

Writing an Inheritance

Women's Writing in Sri Lanka 1860 - 1948

Volume I



Edited by

Neloufer de Mel
Minoli Samarakkody

Women's Education & Research Centre

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VOLUME 1

Edited by
Neloufer de Mel
and
Minoli Samarakkody

A ♀ Publication

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Foreword

As someone who originated a massive project like the *Women's Writings in Sri Lanka during the pre colonial, colonial and post colonial periods* which covers a few centuries, I have a duty to write a few words and place on record some of my thoughts.

The periodizations as we have named is certainly not a product of our colonial minds. They are chosen not merely for convenience, but also for what they connote as markers of our history during which we have gone through certain patterns of socio economic and socio political stages with certain commonalties as specific for each period. We are however, acutely aware of the fact that, each period did not or does not have homogenous patterns of growth. There were, indeed, divergently complex trends within each of the periods we have taken as connoting dividing lines.

This is the first publication of English writings which covers the colonial period. The second which covers the post colonial period is being finalized now and will be released shortly.

As far as the Sinhala and Tamil writings are concerned, two small publications are already out in Tamil, one as a monograph on the colonial period and the other on oral literature of women,

[dirges and lullabies]. Two more of the post colonial period in two volumes are planned for the women's writings in Tamil. The first volume in Sinhala is nearing completion and will be published in a few months and the second is being planned for the year 2002.

In addition to becoming a collection on literature, we hope that these publications will also be used for reconstructing our common history which our mainstream historians have excluded for reasons of inaccessibility or negligence.

There are many in our list as collaborators to this project. And most of them who came into contact with Dr. Neloufer de Mel and Ms. Minoli Samarakody have been acknowledged by them. The part played by Mia Berden and through her, the De Zaaire Foundation, has to be acknowledged. We are thankful, both to the person and the institution for granting us the generous fund which enabled all of us to venture into this long and ambitious project.

Sri Lanka is richer by six publications.

Selvy Thiruchandran

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We wish to acknowledge the following members of our research team whose dedicated and at times arduous work (painstakingly writing out entire short stories and novels by hand when material published before 1940 could not be photocopied) is what made the publication of this anthology a reality: Shenuka Peiris, Amali Fernando, Gayani de Silva and Chathika Rathnapala. We also wish to thank the staff of the Colombo Museum library, the National Archives, the Jayawardena Centre and the University of Peradeniya library, as well as Fr. Aloysius Pieris and Robert Crusz of the Tulana Research Centre, Kelaniya, for access to the Fr. S.G. Perera Memorial Library. A special thanks also to Richard Boyle and Charlotte Cory for information on the diary of Lora St Lo Elizabeth Wilkinson and Selvy Tiruchandran and Sunanda Seeli of the Women's Education Research Centre for their patience and co-operation.

I

INTRODUCTION

Tracing A Genealogy

An important feminist project in recent times has been to collect, document and assess women's writing from all over the world. Several anthologies have appeared in the past decade testifying to the enormous vitality and range of women's writing spanning several years, sometimes centuries, geographical locations, varied ethnic groups, races and diverse genres.¹ This has been in response, partly, to the early feminist lament on the absence of women from the literary canon. Virginia Woolf noted with a sense of outrage that no women authors appeared on the English literary scene before the 18th century.² She analyzed the factors for this absence and set the feminist agenda to come: to ask "What were the conditions in which women lived"³ and what conditions did they write under? What were the patriarchal rules that confined them or endorsed critical reception of their work? What were their themes and preferred narrative forms? What were the genres most acceptable to the literary establishment, and why did the forms of writing most common to women, that of letters and diaries, receive, if at all, only marginal status within it?

The need to anthologize women's writing was also a response to the substantial body of historiography that ignored women's

contribution to nationalist and revolutionary struggles, interventions in debates on tradition and modernity, and entry, under complex material conditions, into politics, professional fields and the performing arts. Feminist scholars, particularly from the post-colonial world, would add the tasks of analyzing women's writing in terms of the double burdens of colonialism (and where applicable, slavery) and patriarchy; of its "location at the margins of patriarchy, empire, nation";⁴ and of women's narrativizations of the themes of race, religion, ethnicity and caste. An understanding that each aspect of social reality is gendered and that patriarchy informs the very organizing principles of society also gave impetus to the collection of an archive depicting women's lives and preoccupations, as well as analysis of their material specificities to better understand their role in the construction of cultural history.⁵

Feminist scholars, archivists and historiographers would discover that looking for women's writing within the established literary establishment controlled by patriarchy was futile. In fact, such a search would only distort the meaning of women's writing and literary expression by confirming the loud silence of women in the field. Rather, as feminist scholars looking for the presence of women in the European theatre noted, "The history of the female performer looks very different when the emphasis on script-based performances and permanent theatre building is removed, since women appear to have flourished in what has become known as the "illegitimate" theatres, in unregulated performances."⁶ Scholars documenting women's art noted that "a new way of seeing" was needed to understand women's art and record its archive.⁷ By the 1980s, the feminist project had become one of looking at alternative forums within orature, literary and theatre spaces

which women occupied, produced creative work in, and held their own.

Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha noted that early 20th century women writing in India were active in journalism.⁸ Many Indian women edited journals and wrote articles and short stories that were published in magazines and journals. There are parallels to this in Sri Lanka, particularly in the Sinhala language journals. Malini Karunaratne published the journal *Lanka Mata* in March 1922,⁹ and Piyaseeli Kusuma edited *Vanitha* in the 1930s. There is reference to the journals *Kulagana Siri*, *Veera Mata* and *Sri Kantha* as edited by women, while women's groups such as the *Nariksha Kaami Society* published *Lakagana Hasuna* (1921) and a women's group from Galle, a sea-port on the southern coast of the island, brought out *Vanithartha Daayani* (1916)¹⁰. Early English language journals such as *The Friend* (1837), the *Ceylon Magazine* (1840), *Young Ceylon* (1850), the satirical magazines *Muniandi* (1869) and *Appuhami* (1890), and literary supplements to newspapers such as *The Literary Examiner* (1846) failed however to include women contributors.¹¹ Yet, by the early 20th century, Christmas and Annual supplements of the noted English language newspapers and journals such as *The Times Annual Supplement*, *The Post and Telegraph Magazine*, *The Ceylon Observer Christmas Supplement*, *The Ceylon Independent*, *Plate's Ceylon Annual* and *The Ceylon Causerie* began to feature women's writing, particularly short stories and poems. The few women who were able to publish their work in book form during this time were those in privileged positions of class and authority, British and American women travel writers, and commentators on Empire who found publishing houses in England to print and distribute their work.

Finding the alternative sites in which women created literature, either through the written text or performance, has been difficult for many reasons. As these works have not been published, unless the families of the women writers kept their archives alive, or societies and clubs at which playlets and skits produced by women filed away their scripts for posterity, this body of work is all but lost to us today.¹² Biographical information on women writers is scarce. Researching a period spanning the 19th and early 20th centuries has meant distant memories at best. Many of the families of Dutch Burgher women writers have migrated from Sri Lanka in the wave of migration that began in the 1950s which took the Burghers away to countries like Australia, Canada and Britain.¹³ Early literary efforts in English by Sri Lankan Tamil women have been lost with the burning, in 1983, of the Jaffna library and its archive. This anthology is therefore by no means complete but a first step in documenting women's creative writing and literary production in Sri Lanka. It is also a selection, based on literary and narrative quality.

Sri Lankan Women's Writing and an English Education

When this research project began in 1997, it soon became clear that there was very little published writing in English by Sri Lankan women before the 1950s. English writing by women was dependent on their having received an English education. From the 1820's onwards, during British colonial rule, Christian girls' schools and convents run by missionaries had been established throughout India and Sri Lanka, providing primary and secondary education for girls. The curriculum and medium of instruction in these schools depended on the class background of the

students. The schools which taught poorer children functioned in the vernacular, while those that targeted the elite provided an English education with facilities for foreign examinations. Education in English received a great boost in Sri Lanka when, in 1832, the Colebrook Commission recommended that English be the medium of instruction for higher education. This ensured that an English education was necessary for university entrance and for professional placement in the higher grades of the administrative, judicial and medical services.

In Jaffna, in the island's northern peninsula, girls' education had begun early when, in 1824, American Methodist missionaries inaugurated the Uduvil Girls' School. In Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital in the south west of the island, amongst the girls' schools which functioned in English was Methodist College, one of the earliest, established in 1866. Bishop's Gate School was another girls' school which had begun earlier - circa late 1856/early 1857 but had closed down to reconvene as Bishop's College in 1875. CMS Ladies' College, inaugurated in 1900, and Holy Family Convent begun by Catholic nuns in 1903 were other early girls' schools. The daughters of wealthy families were also educated at home by English and Eurasian governesses. In 1921 University College was inaugurated and began to enroll women students.

When Buddhist schools for girls began in earnest by the late 19th century under the aegis of the Buddhist Theosophical Society and the Women's Education Society to counteract the influence of the Christian mission school, they could not compete favourably with the English medium schools. The premium placed on an English education was so high during British colonial times, that parents of middle-class and affluent Sinhala Buddhist families preferred to send their daughters to schools where

English was the medium of instruction and which coached students for the Cambridge certificate examination. Fluency in English meant upward social mobility and good marriage prospects. Very soon therefore the most prestigious of the Buddhist girls' schools began to function in the English medium as a response to the demand for an English education. Sanghamitta Girls' School founded by the Women's Education Society in 1889 and later, Buddhist Girls' College (which became Visakha Vidyalaya, the leading Buddhist girls' school in Colombo) founded by the philanthropist Selestina Dias in 1917, were examples of such English medium schools. The value placed on English in these schools was such that students who conversed in Sinhala were punished with the imposition of a fine¹⁴.

The Pioneers

Once education in English took hold, the first writing in English by Sri Lankan women appeared. Three sisters, Jessie Alice, S. Jane and S. Helen Goonetilleke wrote and published short stories in English inspired by Sinhala folk tales. Two short stories by Jessie Alice and Jane Goonetilleke were published in the first volume of *The Orientalist* in May 1884. Given the head-start the Dutch Burgher community had in its access to English education and European culture by way of its closer cultural, linguistic and political affinities to the British, the names of many more Burgher women figure in the records as authors than women of Sinhala and Tamil ethnicity before Sri Lanka's independence in 1948. From Lilian Van Dort who wrote a short story entitled "The Derelict" published in 1916 to Irene Crofton's poems in 1919, Muriel Janz's story "A Tale of Beragama" in 1921 and Ina Trimmer's short stories in the late 1930s and '40s, the archive

shows that Burgher women were at the forefront of literary production in Sri Lanka. Their efforts parallel those of other Burgher women before them who were the pioneer women medical doctors of Sri Lanka (Dr. Alice de Boer being the first woman to obtain the Licentiate in Medicine and Surgery in 1898), and yet others who set the trend in liberal ideas on education and women's entry into various professions.¹⁵ It is also possible that creative writing by many Burgher women have been missed because, in marrying British, Sinhala and Tamil men, they assumed surnames (most of their first names were English anyway) that left no trace of their own ethnicity.

The lacunae in published women's writing reflects the patriarchal view that women's writing was inferior to that of men, that their comments and views were of a domestic and private nature and of little public importance. Even influential journals like *Young Ceylon*, begun by Frederick and Louis Nell and Charles Lorenz in 1850, featured very few articles by women, despite the fact that it kept alive discussions on women's education and entry into professions and pushed for women's franchise and empowerment. Well into the 1930s and 1940s *Young Ceylon* gave news, through its women's page, of the Indian women's movement and the agendas of local women's groups such as the All Ceylon Women's Conference, the Women's Political Union and the Lanka Mahila Samiti. It published news on local women's trade union activity. However, despite this commitment to women's empowerment in the public sphere, *Young Ceylon* published only a few articles by women in contrast to its volume of contributions on varied subjects by men. Some of these women's essays included impressions of Europe (Marjorie de Mel, "A Glimpse of War-Scarred Europe," YC 6, No.11, March 1938),

women's education (Mrs. J. P. John, "What is an Educated Man?," YC3, No. 10, Feb. 1935), music (Maude MacCarthy a. k. a. Tundra Devi, "Indian Music and Western Methods," YC 7, 11, March 1939) and the subject of a colonial society in transition as in Pearl Jayasundera's essay "Wither Ceylon?" which won second prize in the *Young Ceylon* essay competition of 1938. (YC, 7 Nos. 3, 4, July-August 1938.)

It would not be until the early 1960s and well into the 20th Century that a substantial body of fiction and poetry in English by Sri Lankan women began to emerge and be published. But before then, who and what inspired the first Sri Lankan women to write in English? Jessie Alice, Helen and Jane Goonetilleke, Agnes Corea, Nancy Wijekoon, Enid Karunaratane, Rosalind Mendis, Lilian van Dort, Muriel Janz, Ina Trimmer, Mary Gunasekera, and Mabel Fernando were the pioneers who inaugurated the tradition of Sri Lankan women's writing in English. What genealogies of writing and discourses did they lay claim to?

In looking to document an archive of their writing, two significant factors come to mind. The first is that the most substantial body of women's creative writing in English in Sri Lanka before independence in 1948 was by British women who were wives of colonial officials and military officers stationed on the island, or wives of British planters who supervised the coffee and tea plantations, the mainstay of its colonial economy. The first British woman to write about Sri Lanka was Maria Graham, wife of Capt. Thomas Graham of the Royal Navy, who visited the island in 1810.¹⁶ Although comparatively fewer in number there were also upper-class American women travelers. In the words of a male bibliographer they "generally voyaged to broaden their minds and slake their thirst for outlandish spectacles."¹⁷ There were

also sisters and friends who traveled from England to Sri Lanka to visit their brothers and other relatives, often finding suitable marriage partners from amongst the ranks of the colonial officers stationed on the island. Amongst them was Bella Woolf, sister of Leonard Woolf, who came to Sri Lanka on a visit to her brother in 1907 and stayed on to marry Robert Lock, the assistant director of the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens. After his death she married W. T. Southern who was later appointed Governor and Commander in Chief of the Gambia. Bella Woolf was the first woman to write a travel guide to the country entitled *How to See Ceylon*, published in 1914. She also wrote a number of well crafted short stories, essays, sketches and magazine articles which reflected her views on native society and the island's variety of landscapes from dry zone Jaffna, to Kandy in the hill country and coastal Colombo.

Carolyn Corner recorded seven years of residence in Sri Lanka through the experiences of Cynthia, the heroine in *Ceylon: The Paradise of Adam*.¹⁸ This was, for reasons discussed later, a path breaking feminist novel for the time. Women like Mary Stuart and Mary Cameron were wives of planters who wrote books on the plantations, recounting the "life of the coolies", their customs and rituals.¹⁹ Kathleen Hawkins, perhaps taking her cue from Bella Woolf's travel book, wrote a travel series of her own in *The Ceylon Causerie*²⁰ while Catherine Adams wrote columns entitled "Heard Up-Country" and "Wireless Up-Country" (also published in *The Ceylon Causerie*) which gave news of social events in the hill country. Here were women of the British Empire constructing the colony, through a quasi-ethnographic lens, just as their men compiled knowledge of the Orient in the service of "knowing" and therefore ruling it better.

Many other British women also wrote of their impressions of the natives, the landscape, the fairs, the rituals, medicine men, false priests and local superstitions. There was also a fascination with local ghost stories. Anitra Kemp exploited the isolated setting of Trincomalee to weave a haunted tale of a Tamil couple and an ill-gotten treasure in *Let Them Lie*. Claribel Spittel (nee Van Dort, 1876-1952), the daughter of an Irish mother and a Burgher father was another woman who documented a series of ghost stories set in the plantations in *The Times* of 1931. Claribel Spittel was one of the early women medical doctors of Sri Lanka who won a gold medal for surgery during her studentship. In 1911 she married the famous surgeon R. L. Spittel who worked amongst the indigenous Vedda people and wrote books about their community. After marriage Claribel subsumed her own career to help her husband and bring up a family. She was involved in the running of the Wycherley Nursing Home with her husband, and it was not until the second world war and her chairpersonship of the local Red Cross society that she came into her own, with a special role to fulfill as one of Sri Lanka's few women doctors.²¹

British women resident in Sri Lanka kept diaries, a genre favoured by women. Writing diaries was a private pursuit which did not claim to be literary and could be written therefore without attracting too much attention. Women such as Lady Nugent, Lucinda Darby-Griffith and Lora St Lo Elizabeth Wilkinson noted their observations of Sri Lanka in their diaries, at times with considerable literary flair. Lora St Lo Elizabeth Wilkinson (1842-1934) was the daughter of Colonel Charles Edmund Wilkinson RE, Commander of All the Forces of the island who also acted as Lieutenant Governor of Ceylon until the arrival of Sir Charles MacCarthy in 1860. According to Charlotte Cory, the charm of Lora St Lo Elizabeth Wilkinson's diary is in her complete absorp-

tion with her own life and concerns, the health and fates of her pets, and her acquisition of reading matter. The diary provides a complete snapshot of the life of a colonial officer's family in an outpost of the Empire.²² American women like Mary Thorn Carpenter who traveled to Sri Lanka in 1892 and Clara Kathleen Rogers who visited the island in 1903 both kept journals which were subsequently published. Sri Lankan women kept diaries too. Rosalind Mendis (née Jayasinghe, 1901-1994) who published her first novel entitled *The Tragedy of a Mystery* in 1928, kept a diary in which, as she became a devout Catholic later in life, contained her daily thoughts, events and prayers.²³ And, there were Sri Lankan women who did engage in scholarly work such as Eleanor Nell, wife of Charles Ambrose Lorenz, who translated a French version of the capitulation of Ceylon by the Dutch to the British in 1796.²⁴ Violet Methley was another woman who wrote *A Man's Honour* (1920) and read a paper at the Royal Historical Association on the subject of her book – the British Expedition to Kandy in 1803.

As will be discussed in greater detail in the next section, this oeuvre of western women's writing on Sri Lanka provides a fascinating insight not only into the paradigms of Orientalism at work but also of the discursive pressures the western woman writer herself was under. Her sojourns in the colonies often required a tense, ambivalent and contradictory negotiation of her own positions as vested in the Empire, but as a gendered (and unequal) subject within it. Often she had to adopt the tone and stance of imperial male adventure writing even as she stood outside its masculinity in order to be accepted by the patriarchal establishment; or adopt a tone of self-effacement with plenty of disclaimers and humorous asides as an alibi for writing about

the public sphere in the first place; or focus on the more personal, rather than the 'scientific' and factual which needed male 'authorizing',²⁵ although, as noted above, there were exceptions to this. The canon of western women's travel writing presents therefore a fascinating output of colonial literature on Sri Lanka with its intersections of gender and imperialism.

Derivative Beginnings

In introducing an archive of Sri Lankan women's writing, the second significant factor is its derivativeness. Just as Sri Lankan men who began to write in English during the 19th century were influenced by the British literature and essays they had studied in schools, novels available in libraries, and literary pieces published in the local English newspapers and journals,²⁶ Sri Lankan women also followed the styles and attitudes of English writers. Take for instance the case of Rosalind Mendis. Born in 1901 in the village of Hadeniya, 15 miles from Kandy, to parents who could not speak English, she received a formal education at Good Shepherd Convent, Kandy, only until the age of eight. On the sudden death of her father when she was 8 years old, her mother, who could no longer afford to send Rosalind to school, kept her at home, spending what little family money there was on her sons' education. Rosalind's brother, Edward Jayasinghe, who later became a barrister, encouraged his sister to read and write. Without access to school, Rosalind's acquisition of English and its literary vocabulary, syntax and registers were entirely self-taught. She was an avid reader and poured over the essays of Macaulay and the stories of Dickens and Somerset Maugham.²⁷ This reading habit continued through her marriage, when, at the age of 18 or 19, she wed a man ten years her senior. That she was

entirely self-taught in her private vocation as a writer is remarkable. That she was happiest when writing, even to the point of neglecting her children,²⁸ showed her tremendous determination and pride in her talent. That she learnt to write by reading and studying the "best" of the British literary canon shows how profound its influence was on the minds and styles of budding Sri Lankan authors.

The result was that, even though a nascent nationalism amongst Sri Lankan women writers by the end of the 19th century encouraged them to draw on their own folklore and indigenous surroundings, much of their work was imitative and derivative in thought, closely following western writing of the period in its use of narrative form, imagery and language. Their delineation of native characters and comic situations took its cue from British colonial writing. Yasmine Gooneratne notes how the editor of the *Ceylon Magazine*, John Capper, himself inspired by Dickens in his portrayal of character, influenced a number of Sri Lankan writers in how they foregrounded native characters as comic, cunning, indolent, fastidious and/or adopting a bedraggled grandeur.²⁹ Their poems too were paeans to the landscape, the hills and the sea, in a language and tone imitative of the western romantic tradition which had percolated through school textbooks, literary periodicals and a body of writing by British expatriates who wrote of the England they had left behind with nostalgia.³⁰ It would take a while for Sri Lankan women writers to gain confidence in their use of the English language and break free from the mould of colonial narrative forms. Once they did so, they were able to draw from their diverse traditions to produce heterogeneous narratives unique in form and theme to their own experiences.

In the meantime, some of their poetry adopted Victorian moral and religious tones. At times the poems approximated a Christian hymn. Nancy Wijekoon's poem "Our Motherland" is an example of this genre.³¹ Nancy Wijekoon was a school teacher who had joined the Young Lanka League which, begun in 1915, was the earliest radical anti-British nationalist organization in Sri Lanka. British officials considered her poetry seditious and dangerous. It is reported that H. L. Dowbiggin, Inspector General of Police, had ordered surveillance on her during the 1915 Sinhala-Muslim riots.³² Nancy Wijekoon's poem "Our Motherland" closely follows the cadences of a Christian hymn and draws on imagery from British romantic poetry in its evocation of the Lankan landscape. Despite its derivativeness in form and imagery, the poem's reference to an ancient lion race and the Sinhala people as heroes, warriors and martyrs who have pledged themselves to freeing the motherland are unmistakably local and topical. As it casts the events of 1915 as a heroic stand for freedom from British imperialism and unambiguously upholds Sinhala nationalism, its resonance with the register of a hymn serves to further legitimize and make sacred the cause the poem expounds.

We felt it necessary therefore, that given the relative sophistication and influence of their work on a Sri Lankan readership, the writing by British and American women traveling through, or domiciled in Sri Lanka, had to be acknowledged in tracing a genealogy of Sri Lankan women's writing. Undoubtedly, it was British male writing that had the wider circulation. However, it can be reasonably assumed that Sri Lankan women writers would have read the work of British and American women writers, particularly when published in local newspapers and journals. The task would be not to confine the body of women's writing to eth-

nic origin and nationality, but to record how women looked at Sri Lankan society and its landscapes and influenced its literary trajectory. This anthology includes therefore selected works by British and American women for their literary achievement, for marking western/colonial attitudes to Sri Lanka and for providing a canon of writing focused on the local that influenced, if not complemented, the writing by Sri Lankan women themselves.

Dispelling Mythology:

Women's Travel Narratives in Ceylon (1890 - 1935) Orientalism and the Colonial Feminine

A large number of men and women traveled to the colonies during the hey day of imperialism, when Europe had established political control over eighty-five percent of the earth's surface. They recorded their experiences and impressions in memoirs, travelogues, essays and sketches, works of fiction, letters, diaries and visual representations such as drawings, paintings and photographs. According to Sara Mills, "travel writing is essentially an instrument within colonial expansion and served to reinforce colonial rule once in place."³³ Although women's travel writing both facilitated, and was made possible, by imperialism, women were not seen as agents or active participants within it. This was because of "social conventions for conceptualizing imperialism, which seem to be as much about constructing *masculine* British identity as constructing a national identity *per se*."³⁴ Therefore, women as individuals or writers were always seen as marginal to the process of colonialism. Their writing was also received, commented upon and marketed differently although their work shared many discursive elements with that of their

male counterparts. A large number of their writings have remained 'hidden' in history, denying their creators any authoritative status and left out of critical studies on colonial discourse.³⁵ They are also ignored in anthologies of travel writing although they have contributed much, through this particular genre of writing, to the affirmation as well as the debates surrounding the production of knowledge about Empire.

It is also imperative to recognize that these women traveled in an age that was, by and large, difficult for travel. They traveled for a variety of reasons and wrote about their journeys within a multiplicity of constraints as well those of gender, class, textual conventions and audience. These in turn influenced and gave form to their writing. Because of these textual and discursive pressures, women travel writers were sometimes unable to adopt the imperial voice with the ease of male writers. The discourses of imperialism demanded action and intrepid, fearless behaviour from the narrator, while the discourses of femininity demanded passivity and an interest and concern with personal relationships.³⁶

The selection of travel writing in this anthology is representative of a certain class of Western women who traveled to Sri Lanka in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The stereotypical woman traveler is often portrayed in literature and in the visual media as an idle, frivolous and insensitive 'mumsahib' in need of male protection. It was widely accepted that, "Englishmen...are naturally endowed with a spirit of adventure" and, in the words of Samuel Baker, that "There is in the heart of all of us a germ of freedom which longs to break through the barriers that confine us to our own shores."³⁷ Victorian Englishwomen on the other hand were not recognized as possessing such 'natural' endow-

ments as adventurousness or a yearning to break free, despite the reality that there were many women who traveled alone, made use of rare and unusual opportunities to establish a voice of authority and move outside the limits of the domestic sphere. Their writing draws attention to the fact that the stereotypical Victorian 'feminine' image excluded all other types of representation.

There is much evidence that these women actively engaged in what Edward Said termed 'Orientalism' and defined "as a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience."³⁸ They contributed to the large body of knowledge (re)-produced about the East/Orient which was never "a free subject of thought and action."³⁹ Those engaged in producing the East in this fashion had Empire on their minds and definite views on race and imperialism. Said also noted that "Orientalism, which is the system of European or Western knowledge about the Orient,... becomes synonymous with European domination of the Orient."⁴⁰ Thus irrespective of gender, the colonial writer's relationship with the East was about power and domination. She/he helped to strengthen the identity of the West by setting it off against the East as "the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other."⁴¹

A large number of women who traveled to Sri Lanka during the colonial period were wives, daughters, sisters and fiancées of colonial officers and Christian missionaries. Some of them were financially independent, educated, free of domestic ties and belonged to the upper classes of Euro-American society. There were

influential American women who visited Sri Lanka. Amongst them were Ella Wheeler Wilcox, a best-selling poet of the late nineteenth century whose spiritual, mystic and erotic poetry portrayed her as quite daring during her own lifetime, and Achsah Barlow Brewster, an artist-traveler who visited the country in 1921 with her husband and daughter. Her letters about Sri Lanka persuaded D. H. Lawrence and his wife Frieda to visit the island the following year.

Amongst the British women travelers included in this anthology are daring women like Constance Gordon Cumming who had traveled to practically every corner of the world known to Europe in the nineteenth century. She was the twelfth child of an aristocratic, Scottish family. One of her brothers lived in Sri Lanka but had died two years before she first arrived in the island, on her way to the Himalayas. One of her chapters in her book, *Two Happy Years in Ceylon*⁴² which was published in two volumes in 1892, is based on some pages of this brother's diary. Caroline Corner who records her impressions in a work of fiction titled *Ceylon: Paradise of Adam* (1908) is another writer featured.⁴³ She was the wife of a clerk in the Colonial Secretary's Office, but her marriage did not appear to be happy. This may have been the reason for her early return to England. Bella Woolf's purpose in traveling to Sri Lanka in 1907 was to visit her favourite brother Leonard, then an Administrator in the Ceylon Civil Service. She lived in Sri Lanka for a number of years and made a significant contribution to the genre of colonial travel writing with her travelogue cum handbook for travelers titled *How to See Ceylon*.⁴⁴ This publication which first appeared in 1914 was reprinted three times thereafter, and drew on many socio-historical accounts of Sri Lanka by other Western writers. J. R.

Toussaint commends her book in characteristic fashion when he writes "One does not usually associate a lady with the production of a Guide Book, yet we are indebted to one of them for one of the best guides to Ceylon".⁴⁵ *How to See Ceylon* was written for the 'passenger' and provides general information on carriage and rickshaw hire, customs duties, useful hints, itineraries, distances between rest houses on principal roads, pronunciation and meanings of certain Sinhala words occurring in the names of places etc. Bella Woolf also wrote two volumes of sketches and essays entitled *Eastern Star-dust*⁴⁶ and *From Groves of Palm*⁴⁷ and a number of journalistic articles. She clearly indicated her audience as well as her motive when she wrote in the Foreword to *Eastern Star-dust* that her aim was "to convey to those, who live under western skies, some of the magic and colour and humour of Eastern Life."⁴⁸ Clare Rettie's writing is similar to that of Woolf. On a smaller scale to Woolf's *How to See Ceylon*, Rettie wrote *Things Seen in Ceylon*⁴⁹ which provided information about the island's weather, places and inhabitants.

Amongst these women travelers were also artist-travelers who attempted to communicate facets of the island through visual representations in the form of drawings and paintings. Constance Gordon Cumming, Caroline Corner, Mary and Margaret Leitch included in their texts illustrations of native inhabitants and landscapes. Selected reproductions of male colonial art on Sri Lanka during the nineteenth century have been documented in R. K. de Silva's *Early Prints of Ceylon*.⁵⁰ De Silva's volume however excludes women artist-travelers who also made a contribution to colonial art. Constance Gordon Cumming's sketches, some of which are included in this anthology, are excluded in de Silva's collection although he takes certain socio-historical information

from her writings and cites her in a footnote.⁵¹ Visual representations were important means of producing knowledge of the colonies since they brought to those back home in Britain, visual evidence of Sri Lanka – a place they had previously only heard or read about. The artist's understanding of which scenes, peoples, monuments or landscapes were to be illustrated and which were to be ignored were in turn informed not only by verbal texts but by British society's larger, cultural idea of the Orient as different, exotic, and Other. The Orientalist construction of Sri Lanka as a land lost in antiquity, filled with backward if colourful people, was amply validated by drawings of the ruins of ancient capitals and their architecture. Constance Gordon Cumming illustrates her book with elaborate etchings of ancient monuments and exoticized landscapes. A particularly alluring one to the Western imagination may well have been her illustration of the shrine on the summit of Adam's Peak and the peak's shadow. The etching is striking in its attention to detail although the visual images of the shrine, the shadow of the peak, and the human figures are exoticized to be mystic and mysterious. Andrea Feeser writes that Gordon Cumming in her travels to Hawaii, "classifies virtually everything that she encounters as that which is or is not picturesque. What fails to live up to her expectations of picturesque exoticism, she catalogues with irritation."⁵² Colonial works of art were "expressions of a controlling vision that converted native flora and fauna into images arranged and depicted to satisfy the imperial imagination."⁵³ Therefore, visual representations, like their textual counterparts, were conceived within larger, culturally embedded systems of knowledge and meaning, and served to confirm and perpetuate a certain culturally accepted way of looking at the world which upheld European cultural and moral superiority. They also helped to make

Sri Lanka visible and usable for British imperialism and capitalist expansion. They contributed in defining how Sri Lanka and its people appeared to the mass of the British population and fuelled its collective imagination with the idea of Empire. Women artist-travelers were therefore actively engaged in reproducing the East in this manner. They were agents of imperialism in their own right.

The Civilizing Mission and the European Writer: Validation and Ambivalence

Most travelers to Sri Lanka presented a clear notion of difference between the British as a race, of whom the narrator is representative, and the colonial territory being described. Their writing is imbued with imperialist attitudes which stem from a sense of racial superiority. They include detailed descriptions of the native peoples' mode of dress, appearance, local customs and beliefs, behaviour and mentality, and picturesque narratives of the landscape. Nicholas Thomas in *Colonialism's Culture* points out that, "European writers and scholars created a texted Orient through persistent images and metaphors."⁵⁴ These images were either debased, picturesque, seductive or threatening and were distortions that revealed more about the interests and motives of the observers than the observed. The highly romanticized, exoticized and sensualized depictions in the visual and written texts of the period were made possible because the East "was almost a European invention, and has been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences."⁵⁵ The East was celebrated as a mythic space associated for the West with sexual fantasy and adventure, a place far removed from the West. In short essays entitled "The Unchanging East" and "The Point of View" published in *From*

Groves of Palm, Bella Woolf refers to the sublime, to a sense of mystery and awe as she encounters the indigenous landscape – a recurrent theme in most travel writing of the period. In *How to See Ceylon*, she wrote in the Afterward that “romantic feelings so characteristic of the East and the sense of mystery that pervades all Eastern life only enhances its fascination” (p. 222). This narrative pervades practically all Woolf’s writings including the article entitled “Tulips and Palmyras” in which she describes her journey to Jaffna and its sights.

There was never a draught purer, cooler, more fragrant. The trees and bushes and ground are steeped and drenched in dew; sparkling, glittering, twinkling, millions of drops flash into your eyes as the train passes. Birds dash out from the undergrowth, butterflies dart into the light and vanish. Here are cascades of white blossoms hanging from a tree top; there a mantle of yellow flowers. You draw in great draughts of air as you could never have enough of it, and at last, returning to your sleeping compartment to prepare for arrival at Jaffna, you feel with him who on honey-dew has fed. And drunk the milk of Paradise. As the train rolls on, you can see the jungle disappear and palmyra palms advance in battalions, their dark fans spread against the golden dawn.⁵⁶

The East is celebrated and romanticized again in her essay ‘The Wind through the Palms’ published in *From Groves of Palm*:

Nothing can compare with the soft airs of the Tropics. They lap you gently, fragrantly. They are full of strange perfumes that have fled before you realize them, and all the wander and the mystery of the East are blended in these sudden gusts of jasmine and frangipanni, essence of heavy-scented flowers that grow by temple Gates. You are bathed in the very joy of living and the air is full of music. The daring colours of the East float before your eyes – purples and coppers and the insisting magenta that

harmonises so well with the bronze shins and the gleam of heavy silver armlets.

In England our breezes bring scent of cowslips and the wild, wet freshness of the woods, and there is a freedom and a chill in them which strengthens and cleanses and thrills. But the winds of the East are sensuous and languorous and full of subtle desire – and they hold you in a magic web that snares your soul. (p. 81)

Many British women writers who had internalized imperialist attitudes were ardent supporters of the “civilizing mission” which justified colonialism. This is evident in the way they made value judgements and vast generalizations about native customs, behaviour and ‘mentality’. Bella Woolf wrote with reference to the Sinhala villagers that, “even in the villages the people walk along thinking of nothing at all.”⁵⁷ They also reinforced the notion of the colonizer’s ingenuity in comprehending the ‘native’, thought to possess child-like minds which rendered them incapable of governing themselves. In many writings of the period, the native subjects are often depicted as irrational, comic and intellectually deficient. Many of these stereotypes are located within the working class.⁵⁸ The native elite on the other hand is portrayed as arrogant. This reflects, perhaps, the growing anxiety felt by the British at the emerging indigenous nationalist elite. In *From Groves of Palm* Bella Woolf writes of “a respectable looking elderly person, wearing a tortoiseshell comb and a minute knot of grizzled hair. He sat in an outrigger canoe on two large cushions, in great luxury. Something in our appearance seemed to amuse him, and he evidently directed some racy and uncomplimentary witticisms at our craft.”⁵⁹ Even though there is a double gaze here, of the colonizer on the colonized and vice versa, there is in this writing a homogenization, and generalization as strate-

gies through which colonial writers make authoritative statements about the colonized.

Language is another powerful tool used by colonial writers to convey the ethnic, social and class disparities between themselves and the colonized, revealing in the process their attitudes towards the latter. These writers would have been aware of the westernized and urbanized local elite that emerged in the nineteenth century, following the establishment of English educational and British capitalist expansion in Sri Lanka. They would also have been mindful that, by the early twentieth century, many of these elites were bilinguals who used an educated variety of English, which was similar, particularly in terms of syntax, to the exonormative variety that was taught in schools. However, Clare Rettie makes a generalization in terms of English language pronunciation among 'natives' when she writes that "Sinhalese always preface the letter 'S' by 'ye' for some odd reason."⁶⁰ Although educated Lankan English differed from Standard British mainly with regard to pronunciation, the particular pronunciation feature that Rettie refers to could not have occurred in the speech of these bilinguals since it is a socially stigmatized variant of the language even today, and regarded as non-proficient. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the standard variety of English that was spoken among the English educated local elite is rarely documented within the genre of travel writing. An exception is the educated, grammatical form of the language spoken by Sister Goonachari in the sketch entitled 'A Thousand Jasmin Flowers' in *Eastern Star-dust* by Bella Woolf. In contrast, the writings, in general, abound with the speech of the 'uneducated native.' This is also an indication that socially, the colonizers interacted only among themselves. Interaction with the colonized, if any, was limited to the working classes.

An analysis of English language usage among this latter group, as represented by the writers of this period, reveals several grammatical - phonological inconsistencies. For instance, in the sketch 'The Fortune Teller' in Woolf's *Eastern Star-dust*, Celestina, an ayah, speaks non-proficient English conveyed through a number of linguistic devices. In terms of pronunciation, since Sinhala has no /f/ phoneme, Celestina substitutes the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ of Sinhala in its place as in "I shall not be lucky till Pebruary month" (p. 24) which betrays a socially stigmatized variant of the norm. In addition, there are several syntactic devices that have been used to construct the English spoken by the colonized as a simplified linguistic system. For example, "Everything I am having is going," (p. 26) as Celestina says illustrates the indiscriminate marking of the category 'aspect' in its progressive form with *ing*. Another device is the over-use of grammatical formatives such as plural forms as in "He is telling peoples what will happen." (p. 24). Others include the violation of subject-verb agreement as in "Some gives ten cents, some more;" (p. 24) and "Last year when my husband and I takes the boarding-house..." (p. 25). There are several other devices that include the use of incorrect subordinators and the omission of pronouns and articles.

An interesting feature is that although some of the devices used by the writers of the period were similar, the types of non-proficient English constructed by them cannot be identified as conforming to established varieties of Lankan English since these are not systematic or rule-governed. Therefore, the representation of the type(s) of English spoken by the 'uneducated' native is varied and problematic. For instance, Caroline Corner, Bella Woolf and Clare Rettie used a range of linguistic devices to deliberately *construct* the types of non-proficient English used by

the working classes, but the particular 'varieties' constructed are inconsistent. A particularly noteworthy example is the pronunciation of the fortune-teller in the sketch of the same name in Woolf's *Eastern Star-dust*: "I tell ze trooth, good or bad" (p. 27), and "Tell not your heart's secret to *ozzer* womens." (p. 28) These two utterances contain a phoneme (appearing in the italicized words above), which betrays a 'foreign' accent. The phoneme, however, cannot be traced to Sinhala or Tamil since it clearly does not exist in either of the indigenous languages.

Furthermore, Clare Rettie uses language as a powerful tool to convey attitudes of superiority, portraying for instance, a cultural disparity between Europeans and Eurasians by caricaturing the latter's speech. Eurasians were regarded as inferior by the Europeans and as a result caricatured or treated condescendingly in colonial literature. The disparity in linguistic competence is constructed through the Eurasian's speech as highly complex and stylized even in informal contexts. This conveys their lack of linguistic and communicative competence. For instance, Mr. Joseph Daniel David addresses a group of Europeans lazing in their verandah in the following manner:

May I be pardoned this apparently seeming untimely intrusion,' he began, in the mincing tone of voice his kind usually adopt, 'but having been informed, in a roundabout fashion, that present company were here, I decided to make the bold attempt to call. Have I the honour to address. (p.144)

The deliberate construction of English used among these various 'subordinate' groups helped to portray them as comic and intellectually inferior to the colonized. This, in turn, reinforced the need for continuing colonial rule over a local bilingual elite, many of whom had, in reality, a high level of competence in English in addition to Sinhala or Tamil.

The general view however is that women's travel writing "tended to concentrate on descriptions of people as individuals, rather than on statements about the race as a whole."⁶² Therefore, critics have tended to treat women's texts as expressions of personal endeavour and individualism rather than as part of a larger political enterprise. Although there is much evidence to show that women were writing from within an imperialist framework, it is difficult and unwise to generalize on women's travel writing. The individual writer's personal experiences, motivation, complexities and ambiguities invariably inform her work. American women writers such as Mary Thorn Carpenter and Ella Wheeler Wilcox describe the landscape picturesquely but portray many other aspects of Sri Lanka such as its temples and native costumes negatively. These very same aspects are, however, viewed positively by Achsah Barlow Brewster and Margaret Mordecai. The American women are also able to overtly criticize British imperialism because they are not part of it. Mordecai condemns the material interests of the British colonizers in dismantling a bridge made of satinwood in the Peradeniya Gardens.⁶³ She lamented in *Indian Dreamlands*:

The old kings of Kandy made it their garden long ago, and to honour it the more they threw across the river in one high noble span, a bridge of satinwood. Had they built it of less precious material we might have had it still. But, alas, the satinwood was too great a temptation for the commercial instincts of the British conquerors. The bridge was removed and sold to make chairs and tables; and lower down the river an ungainly iron structure in three arches has taken its place.⁶⁴

Both men and women travel writers on the whole never failed to describe the appearance of native women. However, their perceptions of these women differed slightly. Elizabeth Harris, in her study of British views on local women in nineteenth century Sri Lanka wrote, "In very general terms, ... it is the women who bring in romanticism concerning external appearances, rather than the male writers. The men are arrogantly judgmental in their assessments, betraying both racism and chauvinism."⁶⁵ The colonized woman was the 'Other' to both Western men and women travelers. However, Western women's perception of the native woman was different to men's as seen in Woolf's description of a procession of women going to the temple: "They were visions of delight as they moved along under the yellow flowers, the sunlight dappling their black hair and bronze rounded cheeks and arms."⁶⁶ Such "visions" and references to "large somber eyes" and "dark eyes under curling lashes" are plentiful in the colonial woman writer's gaze on the colonized woman. Many male travelers on the other hand depicted native women as the 'noble savage', sensuous and living close to nature. Rana Kabbani noted in *Europe's Myths of Orient* that "the articulation of sexism in (Burton's) narrative went hand in hand with the articulation of racism, for women were a sub-group in patriarchal Victorian society just as other races were sub-groups within the colonial enterprises."⁶⁷

Although women like Bella Woolf and Clare Rettie did write within imperialist/orientalist discourses, many contradictions and ambivalences are to be found in their work. Because of the oppression Victorian women in Britain suffered, many women travelers such as Woolf and Rettie aligned themselves and sympathized with native women. As Susan L. Blake pointed out in an essay entitled 'A Woman's Trek: What Difference does Gender

Make?', "women, colonized themselves by gender, might recognize and oppose colonization based on race"⁶⁸ Kumari Jayawardena also points out that some of the famous "lady adventurers" of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries "reflect a concern with indigenous societies and the condition of their women and children usually absent in the writings of male travelers."⁶⁹ Greater sensitivity towards the colonized Sinhalese women can be discerned in the writings of Bella Woolf :

It is the women who have the poorest time in village life. The ordinary villager cultivates his patch of paddy and then lazes on a cane couch before his door, while his wife pounds the paddy, collects and chops the firewood, fetches the water in the heavy chatties, cooks and does every other odd job. Women occupy the traditional oriental subservient position among the village Sinhalese. When they are educated, their influence will do much to elevate the tone of village life. Vernacular girls' schools are gradually being established in Ceylon.⁷⁰

Constance Gordon Cumming also refers, in *Two Happy Years in Ceylon*, to native women and customs of feminine seclusion although she noted that "these are by no means so stringent in Ceylon as on the mainland" (p. 359). She devoted a part of her narrative to comment on the success of the Uduvil Girls' Boarding School in Jaffna which was established by American missionaries in 1824. She noted:

(I may remark in passing, that in 1887 several girls in the Oodooville training school passed far ahead of any of the boys, a circumstance which proved quite a shock to the Tamil believers in feminine incapacity for intellectual studies!) (p. 360)

That the crucial point about patriarchy Constance Gordon Cummings wishes to mark can be made only in a passing remark

within parenthesis, illustrates well the discursive constraints circumscribing the women travel writer. Their own gendered status made writers like Bella Woolf, Constance Gordon Cumming and Clare Rettie show remarkable perception into the complexities of representation. Despite her own complicity in homogenizing village life Woolf asked: "To all who travel in the East comes the thought, what of the life below the surface that is only skimmed by the tourist? Those whose lot it is to dwell in the East, learn in time something of oriental life and nature, but they also realize that much must ever remain a sealed book."⁷¹ Many women writers also repeatedly condemned industrial capitalism and material obsession which they saw as an insidious characteristic of the 'civilized' Western world. Woolf looked at technology and modernization as an intrusion and cause for regret and wrote that the motor car "scorching along the crowded Eastern roads is one of the worst forms of selfishness in the calendar of vices."⁷² In rejecting modernization, she romanticized and appropriated the 'Other's' society as an 'alternative model' which should not be changed by industrialization. This was partly due to the fact that "to the Victorian surrounded by the busy, commercialism of industrial English in the nineteenth century, the East afforded mental or physical escape into adventure and romance."⁷³ Such an indulgence in the natural and 'primitive' is also conveyed through verse in Mary Nock's *A Song of the Patnas*, published in the Christmas number of *The Ceylon Observer* in 1921. As Yasmine Gooneratne points out, "Nature becomes a source of healing and refreshment to the tired man....blended with a disturbing enthusiasm for indulgence in emotional fantasy."⁷⁴ The last two lines of Nock's poem evoke this urge for escapism:

So leave the white road and noise of the town,
To stray for a while where nature is free. (p. 66)

Hand in hand with a mistrust of industrialization went the celebration of native customs and ways of life. Bella Woolf promoted ideas of indigenous cultural revival and deplored the Westernization taking place amongst Sri Lankan society. In *Things Seen in Ceylon* Clare Rettie conveyed regret that local women have adopted Western dress:

The Sinhalese and Tamil women have a fine carriage, they carry their heads, on which artistically shaped chatties (or pots) are often poised, in truly regal fashion. The arm and ankle ornaments tinkle musically as they move, their ears and noses sparkle with coloured jewelry, and their bright cloths (or *sarongs*) are swathed round them, with a certain careless grace. Unfortunately, of late years, many Natives have adopted European, or semi-European, dress, and the result is usually disastrous. (p. 30).

Sustaining and Resisting Imperialism: The Woman Writer In-between

The subtle contradictions in women's travel writing show the complicity and resistance by Western women to the cultural values dominant during the spread of Empire and reveals the complex part played by women in both sustaining and resisting imperialism. Woolf writes with authority in *How to See Ceylon* that the Sri Lankan villager is better off than the English poor in that they are free of the adverse effects of industrialism and materialism. However, she notes that although "outwardly it is Arcadia....it comes perhaps as a shock to hear of the large percentage of crimes of violence in Ceylon." (p.219). She fails to point out that this situation also has its roots in the inequalities wrought by colonialism. Although a blindness enters her writing when

she describes the village children in *How to See Ceylon* — “Certainly the children have an ideal life. You may travel hundreds of miles in Ceylon and never hear a child cry....” (p.219), in an article entitled *Where Hunger Stalks* published in *The Times of Ceylon* in 1920 she does engage with the stark socio-economic reality of the poor. Her exposure to poverty at first causes her to suffer “a rude shock” reflecting her own secluded privilege. She acknowledges that, “owing to the increased cost of imported food-stuffs, rice has gone up to double its former price. In many cases where wages have not risen or there is no wage-earner, whole families are suffering severely.” She is highly critical of “the comfortable well-fed people who prate of pauperisation (who) should all have had a chance of seeing the crowds that gathered at the various depots...it was a procession of emaciated, dull-eyed, weary creatures...,” and takes comfort in the “the Municipality of the Ladies’ League (which) have it in hand. Here Bella Woolf’s writings do reveal a liberal sensibility with a strong sense of injustice at the socio-economic disparity between the colonizer and the colonized, and the apathy shown by some members of her social class and race towards the colonial subject. While it is true, therefore, that writers like Woolf wrote within orientalist/imperialist paradigms, they also resisted to some extent, its discourses and modalities of power by subtly revealing the complexities and inequalities of the imperial system. Harriet Martineau was another woman who, in a work entitled *Cinnamon and Pearls* overtly criticized economic imperialism as early as the middle of the nineteenth century. This work caused debate. While an English newspaper of the day commended her work as a “vehicle of important truths,” J. R. Toussaint, writing on women’s contribution to Sri Lankan literature, felt it necessary to condemn her suggestion that the colonial government should

give up its monopoly in pearl fishery and the cinnamon trade as naive and accused Martineau of being “misinformed on several important points”.⁷⁵

Because of the manner in which women’s writing was received and commented upon, their writing carried the terms of the textual and discursive constraints they were under. Except for Martineau and Woolf, they hardly denounced the treatment of the colonial subject or the oppression of Victorian women overtly in their work. It is only in a personal letter to her brother Leonard that Bella Woolf’s criticism of Victorian patriarchy comes through strongly. She wrote that “...Women stand to lose so much by marriage nowadays, at least women with brains, that it takes a great deal for them to go in for it...”⁷⁶ She thus challenged an aspect of Victorian ideology concerning womanhood and was aware how the gendered norms of marriage for women imposed constraints on them.

The titles of their work, in contrast to those of their male counterparts, also reveal the discursive constraints impinging on these women writers. There is a prototypical feminized sensibility reinforced in titles from Bella Woolf’s *Eastern star-dust, From Groves of Palm, Tulips & Palmyras* to Constance Gordon Cumming’s *Two Happy Years in Ceylon* which stands in direct contrast to the authorizing titles of Samuel Baker’s *Eight Years’ Wanderings in Ceylon, With Rifle and Hound in Ceylon, Excursions, Adventures, and Field-Sports in Ceylon* or Davy’s *An Account of the Interior of Ceylon*. Works by male authors were also given prominence when published as memoirs that conveyed necessary ‘factual’ information to the prospective settler in the colony, whereas women’s writing was regarded simply as autobiographical private musings.

Adventure Narratives

In spite of these textual and discursive constraints there were many women whose writings reveal that they were strong, active, fearless and independent individuals who ventured over unknown and 'dangerous' terrain defying the common belief that the colonies were "no place for a white woman."⁷⁷ The adventure narrative, which is usually a male preserve, was not an unproblematic genre for women writers. Convention decreed that elements in 'adventure' were improper for women and the adventure hero who is master of the situation and maintains a 'stiff upper lip' clashed with other, patriarchal discursive constructions of how women should behave.⁷⁸ Adventure narratives were at their height in the nineteenth century when women travelers were writing in large numbers. Some women writers such as Catherine Adams⁷⁹ subtly alluded to the gendering of the adventure tale when she parodied the conventional male adventure narrative. Her own narrative titled *A Christmas Adventure*, begins with the proclamation that her heroines Betty Torrington and Lorna Dalziell "were two of the most intrepid young women that came out of Great Britain." The humorous and exaggerated narrative of the protagonists' adventures, which border on the ridiculous, seeks to undermine the 'acceptable' (male) adventure narrative. Adams further parodies the male adventure hero who is fully in control in the face of danger — a necessary convention of the adventure tale — when she presents her own heroines in *A Christmas Adventure* as merely, but credibly, human: "It was a most horrible moment. No time now for heroics or a man-like, calm demeanour" (p. 83).

Thus even when women adopted the role of the adventure narrator, their narratives were often undermined or modified by dis-

claimers and humorous interventions. Constance Gordon Cumming downplayed the dangers she encountered when she wrote: "Where there is bedding, it is essential to turn over the cushions and anything of the nature of a mattress, as being only likely to conceal centipedes and scorpions possibly snakes."⁸⁰ She does not sensationalize the account of her journey and clearly does not adopt the male adventurer's daring narrative voice. She thereby destabilizes the reader's expectations and makes her position of danger all the more acceptable for being *credible*. As these works had a revolutionary potential they were received critically and viewed with suspicion by the male literary establishment. Writers such as Constance Gordon Cumming were accused of exaggeration and falsehood and considered eccentric and odd. They had to guard against such accusations by restricting the type of language they used, the 'experience' depicted, and structuring their texts in a way that made their writing less authoritarian.

There are other adventure narratives that also include social and ideological commentary, and openly challenge the discourses of colonialism and the feminized. Caroline Corner in *Ceylon: The Paradise of Adam*, was mindful of a culture which suspected unaccompanied women travelers who went against accepted convention, which branded them odd and 'eccentric.' Her views are expressed through Cynthia, the female character in her novel, who is portrayed as a 'New Woman'. Cynthia is determined, self-reliant and subverts conventional reader expectations of the feminized in her defiance of social convention and assertion of independence from patriarchal restraints. Cynthia rides alone in Sri Lanka, unaccompanied by a European male and is aware of the reaction towards her behaviour:

The Europeans she encountered later on her return stared and may have wondered, "where had she been? What business could a European have, a gentlewoman too, beyond the prescribed limitations of the Park or Galle Face Drive?" Little did they dream of the interest these solitary expeditions had for that eccentric English girl, as doubtless she was called.

As Sara Mills notes, women's sexuality was an essential component in the construction of 'Britishness', in particular, male 'Britishness' within the colonial context. Many writers internalized this discourse and tended to de-sexualize British women depicting them as gentlewomen in need of protection or as the 'angel of the house' while British men came to the East for sexual adventure. Caroline Corner's work undermines these notions. Cynthia narrates an encounter with a wild elephant in a chapter headed - 'Bungalow and occupants in deadly danger.' The deliberate subversion of Cynthia in not conforming to the stereotypical 'feminine' image of women as weak and frail and therefore given to swooning and hysterics in dangerous situations is revealed in the following lines:

Would it [the elephant] come *their* way, was now the thought in each human mind. Cynthia's feminine intuition answered, "No." Then Cynthia ought to have fainted, but she didn't nor even had hysterics for the first time in her life. No, she had a whiskey and soda instead, and afterwards went to sleep again....⁸¹

Caroline Corner wrote at a time of feminist debate and action on a wide range of issues including women's education, franchise, property rights, employment opportunities and working conditions, and reforms in marriage and divorce laws. Elizabeth Harris noted that at this time "pressure groups for greater employment opportunities, dress reform, family planning education, in-

creased legal rights and suffrage for women arose, drawing in a large number of gifted and vocal women."⁸² Corner establishes a voice of authority very early in her work, showing awareness of the discursive constraints that could undermine it. The opening page of her book contains a Spanish proverb which sets the ironic tone of the narrative voice to come - "Travellers and inquisitive women see strange sights." The seemingly light-hearted narrative style is thereby already put in place while the sexist implication of the proverb implies awareness that convention does not expect women to move outside the domestic sphere unless they are inquisitive and odd. Corner is also critical of the notion that travelers are fundamentally male and that women who adopt this role are perceived as 'inquisitive.' The reference to 'strange sights' may resonate with Orientalist tropes but takes on a tone of ambivalence in Corner's writing for she not only resists romanticizing what she sees in Sri Lanka but voices strong criticism of her country's treatment of the colonies and the colonized.

Although many women travel writers adopted highly subjective and exaggeratedly poetic narrative styles in their descriptions of Sri Lanka, Corner refused to indulge in such fantasy writing. She accepted her surroundings for what they were, aware of herself as a newcomer and that her observations could be superficial. She appreciated the tropical flowers in bloom, their colour and fragrance as did every traveler to Sri Lanka, but was also conscious that sheer fatigue caused her drowsiness and not the air "possessed of narcotic properties." She also criticizes the whole imperial venture through an allegorical dialogue between Cynthia as representative of the colonizer, and a Bird of Paradise as the colonized. In its opening address to Cynthia, the bird shows that the native colonized were by no means weak and ignorant but

critically aware of the ideological trappings and modalities of Western imperialism:

A newcomer, eh? Enraptured with our lovely isle, I'll warrant already. A contrast, certainly, to your foggy London and its dirty sparrows.... Ah! you didn't know we could talk and are given to discussing your affairs? There's something yet to learn. Perhaps even we of the jungle could teach you something if you gave us the opportunity. We often 'talk you over,' as you say, and sometimes terminate the discussion with a vote of censure on some of your ways.

She was intelligent in her approach to the subject of 'native lethargy' and refused to attribute to the 'native' childlike minds or animal qualities as Leonard Woolf did in his novel *A Village in the Jungle*.⁸³ This is Caroline Corner's understanding of native behavior which carries a criticism too of the inadequacy of European 'rationality' in understanding those outside its own cultural paradigms:

A study, an intensely interesting study, is the Oriental, a product of the ages, of the soft sunlit scenery. He meditates asquat on his heels for hours, his eyes gazing far away, into infinity apparently. The European looking on him thinks him stupid, bovine. Is he? All the while thoughts are animating his subtle mind, a reservoir too deep for the average European to fathom, with all his "cram." (p. 322)

She was also harsh in her criticism of officials of the Empire. She referred to the civil servants of the colonial government as "those little tin gods". "The Civil Servants are the 'blue blood' of Ceylon particularly in their own estimation" (p. 317) she wrote, commenting on their sense of arrogance.

Caroline Corner also addressed the inequalities of gender in Victorian society and its legal system which denied suffrage to women and rights to property and inheritance on marriage. The Victorian woman was also denied the right to sue or divorce her husband. Therefore, the law did not protect her against marital exploitation. Caroline Corner's heroine Cynthia is very much the 'new woman', who, confident in her independence and intellectual capabilities, questions this system:

Cynthia's first experience of a Court of Justice in Ceylon – indeed anywhere – caused her to think – fatal condition in woman! Moreover, it caused her to ask questions. Reckless of consequences, Cynthia's thirst for knowledge goaded her on.....Cynthia was possessed of a mind that demanded food.... likewise was she endowed with a heart that oft times ached at the injustice of man – not "mere man" mankind in full, broad sense – and sometimes rose in rebellion and hated the cruelties perpetuated on the weak around her. Europeans thought she must be lonely. Europeans were mistaken. Cynthia was never lonely. The gamut of her musings was wide – unlimited. The more she thought, the more there was to think and the wider the gamut grew. Everything has interest if one did but take the trouble to look for it – search it out. Why did not her countrymen on taking possession of the island of Ceylon take their own law with them? A wife being regarded as a mere chattel of her lord and master which tiring of, may be exchanged, when the lord and master chooses to transfer his affection elsewhere. (p.180)

Not surprisingly, Caroline Corner's critiques of imperialism and patriarchy met with harsh condemnation by male critics. J. R. Toussaint described Corner as "a facile writer"⁸⁴ and stated that her book "did not meet with a very favourable reception." R. G. Anthonisz, quoted in Toussaint, accused Corner of exaggeration and falsehood: "A peep into its pages have been sufficient to fill

us with wonder and amusement at the uncommon and improbable nature of some of her experiences, and to make us hesitate to accept the stories she relates as narratives of actual occurrences" were the terms of his dismissal of her writing.⁸⁵ Toussaint's overall dismissal of women's writing in Sri Lanka is couched in patronizing terms, drawing attention to women's lack of education, deep literary and cultural understanding and analyses, and a penchant for outdoor 'games' and society life.

One can scarcely mention a single outstanding literary contribution made by a Ceylon woman. The only explanation of this is that women are now devoting a large part of their time to outdoor games and other pursuits, and have therefore less opportunities for literary culture. Outdoor games and amusements have their proper place in the life of the Community, but they must not be allowed to usurp the position which reading and writing should occupy in the daily life of a woman.⁸⁶

Sara Mills noted that it was because of the uneasy foundations on which women's writing was based that it was regarded as 'bad writing' or as simple autobiographies not to be included in anthologies dealing with critical colonial discourse.⁸⁷ In re-appraising these women's texts it is imperative therefore that they be considered in terms of the discursive frameworks within which they were produced and received, and read as textual constructs that emerged out of a range of discourses in conflict.

Modernity and The Nationalist Impulse

The 'New Woman' Author

The growth of feminism and women's movements in the 20th century was distinctly related to the modernizing impulses of their societies. What women achieved in terms of their civil and political rights largely took place under circumstances that pushed towards a new socio-political and cultural modernity. In the colonies, the colonized elite at the vanguard of anti-imperialist struggles showed a keenness to modernize their societies as a tool of parity with their colonial masters, and women's emancipation was seen as an essential and integral part of this process. The emergence of the 'new woman' became part of this campaign. The terminology and characteristics of the 'new woman' which had become fashionable in 19th century Europe and epitomized in heroines like Caroline Corner's Cynthia, was adopted in the colonies with zeal. Kassim Amin published a book on women's emancipation entitled *The New Woman* in 1901. Although of late feminist scholars like Leila Ahmed have accused Amin of having "reproduced colonial thinking about women's status in Muslim society",⁸⁸ and merely called for the substitution of Islamic-style male dominance for Western-style male dominance, that Amin was known as the 'father of feminism' in the Middle-East shows the radical impact of his work at the time. In 1919 Egyptian women founded the Societe de la Femme Nouvelle. The new agenda for women spread to East Asia. Japan saw the establishment of the Association of New Women in 1919, and in 1919 and 1920 respectively, magazines entitled *The New Woman* were published in China and Korea.⁸⁹ Kumari Jayawardena cautions that what actually entailed this 'new woman' varied from region to region, according to historical specificities and cultural traditions. Nev-

ertheless, in colonial situations, it allowed women a degree of freedom they had not enjoyed before either in pre-colonial or early colonial society. They had greater access to public spaces, took part in campaigns for political and civil rights and better working conditions for women, and fought for, and availed themselves, of growing education and public health facilities.

Bridging Old and New

Modernity, however, is a complex set of co-ordinates that also incorporates tradition to fit its needs. Within the context of anti-colonial nationalism, modernity was often read as *already* a part of indigenous tradition. In Sri Lanka, within Sinhala nationalism, images of the ideal Arya Sinhala woman, appreciation of the Sinhala language and Buddhist culture were foregrounded as part and parcel of the nation's emerging modernity. Women were made its embodiment.

The debate on the nexus between modernization and cultural tradition/integrity was addressed by Sri Lankan women writers. A good example of a forceful and humorous rendering of it is to be found in a satirical dialogue entitled 'Her Wedding Morning' by Ina Trimmer reprinted in this anthology. Ina Trimmer (née de Zilwa) was born on 18th April 1890 in the southern town of Matara. Her father Alan Scott de Zilwa was a proctor of Burgher descent and her mother Lillian (née Perera) who looked after the home was an avid reader. Ina received her primary and secondary education at the Matara Wesleyan School. She did not continue her education to tertiary level however because she married young, at the age of seventeen. Her husband C. A. H. Kuenaman was a Superintendent of the Excise Department. They lived in Galle on a tea estate named Armitage Hill and had two children named

Herbert and June. It is reported that Ina did not like children much and that her grandchildren called her 'aunty Ina' at her request.⁹⁰

Ina divorced C. A. H. Kuenaman in 1933 and the following year married A. E. H. Trimmer, a tea planter. He was of British origin, but born in Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka, where his father had been a missionary. As a result he was fluent in Tamil and many Tamil words figure in Ina Trimmer's stories. The Trimmers lived on the Brae Group estate in Madulkalle. It was an inaccessible place and anybody visiting had to walk four miles to get to the estate bungalow. It is this isolation that encouraged Ina Trimmer to take up creative writing. From 1934 onwards she was a regular contributor to the *Times of Ceylon*, the *Ceylon Observer* and the *Daily News*. Some of her short stories were broadcast over the BBC. Her writing continued even after her second husband's death in 1954. She relocated to Colombo, lived with her sister and well into the 1970s wrote for magazines like the *Tribune*. She died in 1982 on 17th April at the age of ninety two.

The dialogue in Ina Trimmer's short story 'Her Wedding Morning' is between a mother and daughter on the morning of the daughter's wedding.⁹¹ It represents the viewpoints of two generations of Sri Lankan women. The mother, Ango Nona is a fifty-year old woman who is a target of satire in the dialogue. Trimmer skillfully achieves a satirical effect by contrasting the spoken language of the two women, thereby effectively conveying the social/class disparity between mother and daughter. Although there are several linguistic features that characterize Ango Nona's speech as a colloquial variety of Lankan English, there are many others which reveal non-proficient usage. For instance, while features such as code mixing ("white saree like a *paynayray*"

meaning 'sieve' in Sinhala), the simplified tag question ("a nice thing *no*"), lexical transfer ("drinking black *cassaya*") and interjections such as *aiyo!*, are features of colloquial Lankan English, the formation of interrogatives without changing the position of the subject and the auxiliary item ("How long you are taking.."), the omission/overuse of articles ("coming to ask *the* advice from me"), violation of selection restrictions in *be + ing* constructions ("Your father is always listening to me and doing what I am telling") etc. locate her within a Sinhala speaking lower-middle class milieu. Seeking upward social mobility for her daughter Leela, she has worked hard to provide the latter with an English education. But she is, at the same time, beset by anxiety at Leela's achievements. Leela's independent outlook and self-confidence produce ambivalence in the mother who no longer feels in control or needed in the future society her daughter will be part of. This produces a response in her that is nagging and irrational. She accuses Leela of bad habits, of smoking, of repudiating tradition by wearing bobbed hair and dressing immodestly - "Like dolls dressed up, finger nails painted, toe nails painted, how to know what else. Lace jacket showing the body" she fumes. Leela meanwhile is a self-assured young woman who drives a car, is glad of her mobility and looks forward to the future with ease and confidence. She asks, in educated Lankan standard English:

But we are not a bad lot, mother, in spite of all these things. Are we now? We can look after ourselves which you all couldn't. Whenever you went out a servant accompanied you just as if you were a child, while we are at home anywhere. We don't want servants to walk behind us; we are not afraid of anything. You must admit girls of the present day are a jolly capable lot.

A key argument between mother and daughter centers around the wedding dress. The mother wants Leela to wear a white muslin jacket and pink silk skirt in keeping with an older fashion adopted by Sinhala women of the mid 19th century. Leela prefers a georgette sari, eliciting her mother's scorn and chiding: "go, go, go. Dress, will you, like a 'thewditchee' (a flighty woman) with lace jacket and the white saree like a 'paynayray' (sieve). Annay for me, very ugly." Leela argues that the skirt is part of English attire. "We are Sinhalese" she says "must dress like Sinhalese, not imitate the Western nations." In this transitory period of Sri Lankan society, as values of behavior and dress change, it is the daughter's right to *choice* of dress that is compelling. Leela complies with the nationalist sentiment of the times, but makes it clear that for her, its dictates on dress are part and parcel of the modernity she represents. Her own agency is at work here and this is when Sri Lankan women are best able to creatively use traditional symbols for new meanings, finding ways "to put new experiences in the old package."⁹²

This was also an era in which Western culture was suspiciously looked at as ushering in a disguised modernity, a false consciousness with the hidden agenda of wiping out the indigenous. Within such a nationalist lens women were encouraged to modernize, but with only a sufficient, *selected* modernity as would befit the emerging nation. At the same time, there were women for whom the ability to make their own choices and construct their own subjectivity, even if this meant an acceptance of some traditions, were important rights. As Deniz Kandiyoti noted, women did, in this way, make "an irreversible entry into political discourse and the question of their rights became a privileged site for debates concerning questions of modernization vs. cultural conservatism and integrity."⁹³

Several women's groups and women activists were part and parcel of these debates in Sri Lanka. The Women's Franchise Union organized to obtain the vote for all Sri Lankan women, despite being the target of much lampooning and diatribes by male critics and political skeptics.⁹⁴ It achieved its goal in 1933 when all women over 21 years of age, irrespective of education and property qualifications, were given the vote. Women from trade unions and leftwing parties were active in the labour strikes against British capital in the late 1920s and '30s, as well as in the Suriyamala campaign which used poppy day to challenge the British colonial government. Selling the local Suriyamala instead of the poppy, the women collected funds to educate an under-caste girl instead of supporting British war efforts. Education and health services were other high priorities for women who organized under the umbrella of the Ceylon Women's Union which was one of the earliest women's groups to form, founded in 1904 by Dr. Mary Rutnam. The All Ceylon Women's Conference, The Lanka Mahila Samiti and the Eksath Kantha Peramuna were other groups that engaged in lobbying for better education, public health, working conditions and women's entry into the administrative service.

Better access to education soon ushered in an era in which Sri Lankan women looked for professional work as teachers, medical doctors, secretaries, nurses and officers in the Ceylon Administrative Service. This inevitably led to a new sense of identity amongst the educated middle-class Sri Lankan woman. Women ventured out into the public sphere. They took to politics. Adeline Mollamure was elected to the State Council in 1931 and Neysum Saravanamuttu successfully contested the Colombo North seat in May 1932. Agnes de Silva, active in the Women's Franchise Union, contested the Galagedera by-election in 1933. Miriam de Saram (nee Deraniyagala) entered the world of dance, hitherto

dominated by men, and many Burgher women distinguished themselves in the medical profession.⁹⁵ Other women formed equivalents to exclusive male clubs. An article by Franco Polo lampooning the Cosmopolitan Club (which may have been a precursor to The Women's International Club) appeared in *The Searchlight* of 19th August 1933. The author charged that the society was a secretive, man-hating women's only club. The elite world of the Cosmopolitan club may have detracted from its existence, but its formation signaled that women were getting together in a sisterhood that went beyond "the differences of caste, colour and creed". Articles were written in *Young Ceylon* by women like Miss. J. R. J. Ponniah who, while reinforcing the prime role of the Sri Lankan woman as a home maker and social service worker, nevertheless stated that "new occasions teach new duties and new times demand new measures" so that women must "not resist the flow of the onward current."⁹⁶

While there is little information on the direct connection between the early Sri Lankan women authors featured in this anthology and these women's groups and activists quoted above, the climate of radicalism, public campaigning and civil and political demands brought to the forefront by the latter would surely have produced an important *context* for the women authors. That some of them turned to indigenous folklore as the Goonetilleke sisters did, or wrote historical fiction depicting complex encounters between the native Sri Lankan and the conquering colonizer/foe as Mabel Fernando did in her short stories, marks a significant move towards understanding and exploiting indigenous traditions and legends in the service of a nascent nationalism. Many of them also wrote about colonial society in transition and its effect on Sri Lankan women. A story by Sheila de Silva entitled 'Jacolis Understands Now'⁹⁷ underscores how, the woman protagonist from the village changes in attitudes and

desires once she lives in the city serving in domestic employment. She has moved on, no longer in need of village life or her simple village husband. Whether there is criticism of such changing values or not, the women authors of the period were keenly aware of the transformations in the lives of Sri Lankan women, brought on by the march of nationalism, access to education, awareness and demands for civil and political rights. The challenges and anxieties for this 'new woman' as she forged a new sense of cultural identity and struggled to be an equal participant in independent Sri Lanka were the preoccupations of many women at the time. Ina Trimmer's 'Her Wedding Morning' was one of the literary attempts by a Sri Lankan woman writer to address these issues. And the debates would become more intense and take on a significantly central position within the political and cultural arena of the post-1948, post-independence era, in which, for the Sri Lankan writer in English, the medium of language itself became a site of contention. How Sri Lankan women writers after 1948 dealt with these issues, among their many other concerns, will be the concerns of another anthology.

The research team involved in our project worked in many libraries but mainly found their sources in the National Archives, the Colombo Museum Library, The Jayawardena Centre, the library of the Peradeniya University and the Fr. S. G. Perera Memorial Library of the Tulana Research Centre, Kelaniya. Access to material in Jaffna was hampered by the on-going war. A significant archive of poetry, drama and short stories by Tamil women writers in English before 1948 may exist that we have not had access to.

We have adopted a thematic approach to arranging the anthology. The stories and extracts featured are multi-dimensional but it was possible to arrange the material according to their most

prominent themes. To give the reader an idea of what the stories and extracts are about we have provided titles for them. However, where authors have given their stories original titles, these have been retained, and appear in bold typeface. We have also kept the original spelling and punctuation of the stories. These writings are but a sample of the literary output of women writing in Sri Lanka from 1860-1948. We have drawn our sources from already published material. Women's writing that did not get published for one reason or another, and the literary efforts of women who wrote only for private reading and family enjoyment remain beyond our scope. The varied range of writing in this anthology clearly reflects that women in Sri Lanka turned to writing in English as a forum for their ideas and talents, entertainment and hobby. However, the diversity of themes, styles and voices that emerge force a critical analysis of this writing within a re-conceptualized framework. Such a re-theorizing would *establish* women's writing *within* colonial discourse, taking into consideration the variety of discursive pressures and constraints on both the production and reception of women's writing.

Creative writing by women mostly appeared in the following publications:

Newspapers

The Ceylon Independent

Annals and Christmas Supplements

Plate Annual, The Ceylon Independent Supplement, The Ceylon Times Supplement, The Observer Christmas Supplement, The Easter Annual and the Ceylon Christmas Herald;

Magazines/Journals

The Post and Telegraph, The Sari, The Orientalist, The Ceylon Causarie, The Ceylon Review, Young Ceylon, Young Lanka, The Kandy Young Men and Women, and The Ceylon Scout Pie.

END NOTES

- 1 See for instance Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha (eds.), *Women Writing in India* Vols.1 & 2, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995; Florence Straton (ed.), *African Women's Writing* (work in progress); Brown University Women Writers Project, electronic editions of works by British women writers of the late 19th Century; New York Public Library, "Voices from the Gaps" - instructional site focusing on the lives and works of Women Writers of Color; Alan Jacobs (ed.), *Enough Already: An Anthology of Australian-Jewish Writing*, St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999 which features a number of Australian-Jewish women writers; Fauzia Rafiq (ed.) *Aurat Durbar: Writings by Women of South Asian Origin*, Toronto: Second Story Press, 1995; Samina Rehman (ed. and trns.) *In Her Own Write: Short Stories by Women Writers in Pakistan*, Lahore: ASR, 1994; Olga Kenyon, *Women's Voices: Their Lives and Loves Through 2000 Years of Letters*, London: Constable, 1995.
- 2 Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, London: Hogarth Press, 1929.
- 3 Ibid., p.62.
- 4 Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha, *Women Writing* Vol. 2. p. xv.
- 5 Kumkum Sangari & Sudesh Vaid, Introduction to *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989.
- 6 Katherine Cockin, Introduction to part 1 in *The Routledge Reader in Gender and Performance* (ed.) Lizbeth Goodman with Jane de Gay, London: Routledge, 1998, p. 21.
- 7 Karen Peterson and J. J. Wilson, *Women Artists: Recognition and Reappraisal from the Early Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, London: The Women's Press, 1979, p. 6.
- 8 Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha, *Women Writing* Vol.2, p. xvi.
- 9 A. Habarakadarachchi, 'A Note on Early 20th Cetrury Sinhala Women Writers,' *Pravada* (Sinhala), No.17, January-March 2001, p.173.
- 10 Malathi de Alwis & Kumari Jayawardena, *Casting Pearls... The Women's Franchise Movement in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, 2000. p. 6 & 13.
- 11 For a description of the beginnings of English literature by Sri Lankan writers in newspapers and journals see Yasmine Gooneratne, *English Literature in Ceylon 1815-1878*, Dehiwela: Tisara Prakasakayo, 1968. Chapter 8.
- 12 For instance we know that in 1909, five young Burgher women performed a 'Dialogue on Women's Rights' at a meeting of the Ceylon

- Women's Union. However, the original Dialogue is lost and we have only responses to it. Dr. Mary Rutnam, founder of the CWU, thought it was 'splendid'. Malathi de Alwis and Kumari Jayawardena, *Casting Pearls*, p.3.
- 13 The Dutch Burghers are ancestors of the Dutch who colonized Ceylon from 1656-1796.
- 14 Manel Tampoe, *The Story of Selestina Dias: Buddhist Female Philanthropy and Education*, Colombo, Social Scientists' Association, 1997, p.76.
- 15 See Deloraine Brohier, *Dr. Alice de Boer and some pioneer Burgher Women Doctors*, Colombo, Social Scientists' Association, 1994.
- 16 J. R. Toussaint, "Women's Contribution to Ceylon Literature," Paper presented at the Dutch Burgher Union, 1940, pamphlet reprinted from the *Dutch Burgher Union Journal*, 1941, p. 3.
- 17 H. A. I. Goonetilleke, *Images of Sri Lanka Through American Eyes*, Colombo: United States Information Service, 1976, p. 244
- 18 Carolyn Corner, *Ceylon: The Paradise of Adam*, London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1908.
- 19 Mary E. Steuart, *Everyday life on a Ceylon Cocoa Estate*, London: Henry J. Drane, 1905; Mary Cameron, "A Day on the Totum," *The Times of Ceylon Christmas No.*, 1932.
- 20 *The Ceylon Causerie*, vols. 3 and 4, 1931-1933.
- 21 Deloraine Brohier, *op. cit* pp.42-44.
- 22 Charlotte Cory, *Imperial Quadrille*, London: Harper Collins, 2002
- 23 Bernadine de Silva, (daughter of Rosalind Mendis), personal communication.
- 24 J. R. Toussaint. No information is given as to what French text was translated by Mrs. Lorenz.
- 25 Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*, London: Routledge, 1991.
- 26 Sir James Alwis' *Leisure Hours*, a collection of literary papers and original verse published in 1863 is one such work. See Yasmine Gooneratne, *Englis Literature in Ceylon*, Chapter 10.
- 27 Bernadine de Silva, personal communication.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Yasmine Gooneratne, *op.cit.*, pp.157-60.

- 30 Ibid., Chapter 11. See for instance the poem of Venetia Stambo in this anthology.
- 31 Nancy Wijeykoon, "Our Motherland," *Young Lanka*, vol.1 no. 1, July 1918.
- 32 Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*, London: Zed, and Colombo: Sanjiva Books, 1986, p. 127.
- 33 Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference*, p. 2.
- 34 Ibid, p.3.
- 35 See Kumari Jayawardena, *The White Woman's Burden*, London: Routledge, 1995, p.4. While Jayawardena refers to the many categories of colonial women resident in the colonies, she states: "What has not emerged however, was the reality of the colonial wife, living in a sort of doubly refined bondage – isolated in the home as a woman and alienated in the colony as a foreigner. This book does not deal with them." The women travel-writers featured in our anthology did experience the double burdens of patriarchy and alienation. However, and despite this, they produced literature of high quality. That their writing continues to be neglected in scholarly accounts of gender and imperialism of the period, produces a silence that needs to be redressed.
- 36 Sara Mills, op.cit., p.3.
- 37 Samuel Baker, *Eight Years Wanderings in Ceylon*, London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longman, 1855, Preface, pp. vii-viii.
- 38 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London: Penguin, 1979. p.1.
- 39 Ibid., p.3.
- 40 Ibid, p.197.
- 41 Ibid, p.2.
- 42 Constance Gordon Cumming, *Two Happy Years in Ceylon*, Vols.1 & 2, London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1892.
- 43 Carolyn Corner, *Ceylon: Paradise of Adam, a record of seven years residence in Ceylon*, London: John Lane, The Bodleyhead, 1908.
- 44 Bella Woolf, *How to See Ceylon*, Colombo: The Times of Ceylon, 1914.
- 45 J. R. Toussaint, op.cit., p.10.
- 46 Bella Woolf, *Eastern Star-dust*, Colombo: The Times of Ceylon, 1922.
- 47 Bella Woolf, *From Groves of Palm*, Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1925.
- 48 Bella Woolf, *Eastern Star-dust*, Foreword.

- 49 Clare Rettie, *Things Seen in Ceylon*, London: Seeley, Service & Co. Limited, 1929.
- 50 R. K. de Silva, *Early Prints of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) 1800-1900*, London: Serendib, 1985.
- 51 Ibid., p.19.
- 52 Andrea Feeser, *Constance Fredericka Gordon Cumming: Constructing a Picturesque and Christian Hawaii*, Abstract, University of Minnesota conference, 'Snapshots from Abroad,' November, 1997.
- 53 Julia Gergits, *Reflections of a Happy Life: The Paintings in the Marianne North Gallery at Kew Gardens and their Relationship to her writings*, Abstract, University of Minnesota conference 'Snapshots from Abroad,' November 1997.
- 54 Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994, pp.22-23.
- 55 Edward Said, op.cit., p. 1.
- 56 Bella Woolf, 'Tulips & Palmyras' in *The Times of Ceylon*, Christmas Number, Colombo: The Times of Ceylon, 1934.
- 57 Bella Woolf, *How to See Ceylon*, p. 222
- 58 See E. Watkins, *Housekeeping Chatter*, The Times of Ceylon, 1919; Woolf, 1922
- 59 Bella Woolf, *From Groves of Palm*, p.25.
- 60 Claire Rettie, *Things Seen in Ceylon*, p. 142.
- 61 Clare Rettie, *Things Seen in Ceylon*, p. 144.
- 62 Sara Mills, op.cit., p. 3.
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II

THE COLONIAL GAZE

Constance Fredericka Gordon Cumming

My First Glimpse of the Tropics (1892)

To begin with let me recall my very first impressions of this paradise, when *en route* to the Himalayas, we touched at Point de Galle, and there obtained our first glimpse of the tropics a sight never to be excelled in any subsequent wanderings.

In those days there was no Suez Canal; so travellers were landed at Alexandria, and crossed Egypt to Suez, whence another steamer carried them down the Red Sea to Aden, and thence eastward.

It would be difficult to imagine a contrast more complete, as opposite types of Creation, than the scenes thus successively revealed, like dissolving views in the panorama of travel – Aden and Ceylon – the former like a vision of some ruined world, the latter the very ideal of Eden: there is a stifling atmosphere and scorching rocks, seemingly without one blade of grass whereon to rest the wearied eye; here a balmy sleepy air, laden with fragrance of our rarest hothouse flowers, clustering in densest luxuriance amid tangled mazes of infinitely varied verdure.

Creamy blossoms with large glossy leaves; crimson and gold gleaming like gems, from their setting of delicate green shadow; an endless variety of tropical flowers growing in wild confusion over hill and plain; delicate creepers festooning the larger shrubs, and linking together the tall graceful palms with a perfect network of tendrils and blossoms, or finding their home in every crevice of the rocks, and veiling them with fairy drapery.

Every shrub is covered with young fresh leaves of many tints; for here we have perpetual spring as well as continual autumn, and though the ground is always strewn with withered leaves, new life is for ever bursting forth, in hues which are wont of approaching winter and death. Some trees there are whose sombre foliage is always tipped with young leaves or vivid crimson; others which seem to change their leaves periodically, and which one week burst forth in brilliant scarlet, then gradually deepen to crimson, changing to olive; finally the whole tree becomes green.

Long before we sighted the beautiful Isle, the breath of these tropical forests "met us out on the seas"; and as so many people, who do not happen when nearing the coast to have been favoured with a land-wind, laugh at the idea of "spice-laden breezes," I may as well state that again and again in southern seas, even when out of sight of land (notably when passing Cape Comorin), I have for several hours been rejoiced by a balmy off shore, like the atmosphere of a greenhouse, recalling the delicate scent of primulas. It has been unmistakable as is the fragrance of birch-woods in the Highlands after summer rain, or that of resinous fir-needles in the noonday sun.

As we neared the Isle, some of our party confessed themselves disappointed, even though we were favoured with a clear view of Adam's Peak, rising in solitary beauty above the blue mountain-ranges, right in the heart of the Isle. But in truth these lie so far inland that the unaccustomed eye fails to recognise their height; and the coast, with its endless expanse of cocoa-palm topes fringing the coral strand, is certainly somewhat monotonous as seen from the sea.

Not till we were gliding into the calm harbour did we realise the fascination of the scene, when, from those white sands overshadowed by palms, we espied curious objects coming towards us over the blue rippling water. In the distance they looked like great sea-spiders with very long legs; but as they approached and turned sideways, we saw that they were long narrow canoes, most curiously constructed, each being simply the hollow trunk of a tree, with raised bulwarks stitched on with twisted cocoa-nut fibre. They ride high on the water, and the long oars produce the spider-like effect aforesaid.

Some of the larger canoes are from forty to sixty feet in length, and carry many human beings; but the width is so small that there is never room for two persons to sit abreast. Of course such hollowed trees would inevitably roll over were they not balanced by a long heavy log, which, like the canoe itself, is pointed at both ends, and floats alongside at a distance of about ten feet, being attached to the boat by two strong bamboos tied on at right angles, thus staying the craft fore and aft.

This outrigger, as it is called, is applied on one side only, and must always be kept windward, hence tacking is impossible; so the canoe is constructed to go either backward or forward. The

quaint brown sail forms a triangle between two bamboos, which meet in a point at bow or stern alternately; and when this is hoisted, the canoe literally flies before the breeze – the strength of which is described as a “one-man breeze” or a “two- or three-man breeze,” according to how many human beings must help to steady the boat by adding their weight to that of the floating log, by either standing on it or on the connecting bamboos. Very picturesque are these lithe, rich brown figures, ever and anon half swamped by the waves, as they stand with rope in hand, ready at a moment’s notice to haul down the sail. Most of the fishermen wear wide-brimmed straw hats, and scanty drapery consisting of a couple of gay pocket handkerchiefs – one which, knotted round the shoulders, perhaps displays a portrait of the Pope or of the Madonna, which, together with the small crucifix hanging from the neck, shows them to be members of the Church of Rome.

Even the tiniest canoes are balanced by the floating out-rigger, so that very small children paddle themselves about the harbour in perfect safety; and a number of most fascinating little traders came round us offering fruit and coral for sale. Ere our vessel reached her moorings she was boarded by a crowd of merchants we should call them pedlars – offering us curious treasures; but to us the sellers were far more interesting than their wares.

Mary Thorn Carpenter

Strange Sounds and Colours (c.1892)

Colombo is a Babel of strange sounds and colours, all new and bewildering to me. Fancy a town of one hundred thousand blacks, Sinhalese, Tamils, Mahometans and Hindus, with only fifteen hundred Europeans. The natives wear a costume, if not the strangest, at least the most grotesque that one can imagine. The Singhalese portion of the population are dressed in a dark coat, over a skirt of white muslin, fastened about the waist; their long black hair is brushed smoothly back from the forehead, and secured by a tortoise-shell comb, the only feature which distinguishes the costume worn by the men from that of their wives, so far as I can see. Tea and bananas, our first *chota-hazri*, were served on the piazza of the grand Oriental Hotel by a native servant, dressed in about a shilling’s worth of white cotton cloth. Then we secured our rooms, and spent the morning in the bazaars.

An arcade extends along this low colonnaded caravansary, where the life of the town is concentrated. Here are the shops,

the only apothecary, the only bookstand. Here, on the broad street, are congregated a long line of *jinrikishas*, the hansoms of Colombo. Groups of half-naked coolies squat on the ground, inert and motionless, scarcely distinguishable from a heap of dirty rags. Not allowed to approach nearer the hotel, they await the porter's signal; when, filled with sudden life, they jump' quickly to a place between the shafts, and rush forward with the rickshaw. Here also are the jewellers' shops, where we were shown glittering heaps of precious stones, but found scarcely a good ruby or sapphire among them. Streeter, of London, and the great New York firms purchase all the valuable gems, leaving flawed and imperfect stones for tourists. No sooner has the unwary traveller set foot in the arcade, than these Moormen rush out of their shops, push a printed card of the firm in your hand, and press you to enter no one escapes. Once inside, courtesy provides fans and chairs. You are soon seated at a table before heaps of sparkling rubies, cat's-eyes, pale sapphires, and moonstones. Then, if you like, bargaining begins, and a war of words is waged on the price. The insinuating jewellers produce well-thumbed letters from distinguished customers, Mr. Vanderbilt, or the Rothschilds, while they raise or lower prices in the scale of your enthusiasm. The least interest manifested in a particular stone on your part seals you as their prey. They hunt you for days, steal stealthily towards you at four o'clock tea on the verandah, and thrust the stone, shining on a bit of cotton-wool, directly under your eyes; or suddenly come upon you, just leaving for a drive, retreating from the blow of the porter's stick, only to reappear more bland than before, - always polite, resenting nothing; they finally astonish you by accepting a tithe of the original price, and you are most fortunate if your gem proves not a bit of bright-colored glass. The barefooted rascals are cunning, and I am no match for them as far as I have gone. There are several good

shops for tortoise-shell; here is the cheapest market in the world for shell, which the natives polish but never carve.

In the hotel, you feel transported to another planet. The building itself is not remarkable, resembling a large Italian house, white, low, and surrounded by balconies, with a beautiful garden, rich in flowering shrubs and brilliant trees; but the life and customs of the house are very Oriental, and suited to the tropics. We have an excellent table, - in the morning, *chota-hazri* (tea and toast, bananas and jam) is served in our room at six a.m.; - breakfast (*burra-hazri*, or the big breakfast) comes at nine; tiffin at two; and dinner at the *table d'hote* at eight. The great native *plat* is 'curry'; well, 'curry' means anything, meat or vegetable, accompanied by miscellaneous dishes at the same time. Our 'curry' of meat at dinner last evening was eaten with dried cocoanut, chutney simple and chutney green, Bombay duck (a funny little dried fish to be eaten with your fingers) rice, pulled bread, and turnover of potatoes, fresh yellow coconut, grated fine, white coconut sliced, besides the spices. All our servants are men; and are called, old and young indiscriminately, by one general name, 'boy'. It seems so absurd to call one of these grave, white-bearded Singhalese, a 'boy'.

In the East, you are not expected to do anything for yourself, never to stoop or to cross the room; one call in the corridor brings a black multitude to your door, who know nothing but to serve you quickly and faithfully as a matter of course. I would give much for a picture of the Sinhalese barber who did the shampooing of my hair this morning, - straight as an arrow, in clinging white undergarment reaching to his bare feet, and a loose white coat; his front hair combed straight back under a narrow tortoise-shell comb. They all speak a few words of

several languages, and understand better if one speaks broken English to them. I informed my native barber that I lived in America, not in England; and in wonder, he replied, 'Lady speaks English very, very well'.

Colombo, Christmas Day. I was awake this morning at six o'clock, having it on my mind that Christmas had come in Ceylon. A very few fire-crackers and the church bells from the fort sounded outside my window; but by far the most noise was made by the birds in the garden trees who carolled away without ceasing. B. came in with Christmas greetings, and brought me a dainty *chotabazri*, and soon we were both off in a gharri to the English church for eight o'clock service. The church, mossy and gray, is placed above the roadside in a dense palm grove. Among the congregation already in the church were high-caste native ladies, who occupied the benches, dressed in full low-necked and short-sleeved gowns; their bronzy black necks and arms quite covered with bracelets and jewellery. A drapery of white worked veiling covered the head, reaching to the waist; and a few wore old-fashioned and very scanty satin skirts. We passed many native grandees going to church in coaches, driven by black coachmen, in their white trousers, bare knees, and barefooted. Some Europeans drove very smart dog-carts, with black grooms standing behind, in bright red or yellow turbans and sashes; and all in white, without shoes and stockings. Indeed, everything in this climate is white. Carriages, and also umbrellas, are covered with white linen, as a protection against the sun's rays; even the residents appear in the evening for dinner in white linen clothes of English cut and make, and belted with red sashes, which look very bright in a drawing-room. In church, the service was read by the European chaplain from the fort; and the choir, organist and choristers, are all re-

cruited from our dark brothers, the Singhalese converts. For a reminder of Christmas, the church is festooned in white and green, while a couple of boys outside the open windows are pulling an immense punkah to and fro over the heads of the congregation; and from the doorway steals in the scented air of cinnamon gardens, and birds fly in and out of the windows, joining in carols and chants. 'High noon behind the tamarisks; the sun is hot above us, as at home the Christmas Day is breaking wan...'

December 29. We have driven to Kalanie¹. It was necessary to make a very early start indeed; for in this hot climate the noon-day sun puts an end alike to business and pleasure after ten o'clock. A fresh air blew softly through the trees, stirring up an occasional puff of dust in the streets. Before starting out we picked up our Hindu guide from a motley crowd of natives at the entrance of the hotel, choosing one especially recommended for his linguistic talents. It was soon evident that our information concerning the various points of interest en route would be conveyed to us in a choice vocabulary often very broken, very imperfect, almost unintelligible English words possessed by the guide.

Kalanie is an old Buddhist town fourteen miles distant from Colombo, reached by a narrow road cut through a jungle of luxuriant growth. On the outskirts of the town we passed through several native settlements, meeting numerous vendors carrying large baskets of the green betel-nut on their heads. From the size of the baskets and quantity of leaves one would imagine the supply coming into Colombo in the morning would be sufficient for the entire East; but they assured us not a single leaf would remain unsold by the evening. We passed crowds of children

playing in the narrow streets, where vegetables and fresh fruits are sold on the side-walk by half-clad and wretched natives. We could not drive very fast for fear of running over the small urchins squatting about the roadway, enjoying to their heart's content a game of marbles, played just as children would in our country.

Here and there was a pretty Buddhist home; and sometimes the devout inmates were tracing white arabesque designs in chalk on the hard, yellow ground before their doors, placing at each end of the lines bunches of the roses of Sharon, red and brilliant against the sun-baked earth,- it being the Sinhalese way of honoring a saint's fete. In their Tengyur, Buddhists have particular directions laid down for constructing magical squares and angles around the image of tutelary saints who are thus worshipped. Such figures are varied according to the school of the disciple; some patterns are rounded, some oblong, others square; and traced in colored chalks, they resemble the decorative pavement-drawing used for advertisements in cities.

Farther on a river is crossed by a bridge of boats which earned a title for the architect. The narrow stream is bordered and shaded by thickets of coconut-palms which Mark Twain describes as 'feather-dusters struck by lightning.' I fancy this comes from the slanting angle of their slender trunks, ending in a tuft of feathery leaves, which,- gives the whole country the effect of having been swept by a hurricane. Ten of these coconut-trees are a native's wedding portion to his daughters valuable heritage indeed, when you consider the great possibilities of usefulness to a native household. The Sinhalese rely solely on the leaves for thatching their huts; avail themselves of the juice, called toddy,² for convivial occasions; make the fibre into cloth; to say nothing

of the coconuts themselves, which furnish them milk and capital curry.

At last we reached the jungle. Ever since I had been in this country I had been pining to see a tropical jungle,-a real haunt of wild animals and deadly snakes. On both sides of the road stretched a forest of thick, interminable, green palms and bananas, interwoven with vines and clinging plants. Here were the bread-fruit trees and spreading mangoes, many rare ferns and fantastic bushes, besides the jack-tree, whose mammoth green fruit, shaped like a prickly gourd, runs tear-like down the trunk, instead of growing properly on branches in a conventional manner. It was all indescribably beautiful, and awed one by the intense, the absolute silence of desolation broken only by the bird dwellers of its dark and lonely depths. Nothing could induce a person, other than a native or a most enthusiastic sportsman, to venture ten feet in the tall stems of purple foliage or the green thicket of branching boughs. The vegetation is almost too luxuriant; it goes against man's efforts towards cultivation, as the Arctic barrenness would discourage one in this lack of vegetation. Everything grows so rank, cut away a root, and flowers will cover the earth; a little twig stuck into the ground becomes a tree in a year.

I wish I could take some of the fascinating photographs one could so easily make. Every spot is a picture; and there are so many delicious places and queer scenes that a camera would be better than a volume of letters. Now and then we pass native huts, thatched down to the ground with coconut fibre, where, from the inky blackness of the only opening in the house, a native appears in his ragged waist-cloth, only less dark than his habitation. The only touch of color is the great yellow stem of

bananas hanging in the doorway, cut fresh this morning from his own stock of trees in the jungle. These he may dispose of during the day for a couple of annas, should a passer-by have need of them.

The temples at Kalanie form a collection of rude and neglected shrines, dirty and ill-kept, but interesting as the oldest Buddhist remains in Ceylon. Kalanie was once a famous seat of Buddhist learning, and known all over the Eastern world. What a change, - almost all traces of former grandeur have vanished! The most ancient building is a kilnshaped, white plastered tope, its base half hidden by tall grasses. The interior remains a secret; no permission to visit the shrine has ever been extended to travellers. This tope is claimed by the monks to date with the pyramids; an antiquity very absurd and unfounded according to a recent statement of Max Muller, who places the earliest Vedic hymns about 1500 B. C., and declares that Buddhism stands to Brahminism as Protestantism stands to Roman Catholicism; and to effect such changes and reforms requires centuries. So the enormous antiquity of our Kalanie tope must be brought forward from the youth of the world into her more vigorous age. It has been truly said, 'that Oriental scholarship has wrought an almost miraculous change among the ruins of the past. What was old has become new; what was young has become old.'

Children, beautiful, dark-eyed children, offer us temple flowers, and, on seeing us arrive, cry, in a well-meant effort of welcome, 'Good-bye, lady! good-bye.' They are simply the most lovely children ever seen, with great dreamy eyes and bright expressive faces. They are a great deal prettier and more graceful than our village children, and came swarming around us, darting behind some shelter when warned by the priests in

emphatic Sinhalese and gestures, which we could understand, at least that they must leave our ladyships in peace.

Two priests were being photographed by an amateur under a sacred bo-tree. We observe the mild brethren of the yellow robe, in spite of their perfectly impassive countenances expressing a would-be attainment of an early Nirvana, show that little touch of human vanity, in posing before the camera, which makes the whole world kin. One of the priests afterwards volunteered to show us the temples, where the life and work of Buddha was rudely pictured in bright colours on the walls. After a struggle to conquer English words, which I thought would cause his sudden death, the yellow priest, exhausted from his labors, drew a disconsolate breath, and pointing to the still unexplained pictures and sculptures of his master, Buddha, said: 'Lady, know repeat Edwin Arnold; lady know repeat everything,' - which means that the 'Light of Asia,' containing Buddha's life history, would relieve the poor monk of future efforts to enlighten us. It is a perfect enchantment to be here; the quiet Buddhist temple, the impassive priests, the roguish little fairies of children, and ourselves, - the heirs of all ages, meeting in this distant, mysterious, and sacred place of the ancient religion. But the sun is getting high, and it is quite time we were starting home....

END NOTES

- 1 Kelaniya, the historic temple, 6 miles from Colombo, destroyed by the Portuguese, and later rebuilt and restored before Independence in 1948.
- 2 Toddy, the fermented juice of the coconut palm.

Bella Sidney Woolf

The Soul of the People (1914)

To all who travel in the East comes the thought, what of the life below the surface that is only skimmed by the tourist? Those, whose lot it is to dwell in the East, learn in time something of oriental life and nature, but they also realize that much must ever remain a sealed book.

In the space of this small book there is no opportunity of giving more than a few references to the life of the people. As one passes through the villages, one speculates on the daily joys and sorrows and amusements of the people gossiping in their doorways. Outwardly it is Arcadia, and one is tempted to compare the lot of a Ceylon native – sunshine and rice and ripe fruits and a mat and a chattie or two to make up the sum total of his possessions – with that of the English poor. It comes perhaps as a shock to hear of the large percentage of crimes of violence in Ceylon. Even so the villager is better off than his Western brother. If village life is not outwardly all that it seems, it has its good points. Certainly the children have an ideal life. You may

travel hundreds of miles in Ceylon and never hear a child cry. The small brown black-eyed urchins play about in the dust, with no toys, contented, laughing throughout the long sunny days.

It is the women who have the poorest time in village life. The ordinary villager cultivates his patch of paddy and then lazes on a cane couch before his door, while his wife pounds the paddy, collects and chops the firewood, fetches the water in the heavy chatties, cooks and does every other odd job. Women occupy the traditional oriental subservient position among the village Sinhalese. When they are educated, their influence will do much to elevate the tone of village life. Vernacular Girls' schools are gradually being established in Ceylon.

The Tamil coolie, it must be conferred is a much more law-abiding peaceful person than the Sinhalese. Apart from the hot temper which leads to the flashing out of a knife and murder, there is an undercurrent of malice in the village life. It probably arises from idleness and from "the absence of any effective practical control over the lives of villagers by those who alone can exercise it". The last words of Mr. Justice Ranton's delivered at the end of a heavy calendar of crimes. He added that the Buddhist priesthood should exercise their influence and in this, as well as with all that he so wisely said, one must concur heartily. If the pure tenets of Buddhism were planted in the hearts of the villagers, there would be as much inward as there is now outward peace.

On the other hand there is a pleasant side especially in certain districts. There is a great deal of ceremonial attendant on Buddhist feast days with their offering of flowers and putting on of festive attire. Interwoven with the religion is much

superstition. In village life the *Nekatralla* (astrologer) is consulted on all occasion; he decides on unlucky or lucky days for enterprises of all kinds, and he casts horoscopes. The villages go in dread of *Yakkhas* (devils) – spirits of the dead for the most part. Along the road may be noticed white Swami Stones below a Swami tree – usually a Bo-tree, which shows the blend of Buddhism and Hinduism. Here the Tamil coolies propitiate the gods by sacrifices of goats and chickens.

There are, of course, many ceremonies attendant on birth, marriage and death but there is no space here to enlarge on them. Marriage among the Kandians has its peculiar features. It can either be in “binna” or in “diga.” In the former case the husband lives with the wife’s family – in the latter the wife lives with the husband’s family. Kandian divorce laws are so enlightened that adultery of *either* party, desertion, inability to live happily together and mutual consent are all valid grounds. It is far less easy to obtain a divorce in Low-country marriages.

A slight digression from these desultory notes must be made before the writer and the reader part company. It is in the nature of an appeal. As you traverse this beautiful island, consider the life and limb of the villager. The “road hog,” who puts life in jeopardy and destroys the peace of the country-side is markedly on the increase in Ceylon.

Residents and tourists are alike offenders. In remote corners of Ceylon the car is still an amazing apparition. Consequently the people on the road are often flustered and rush wildly from side to side, proving a source of danger to themselves and to the motorist. Moreover, even in the villages people “walk along thinking of nothing at all” and their apparent disregard of the

hooter is merely as a result of their trancelike state. A villager will appear to be looking at the car when in reality he is blind and deaf to its approach.

The author has traversed Ceylon by car, and considers it the best and most enjoyable means of seeing the island, so it is not in the spirit of the anti-motorist that this is written. It is merely an earnest reminder that the world was not made for motorists and that “scorching” along the crowded Eastern roads is one of the worst forms of selfishness in the calendar of vices.

And now the last words must be written. If the Guide has helped any one traveler to fuller enjoyment and understanding of the island and its inhabitant, it will not have been written in vain.

After several years spent among its people, one has the memories of sincere friendships from the educated classes, of faithful service from those in humbler positions, of many acts of kindness touched by romantic feelings so characteristic of the East. And the sense of mystery that pervades all Eastern life only enhances its fascination. It intensifies the longing that comes under the grey skies of the West for the sun-dappled roads beneath the palm-trees, the shrill chirping of the crickets, the graceful gaily-clad people passing up and down on brown and noiseless feet, the tom-toms beating fitfully, the lonely jungle roads, the scented moonlight turning the palms to silver, the fragrance, the languor all the glamour of the land of the never-ending summer.

III

A WOMAN'S JOURNEY

Constance Fredericka Gordon Cumming

Three Weeks of Water-gipsying (1892)

It was in the middle of February that we embarked for the three weeks of "water-gipsying," every hour of which proved so full of novelty and interest. A beautiful drive from St. Thomas's College, Colombo, brought us to the Mutwal river, or Kelany-ganga, where our boat-home awaited us.

Crossing that broad majestic stream, we entered one of the canals cut by the Dutch, parallel with the sea, and thereon glided smoothly into the wide shallow lake of Negombo, at the north end of which we anchored for the night, at a picturesque village of the same name twenty-three miles from Colombo.

Along the canal we passed a succession of winding streams and marshy places with special beauties of their own, and several small lagoons lovely glassy pools covered with pure white water-lilies, and one variety with petals just tipped with lilac and the under side of the leaf purple. These lakelets are fringed with various species of graceful palms, with an undergrowth of luxuriant ferns and handsome shrubs; while the marshes are

glorified by the rich glossy foliage of the mangrove, with clusters of white blossom and large green fruit resembling oranges, but very poisonous.

These eventually turn scarlet, as do also the pine-like fruit of the Pandanus or screw-pine (so called from the corkscrew pattern in which its leaves grow from the stem). The roots of this plant are among the oddest vagaries of the vegetable kingdom. Here and there a patch of the flame blossom, called the Sinhalese *eribuddu*, glowed really like fire as the setting sun shone on its scarlet pea-shaped flowers set in a crown of scarlet leaves. Then there was a sort of prickly acanthus with large blue flowers, also pea-shaped, and a sort of acacia with bright yellow star-shaped blossom.

Negombo Lake is about four miles in width, and all round us were picturesque canoes, whose owners were diligently fishing in its quiet waters. They have a curious method of frightening fish into the net, which is held by some of the men, while others wave long fringes of torn plantain-leaves or cocoa-palm similar to those which are hung up as decorations at any festival. The fish thus alarmed are expected to jump net-wards. At night the fishers carry a blazing torch downwards, so that the glare is all on the water. The torch consists of a fagot of sticks, and from its centre projects a long sharp knife with which to impale any large fish which is seen resting in the shallows.

This was our first night on the water, and to our dismay we found that we had neglected to bring our mosquito-nets, an omission which left us all wholly at the mercy of those venomous little insects, who all night long hummed a chorus of delight as they took it by turns to feast on us, their helpless

victims. Of course their onslaughts involved a sleepless night and a feverish morning; but ere the next sunset we extemporised very efficient nets by hanging up muslin petticoats, which effectually protected our heads, though an incautious foot occasionally revealed itself and suffered accordingly.

Before sunrise we were once more under way, and leaving the lake, turned into a most picturesque canal running right through the native town, of houses embowered in large-leaved tropical shrubs, overshadowed by tall palms, and the water covered with varied boats and canoes.

Leaving the town, our quiet water-way still lay beneath overarching palm-trees, and between banks matted with the dark glossy foliage and large lilac blossoms of the goat's-foot ipomea, a handsome marine convolvulus which forms a thick carpet, binding the arid sandbanks along the seaboard.

Presently we crossed the mouth of the Maha-Oya or great stream, a broad majestic river, gliding silently to join the ocean. It was a vision of wonderful peace to look along its calm waters to the equally calm ocean, whose margin was only defined by the periodical uprising of a great green rolling wave which broke in a dazzling surf with a deep booming roar.

That strange solemn sound continued for hours to reach us from the unseen ocean, as, turning into the Ging-Oya, another most lovely stream, we followed its windings, almost parallel with the sea, which yet was effectually hidden by a narrow bank of luxuriant jungle, and tall palms which cast their cool deep shade on the glassy waters. But for that ever-recurring reminder of "The league-long rollers thundering on the shore,"

there was not a sound to break the silence, save only the rustle of dry reeds or the gentle ripple of our boat sailing with a light breeze. Even the shy creatures which haunt these banks were undisturbed, and amongst others we observed several large iguanas (or, as the Sinhalese call them, *kabragoya*), huge lizards from five to six feet in length. Though very prettily marked, they are ungainly-looking creatures, and I confess to having felt somewhat qualmish the first time I came suddenly upon one in the forest; but they are quite harmless if unmolested. They have, however, a good weapon of defence in their strong tail, with which they can inflict a blow not quickly forgotten. They feed on ants and insects, and are amphibious – being equally at home on marshy ground or in water.

Glorious large butterflies skimmed lightly over the water – some with wings like black velvet, and others of the most lustrous metallic blue; and kingfishers, golden orioles, and other birds of radiant plumage, flitted over the waters. One bird something like a plover is known as the “Did he do it?” because of its quaint inquisitive cry, which seems ceaselessly to reiterate this question.

As the evening came on, we were treated to a concert of croaking frogs, and jackals alternately barking and calling in eerie tones. Finally we anchored for the night beneath an overhanging tree which was evidently specially favoured by the fire-flies, for their tiny green lamps glittered in every corner of the dark foliage, ceaselessly flashing to and fro in such mazy dance, that when we looked beyond them to the quiet stars, it seemed to our bewildered eyes as if these too were in motion! I use the word fire-flies in deference to a common error. In reality these fairy light-bearers are tiny beetles which carry their dainty green

lantern beneath the tail, and veil or unveil its light at pleasure, as a policeman does his bull's-eye lantern – hence the intermittent light which vanishes and reappears several times in a minute.

From the Ging-Oya we passed by a short canal into the Lunu-Oya, another even more lovely river; but first we crossed a fascinating lagoon literally covered with water-lilies of various size and colour, small white ones, larger ones like cups of creamy ivory, with green calyx; exquisite pink lilies with brown calyx, and the under side of the leaf of a rich purple. Besides these there were myriads of tiny white blossoms no bigger than a silver penny, which, together with their flat floating leaves, were so like lilliputian lilies, that we could scarcely believe they were not, till we pulled up a cluster and found that leaves and flowers all grew in a bunch from one little rootlet near the surface instead of each having its own stem, three to four feet in length, and smooth as a piece of India-rubber tubing, rising from the bed of the lake.

Necessity, they say, is the mother of invention; and great was my satisfaction when, having lost my black hair-ribbon, I found that one of these half-dried stems answered the purpose admirably, being rather elastic and perfectly flexible. But the water-gipsies soon discovered many such treasures in the jungle. The smooth tendrils and filaments of various climbing plants supplied us with excellent string several yards in length; indeed, we found lianas as thin as thread, and quite as pliant, hanging without a twist or a knot from the top of the tallest trees; and as to pins, we had only to select the length we required from the too abundant supply of needle-like thorns, which in truth are so marked a characteristic of the Ceylonese forest, that one might almost accept it as proof that here indeed was the original Paradise for

notwithstanding all its wonderful beauty, Ceylon assuredly bears a double share of the curse anent thorns and briers!

We soon discovered that most of the jungle flowers we saw and coveted were thus guarded, – the jessamine – like stars of crimson ixora, the fragrant blossoms of the wild lemon, and many another. There is even one sort of palm whose whole stem bristles with long sharp needles. And besides these dangers, we soon discovered that almost every branch of every flowering shrub is the home of a colony of large red ants, who glue the leaves together, entirely concealing their nests; so that however carefully you may have looked for them, no sooner do you venture cautiously to gather the flower which tempts you, than in a moment a legion of vicious red ants rush forth from their ambush, and covering your unwary arm, swarm into the innermost recesses of your sleeve, all the time biting most painfully.

What with ants biting and mosquitoes and small sand-flies feasting on us, we certainly suffered a good deal, the irritation produced being such that we had simply to take our hair-brushes and brush our poor arms and shoulders to try and counteract it.

Another fruitful source of irritation was “prickly heat,” which is the effect produced on many people by constant perspiration. The sufferer receives no pity, as he is told it is the best safeguard against fever; but nevertheless the discomfort is excessive, and various remedies are recommended, of which the simplest, and, I think, the most efficacious, is every morning to rub one’s self all over with limes, cut in half, and presently sponge off the healing juice. A thin solution of either alum or powdered borax

applied with a feather is also beneficial – a piece of alum the size of a walnut, dissolved in a pint of water, being sufficient to last several days.¹

We were very fortunate in escaping more serious dangers. One evening, as we sat on deck on the bright starlight, I suddenly observed a gruesome centipede, fully seven inches long, coiled up in my lap! With sudden impulse the Bishop flicked it with his handkerchief, when it fell to the deck and escaped, leaving us with a horribly all-overish sensation of centipedes in every corner. Happily neither it nor any of its family favoured us with another visit. It is really wonderful, in a country where venomous creatures abound as they do in Ceylon, how very rarely one sees any of them, and how quickly one acquires the instinctive habit of beating the grass or withered leaves before one’s steps, in order to warn possible snakes to wriggle out of the way, which they seem always ready to do if they have time. Indeed, the mere vibration of a booted footstep generally suffices to give them the alarm – the sufferers from snake-bite being almost invariably barefooted natives, whose silent approach is unnoticed.

END NOTES

1. If there is abrasion of the skin, equal parts of oxide of zinc and carbonate of magnesia is very soothing.

Bella Sidney Woolf

By Waterway to Negombo (1925)

Robert Louis Stevenson says: "One thing in life seeks for another; there is a fitness in events and places.... The effect of night, of any flowing water, of the open ocean, calls up in the mind an army of desires and pleasures. Something, we feel, should happen, we knew not what, yet we proceed in quest of it."

Therefore I never saw Kelani River without longing to have a boat on it, never saw glimpses of the canal without longing to pursue it to Negombo. For just as Stevenson felt that "tracts of young fur and low rocks that reach into deep surroundings, particularly torture and delight me"; so do rivers and their tributaries and cracks and canals – particularly narrow flower-fringed waterways allure and enchant me. The dream came true. One Saturday morning we – seven of us and a crew of two embarked at the Victoria bridge in a motor launch, surrounded by a crowd of interested spectators of all ages. Picnic baskets, thermos flasks, raincoats, sun-shades, cushions all were piled into the launch, and we set off on our adventure.

The journey along the Kelani, in spite of palm-fringed banks, took my thoughts to many a day spent in "Sweet Themmes" at home. For here and there were grassy banks, which might have led to a rose-wreathed bungalow. But there the illusion ended. In many cases they led to a dhoby drying ground. The chief delight of this part of our trip was the fresh breeze created by our launch. How welcome such a breeze can be is only realised after several weeks of the hottest hot weather in Colombo. We passed on the right bank, the entrance to the "old" canal – sometimes known as the Hendala Canal. This was made by the Dutch, and is of little use nowadays, though a certain number of "padda" boats negotiate it with local produce.

One or two of the "padda" boats, with brown sails set, came bearing down on us along the river, and we lamented that the camera could not secure a successful "snap" owing to the vibrations of our modern mode of progression. The thrill of the voyage began when we reached the sand bar across the Kelani and, on the right, the entrance to the canal. Here began our Stevensonian thrills. We are bold navigators about to explore the unknown creeks of a river, hostile tribes may inhabit its banks, and poisoned arrows be our portion.

And with such foolishness, ill-befitting our ages, we entered the canal. From that moment we slid into tropical fairyland. Looking back I see a succession of visions of palm groves on either side dappled with sunlight, nature houses bowered in scarlet shoe-flowers and golden sun-flowers, reeds rustling and thousands of white lotus lilies fringing the waterway and a musical wave following our track.

This same musical wave had its humorous side. The inhabitants of the canal bank seemed to be amphibians. The greater part of the population was bathing. Grandfathers, grandmothers, fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts and babies, all sorts of conditions and ages, were disporting themselves in the not-too-clean water. Most of them, intent on the boat and its occupants, did not notice the wave; others, wrapped in that impenetrable absorption which is characteristically Eastern, noticed neither the boat nor the wave, and were suddenly engulfed. We enjoyed watching their surprise, or their panic-stricken escape from what might have been a tidal wave, judging by their alarmed faces. A dog, more alert than its master, saw the wave coming and developed such panic that he broke his chain and escaped to the "hinterland."

One old man, who jeered at us, was delightfully punished by the wave. He was in a boat. In fact, he reminded me forcibly of

"There was an old man in a boat,
Who said, 'I'm afloat, I'm afloat.'"

He was a respectable looking elderly person, wearing a tortoiseshell comb and a minute knot of grizzled hair. He sat in an outrigger canoe on two large cushions, in great luxury. Something in our appearance seemed to amuse him, and he evidently directed some racy and uncomplimentary witticism at our craft. He did not see the wave. After we had passed him with dignity, and he was still gazing at us and pointing a contemptuous forefinger, the wave of our creating anxious to avenge us, leapt into his boat, swamped his cushions, and left him amazed, sadder, wiser and politer – we hope.

The next object of interest was more dignified and one I shall never forget – an ancient villager bathing; only his head and shoulders rose from water – calm, detached, his silver hair and beard gleamed in the sun – an Eastern Neptune. He clasped in his arms a huge, brown chatty, and immobile, unblinking, he watched our progress.

A "padda" boat, towed by half-a-dozen men pleased us greatly, the bronzed, lithe figures, clad in a minimum of loin cloth, straining at the rope; the steersman with his hands on the filter silhouetted against the bank, a scarlet scarf wound around his head, and a lazy, brown figure lying in the prow. Every man a miracle of unstudied grace. Compare a bargee at home. Probably the virulence of their language would be the only point of similarity. My thoughts flew to Holland and her canals, and the hours spent once on a trekschuit floating through that flat pleasant land, with the windmills and the black and white cows and the sun, sinking like an orange on the horizon. The Hollanders floating along the "old" canal must often have thought with a pang of their far-off country which so few of them were destined to see again.

The canal which we pursued has an interesting history. It is the Hamilton Canal, and dates from 1802. Through the kindness of Mr. Reimers, Government Archivist, I have gleaned some interesting information about it. Gavin Hamilton, Agent of Revenue and Commerce, Colombo, was responsible for its construction. He was one of the first Civil Servants of the colony, and arrived in 1798 with North, the first British Governor of Ceylon.

There is a vast tract of waste land – 6000 acres – lying on the right bank of the canal, called the Mutu Raja Wela swamp. In the days of the Portugese this was said to be a land not flowing with milk and honey, but waving with paddy of the most productive kind. It is interesting to read from the reports of 1767 what befell this fertile land. The Hon. Dissawe writes:

"This tract of land, according to the report of the natives, was cultivated in the times of the King of Cotta, and, not long before the coming of the Portugese (1518),² it was known as Mutte Raja Wel Elle, that is to say, 'A pearl of a royal wide-stretching field.' The Portugese then began to cut a canal from the Negombo Lake to the Kelaniya, through the tract of land, and we undertook this and several uncompleted works of the Portugese, chiefly this canal, which has caused the greatest disservice to the inhabitants."

The result of cutting the canal was that the salt water flowed in and ruined the paddy fields evermore.

From the Dutch Council proceedings of 3rd June, 1767, it appears that His Excellency the Governor had consulted the Dissawe de Costa and the inhabitants of the district, who declared that the swamp could be converted into a fertile district by the construction of a dam and sluices in order to keep for all time the salt water, bring in the necessary fresh water, and hold it as long as necessary, and drain the overflow. His Excellency continued that, having considered the great benefits that would accrue not only to the country, but to the "good inhabitants" if the work of reclaiming the land was successful, he had ordered Hon. Dissawe to undertake the work which, with Heaven's blessing, had so far progressed that a beginning had been made with the ploughing and planting of nearly four thousand morgen (1 morgen equals nearly 2 acres).

But by the time the British had obtained possession of Colombo these fertile fields had reverted to a brandish swamp. The British government seems to have been struck by the possibilities of these fields, and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Gavin Hamilton, Agent of Revenue and Commerce, put forward a scheme for reclaiming the land.

Of this scheme the Hamilton Canal is the only abiding result. Begun in 1802, it was completed in 1804 by which time the work of the reclamation was abandoned owing to the war with the Kandyans.

Governor writes as follows in approving the recommendation of the Board of Revenue and Commerce:

"I entirely concur with you in opinion as to the propriety of suspending the future execution of the great plan during the continuance of the war (with the Kandyans).... It appears from a paper of the Dissawe De Costa that the marsh was once reduced into a cultivable and flourishing state which could not have taken place were there anything unconquerably hostile to production in its soil. Its subsequent return to sterility and insalubrity is easily accounted for by the negligent and capricious habits of the Dutch Government which allowed the noble dyke (of which the ruins still remain, and are declared by Mr. Atkinson to be repairable at no very great expense) to be broken and destroyed."

It seems extraordinary that the Dutch, those skilled and enthusiastic dyke and canal constructors, should have proved so lax and inefficient in the case of a valuable tract of land. It is obvious from these reports that the damage of cutting the canal

and letting in the sea water originated with the Portugese and not with the Dutch.

But while we are investigating the past history of canals the motor boat is making its way past the famous swamp and along the Hamilton's Canal. We passed several toll bridges, with the toll bar that seems to belong to a bygone day.

Innumerable little creeks and backwaters attract and tempt us. Some of them are pathways of white lotus lillies. One in particular leads up to a charming bungalow with deep eaves, reminiscent of the willow-pattern plate. At other times the canal broadens out into a small lake, reed grown. "The Norfolk Broads," cries one of the passengers.

There is, in truth, a strange and strong resemblance. But it must be confessed that lunch is the beacon that prevents us from romantic exploring. We have planned to consume it on the lagoon and time is flying. We were obliged to stop many a time to disentangle weeds from the propeller, and at one time the steering wheel jammed. The reason was found to be a Thermos flask, which had rolled down and wedged itself under the wheel unknown to the steersman. This caused considerable diversion, delay and damage to the flask.

We left the canal and entered the broad waters of the lagoon, sparkling in the sunshine. We anchored our craft and proceeded to enjoy a meal flavoured by a fresh breeze, free from mosquitoes and flies, the dancing waters around us bounded by the palm-fringed shore. Who would eat in stuffy hotels if lunch on the beach could be his portion?

Then we set forth again and rejoiced once more in the slight sailing padda boats and a fisherman in his catamaran fishing with a line. He had the most extraordinary headgear, a topee which developed the shape of a Roman soldier's helmet, and a coat which hung on festoons around him. He was grotesque. We preferred, from an artistic point of view, another fisherman weaving a broad-brimmed straw hat and very little else, a splendid bronze figure motionless in his fragile craft.

The shallowness of the lagoon was proved to us in an extraordinary way. We met two men walking along in the middle of the lagoon and pushing a raft of firewood through the water. It was a delightful variation of the ordinary wood cart to meet the "wood boat." The tower of Negombo Church rose from the trees on our right, and we knew our goal was in sight. Soon the clustering houses by the quay side, and a flaming flamboyant tree came into view, and in a few minutes we ran alongside. Our trip was over.

But the memory of it endures – palms and lotus lillies, mangroves, and a vista of green banks sliding by. Some day we must return to explore the backwaters and the lilly-spread creek that leads to the broad-eaved house. For there romance still lingers, and the dust-strewing car is never heard or seen.

END NOTES

- 2 The Portuguese occupied Ceylon from 1518 to 1656, and the Dutch from 1656 to 1796

Tulips and Palmyra, (1934)

Rapturous creatures like poets have written of cooling steams and luscious fruits and draughts of Samian other wines. Plain, red-faced men have expatiated forcibly on the delights of a certain pull of beer at the "Pig and Whistle" after getting the Muddleton-cum-Dullbridge eleven out, just as the hour struck for drawing stumps. All these, in different ways, can convey a sense of exquisite refreshment, but none of them has told me of the freshness that runs through your fevered veins as you wake up in the dawn as you reach Elephant pass and, leaning from the window of the night-mail, drink in the breath of the jungle.

There was never a draught purer, cooler, more fragrant. The trees and bushes and ground are steeped and drenched in dew; sparkling, glittering, twinkling millions of drops flash into your eyes as the train passes. Birds dash out from the undergrowth, butterflies dart into the light and vanish. Here are cascades of white blossoms hanging from a tree-top; there is a mantle of yellow flowers. You draw in great draughts of air as if you could never have enough of it, and at last, returning to your sleeping compartment to prepare for arrival at Jaffna, you feel one with him who

...on honey-dew has fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

As the train rolls on, you can see the jungle disappear and palmyra palms advance in battalions, their dark fans spread against the golden dawn. Then Jaffna station the bustle of arrival—the crowd of Tamil passengers the sorting out of luggage—and once again you are driving along the familiar

streets, past the gabled Dutch houses, the neatly-pallisaded Tamil dwellings; along the white, dusty roads, marveling at the strangeness and remoteness of this world from the riotous luxuriance and picturesque untidiness of the low-country.

Truly, the Dutch set their mark indelibly on Jaffnapatam, and indissolubly linked in my mind are tulips and palmyras. If you sit out on the broad verandah of King's house, in the moonlight, you can see visions and dream dreams. You can hear the rustle of the voluminous petticoats of those "dear dead women" who, far from their own land made a new home for husband and children. Percival, in his history, is uncomplimentary to the Dutch women, but I have a fondness and an admiration for any woman who in those days shared her husband's fortunes in the East and braved dangers and discomforts.

You can picture the Mevrouws and Mejuffrows dressed in their hot, unsuitable clothes, with their golden "oorijzer" covered with a lace cap, their corals and their massive earrings.

It is interesting to read Percival's reference to the type of costume worn by Dutch women: "On my first arrival on the Island they dressed in the Dutch manner, with long waists and stiff high stays which to me appeared very grotesque and awkward."

Evidently, the Dutch ladies were of the same opinion as Captain Percival, for he goes on to describe the sensible change which took place in their costume; "The dress worn by many of them, which is a mixture of the European and native fashion, is light and pretty. It consists of a piece of fine cotton cloth wrapped around the body and fastened under the arms, which forms the under-dress. Above it is worn a jacket of fine muslin or calico

and a petticoat of the same; over the whole is thrown the *kabey* or muslin robe, with sleeves fitted close to the arms and reaching down to the wrist, with five or six buttons of gold or precious stones. A long or short *kabey* is worn, according to fancy. Some wear their hair loose, and others in a wreath around the back of their heads. These wreaths are fastened with gold pins known by the name of *conde*, very large, like skewers of a peculiar shape, and bent at the end like the handle of a table-spoon; they serve to fasten a plate of gold or tortoiseshell¹ which compresses the hair and keeps it firm on the back part of the head. To this head-dress they frequently add, by way of ornament, a wreath of the Arabian jessamine, a small white flower of a most exquisite scent, which is also worn in garlands around their necks."

It is a pity that there were no artists to put on record the portraits of those who wore so picturesque a dress.

One likes to follow these folks in their daily life. Doubtless their kitchens gleamed with copper and brass and were as spotless as those of their native land. They cooked "wafeless" and "paffertjes" and other far less digestible dishes for their hearty spouses, who drank far more "Hollands" than was good for them and smoked like chimneys.

On Sundays they gathered in the Church, which is little changed from those days. Doubtless, during the long sermon, the children gazed with as much delight as we do on the quaint representation of King David, in an advanced stage of baldness, playing on the harp. This delightful figure on the organ gallery is alone worth a visit to Jaffna. The psalmist is making music from a book of his own works written in Greek and lying on an

eighteenth century reading-desk. There is no trace of the romantic slayer of Goliath about the elderly musician. Even David may not have restrained the children from whispering, as the sermon meandered on, and they were framed in by their parents, who valiantly strove to keep from nodding themselves. After Church, everyone would gather in groups and gossip, some young ones lingering behind to exchange shy glances or hurried words of love before being swept home to the family dinner.

The lives of these men and women were short. If you read the inscriptions on their tombs you will see that among all those whose deaths are recorded in the Dutch Church, only one woman, Barta Augustin, reached the age of 56. The rest is a pathetic record: Margarita Romans, wife of the minister, Bartholomew Heynens, 18 years; Susanna Serringiers, wife of Commandeur Floris Blom, died at the age of 24. Susanna was born at Haarlem in 1669 and died at Jaffnapatam in 1693, so she made the long journey from Europe at an early age. She married Floris Blom in 1686. Susanna Anthonia Van Pelt is the only one who receives the epithet "dear wife." She was the wife of Commandeur Jacob de Jong and she died at the age of 24. Maria Sophia Wirmelskircher is described as the "beloved wife" of David de Bock, Secunde and Dessave. She was 45 years old. Hendrina Philippina Vos, wife of Thomas Nagel, lived only 20 years. Thomas consoled himself with two more wives. Johanna Wirman, wife of a merchant, lived to be 28. As stated, Barta Beckering reached the age of 56. She was the wife of Augustus Augustin. She must have appeared to be a Mother in Israel to her generation.

But it is useless to dwell too much on the sombre side of the picture. I like to visualize the families celebrating St. Nikolass (the Dutch pre-Christian festival; on 5th December) with all the zest that has survived for centuries carrying into a foreign land the merry-makings for young and old. Doubtless they baked the same gingerbread fingers, with currants for eyes and nose and mouth, as one buys in Holland to-day, and the children, little Mietjes and Jantjes, looked forward feverishly to the presents which Sinteklaas (we have adopted him as Santa Claus) would bring them.

There are few moments more magical on a moonlight night than looking out from the mission coral walls of the Dutch fort. Here, surely, ghosts of the past are around us. And yet in the brilliant scented moonlight there is nothing eerie or unpleasant. Here wandered Hendrina and Jacob and Margarita and Bartholomew; here they sat and talked, their thoughts far from the level lands of Jaffna, the reed-grown lagoons, the neat cultivation so reminiscent of their tidy native land. Pink and white oleanders shed their fragrance, instead of hyacinths, and suriyas or lotus flowers took the place of tulips.

When I first drove out to the salt-pans in Jaffna, a villager threw a bunch of lovely pink lotus lilies into the dog-cart there were no motor cars in those days.

I believe that Magdalena or Petronella or Barta fingered the lotus lilies lovingly, as she put them in a vase and likened them to the pink tulips growing in her homeland.

"Il ne change pas de pays qui voit toujours le soleil."

But the thoughts of the Dutch must have sometimes wandered with longing to the misty blueness of Holland, to the Dykes and the "polders", the black and white kine standing in the rays of the setting sun, the yellow cheeses of Edam, the streets of Amsterdam and Haarlem, the "trekschuyten" floating lazily down the green canals, and the moonlight over the Zuyder Zee.

END NOTES

- 1 obviously the "oorijzer" is worn in Holland.

Clare Rettie

Kandy (1929)

KANDY that romantic stronghold—once the scene of treachery and bloodshed, is now a peaceful little town in a charming setting of mountain, lake, and rich vegetation. It is sometimes hot and glaring during the day, but the mornings and evenings are delightfully cool. The Queen's (there are other good hotels) is a pleasant place at which to stay, while exploring the town and surrounding country.

The journey by rail from Colombo is fascinating. At first the train passes through low country, with native villages dotted about; or by groups of thatched huts, the owners of which are busy on the terraces of the vivid green paddy—or rice-fields. One or two Sinhalese may be seen, in terrifying positions, hanging by bare brown legs, on the tall Palmyra palms, from which they extract sap to boil down, and crystallize into a coarse sugar. Others are gathering areca nuts, to mix with lime made from calcined shells, and betel leaf; this mixture they chew, an unpleasant habit which accounts for the ugly red stains on the lips of nearly

every native. Some of the men may be cutting huge leaves from Talipot palms, to thatch their huts, or to use for other purposes to which that most profitable palm can be put; while their women gather oranges, limes, and fresh coco-nuts, to sell to thirsty passengers. There are glimpses of tea and rubber estates; of cardamoms and coffee bushes; of great clumps of snowy *Datura* lilies, amber-coloured lantana, and trails of lovely *gloriosa superba*."

As the train mounts, higher and higher, the scene changes. Mighty crags begin to frown above, sheer precipices can be seen below, the line zigzags sharply, and the wild beauty of the landscape increases. Away in the distance the high mountains are veiled in a soft purple mist, dark patches of jungle on their sides. Waterfalls dash, foaming, into the depths below, and the route skirts so perilously near the edge of an abyss, that the nervous passenger is apprehensive, until the top of the pass is reached, and there is a less sensational run into Kandy.

By the shady banks of a lake which lies in a hollow, sheltered by low, forest-clad hills — European bungalows, Native houses, and places of business are scattered; in the distance the river—the Mahaweliganga—flows tumultuously over rocks, and the Matale and other hills stand out, sharply silhouetted against the cloudless sky.

Though Kandy, for a time the capital of Ceylon, has always been so closely connected with Buddhism, there are not many temples of interest in it, with the exception of the far famed *Dalada Maligawa*, where the tooth relic, so honoured by all good Buddhists, is jealously guarded. The temple is not beautiful, but its architecture has a certain interest, being of an ancient native

type. An octagonal tower, near the entrance, was added by the last king of Kandy, who used to watch the Perahera pageant from its balcony. It is surrounded by an ornate wall, and a moat.

Inside the Temple the air is heavy with the sickly perfume of champac flowers, jasmine, tube roses, and other scented blossoms, brought as offerings by the devout. Yellow-robed priests move about softly, their austere faces hidden by the fans they carry; worshippers glide in and out; irreverent tourists chatter, oblivious of any annoyance they may cause. Near the entrance there are images of Buddha, in the three conventional attitudes, and many fantastic carvings and frescoes, mostly showing the awful doom awaiting evil-doers in the next world.

By a door elaborately inlaid with silver and ivory, the Holy of Holies is reached. The sacred tooth (supposed to be one of Buddha's) is kept there, that strange relic of which so many thrilling tales have been told. It is not genuine, it could not be, for besides the fact that the Portuguese carried off the original (a spurious one was afterwards palmed off on the credulous people) no human being, not even a Buddha! ever had such a tooth. It is really a bit of discoloured ivory, two inches in length and more than one in diameter—but it continues to be an object of reverence to millions. Only on rare occasions can the relic itself be seen; the *dagoba*, however, a bell-shaped shrine, standing on a silver table, is visible through metal bars. There are six smaller shrines inside it, of pure gold and sparkling with jewels. In the most gorgeous of all the tooth rests, supported on a golden lotus flower.

A very interesting part of the Temple is the Library. It contains a large collection of ancient manuscripts on religious, historical,

and other subjects. They are in Pali or Sanskrit, written or rather pricked by a stylus, on strips of palm leaf. The strips are strung loosely together between elaborately decorated covers, several of which are thickly studded with gems. It is stifling in the Temple, the heat and constant movement are tiring, and it is a relief to get out into the purer air.

Kandy was so often burnt and destroyed, in its troubled past, that few of the old buildings are left. There is, however, a part of the Palace remaining and the Audience Hall, with its tall, richly carved columns of teak, and rather florid decorations, is really interesting. It is still in use, for the British Government, probably wishing that it should continue to stand for order and authority in the eyes of the Sinhalese, cleverly turned it into the Supreme Court of Justice.

In modern Kandy there are several European shops, banks, etc., also a Museum, full of specimens of Kandyan Arts and Crafts. Those buildings are necessary, of course, but look just a little out of keeping in such romantic surroundings. The Native shops are much like those of Colombo, except that some of them contain fine silver work, peculiar to Kandy, and it is still sometimes possible to pick up in them antique pieces of Sinhalese jewellery, of unusual design—at a price!

In a charming house (the Pavilion) the Governor lives, when in Kandy; it stands, white and cool, in shady gardens where it is a joy to linger. There one sees gay green lizards, or tiny geckoes, darting through the wealth of shrubs and flowers. Occasionally a harmless snake may slither across the path, bright dragon flies and gaudy butterflies flutter everywhere; birds warble joyously on the branches; and the insects on the plants contrive to look so

like the leaves and twigs -on which they settle, that it comes as a surprise when they are seen to shift their position.

The sunsets are glorious. At times the distant hills are bathed in amber and gold, or tinted a rosy pink, and to wander round the lake on a moonlight night is to stray into fairyland. The stars, always so brilliant in the tropics, shine above the great spreading trees that throw dark, alluring shadows on the paths; fireflies glitter amongst the branches, and the graceful bamboos whisper softly as they sway in the scented air.

In the cool of the early morning, it is very pleasant to stroll along, above the level of the lake, by Lady Horton's walk (so called after the wife of a former Governor), from which wooded path there is a wide view of the fertile valley of Dumbara, and lovely smiling country, away to the imposing mountains beyond. Lady Ridgeway's walk is also one that should not be missed — but, indeed all the paths that lead round, or about, the lake are most engaging.

When walking in Kandy it is always amusing to watch the people. The Ratamahatmayas (Chiefs) are very smart gentlemen indeed. They may sometimes be seen, swaggering along with their heads held high, dressed in many yards of silk or muslin, which is wound round their ample waists and tapers at the ankles, giving them a curious top-like appearance. Jackets of heavy silk brocade, with enormous puffed sleeves, are worn over shirts fastened by jewelled buttons, and confined by velvet belts embroidered in gold. The costume is completed by oddly shaped hats, also stiff with embroidery, and sparkling with precious stones. Buddhist priests pass, their yellow robes held round them disdainfully, as if to avoid the common touch.

Dhobies (washermen) beat clothes mercilessly, on large stones in the lake a drastic method of washing that is general in Ceylon. Sinhalese men swing by, with baskets of fruit or vegetables balanced on *pingos* (yokes made of fibrous, supple wood, on which burdens of equal weight are suspended at each end) or sellers offer gram, a sort of small pea, which is eagerly bought by Natives as a mild refreshment.

If visitors are in Kandy during August they will see that weird, barbaric pageant known as the Perahera. It is held in commemoration of the victory of the Sinhalese over the Tamils, in the second century B. C. Originally for the glorification of four Hindu deities, it has now become almost entirely Buddhist in character. The sacred tooth relic, in its golden shrine, takes the most prominent place in a procession, which, for several days, makes a round of all the Temples in the neighbourhood. The night before the pageant ends is perhaps the most interesting from the visitor's point of view. It is a strange cavalcade which then wends its way through the streets, under the flare of thousands of flickering torches. Elephants, kept by the Ratamahatmayas of the district, and brought in from the estates for the occasion, play an important part. They are almost completely covered with gorgeous trappings, one animal the largest being nearly lost under its richly embroidered and bejewelled accoutrements, even its tusks being enclosed in dazzling sheaths. On this elephant is placed, with great ceremony, a howdah containing the sacred tooth relic in its golden shrine. Two smaller elephants accompany it on either side, while Native Headmen, in festive garments, mount the others. They are attended by retainers of sorts, who carry fantastic umbrellas that glitter with gold and silver, or baskets full of bright coloured flowers. Flags flutter

everywhere, devil dancers prance before and behind, wearing hideous masks, and twisting their lean brown bodies into weird contortions ; there is constant chattering in shrill voices, the crash of cymbals, blowing of pipes, and banging of tom-toms an unholy din !

The following day at the first glimmer of dawn, a strange ceremony takes place: it is known as the Water Cutting. Under the vivid green trees, their branches bowed with sweet-scented blossoms that sparkle with dew, the procession moves towards the verdant banks of the river, where a gaily bedecked boat is waiting. Four of the Chief Priests, followed by one or two assistants, walk in dignified silence, under a canopy, and by a path covered with a strip of cloth, to the water side, and get into the boat. They are punted along for a short distance, then when it is considered that the auspicious moment has arrived a signal is given, and each priest leans over to cut, with a silver sword, a circle in the water. As he does so, one of his helpers carefully dips a bowl into the centre of the circle, and fills it to the brim. At the same moment another empties that which was filled the previous year. What special virtue water obtained in this particular way is supposed to possess it is difficult to say, but it is sacred in the eyes of the Native, who no doubt attaches to it some mystic meaning. The boat having returned to the shore, the priests rejoin the procession, which — after certain rites have been gone through, returns to the Temple of the Tooth, and the Perahera is over. Though the Sinhalese have not quite the same enthusiasm for this pageant as they had in days gone by, and much of its former grandeur no longer exists, it still remains a unique and characteristic spectacle.

The Royal Botanical Gardens of Peredeniya, only a few miles out from Kandy, are noted for their beauty all over the world. It seems hopeless to try and describe them, for it would take far too long to tell of the rare trees and plants, the avenues of stately palms, the unusual fruits and flowers. There are strange parasites of every description, and cacti which grow, in some cases, to a height of nearly forty feet, their exquisite white blooms only opening their petals in the moonlight. The noble Talipot palms, with enormous leaves, have a special interest when showing their creamy wax-like blossoms they only do so once in fifty years, then, having made their supreme effort, they fade away and die.

What a wealth of colour there is! Even on the paths there is frequently a thick powdering of mauve, pink, or orange — it comes from - the fallen petals of the flowers. Homely things are growing, tapioca, arrowroot, cloves, nutmegs, ginger, etc., in the same garden with lofty Palms, and trees to which are attached magnificent orchids, or festoons of flowering creepers. Peredeniya is a veritable Paradise for those interested in botany, chemistry, or entomology. There are specialists in those, and kindred subjects, attached to the gardens. They are always willing to give help, or advice, to those who may be interested.

But for the ordinary visitor it is enough just to wander under the graceful spreading boughs, to listen to the birds, and absorb the loveliness of it all. In case it may be imagined that perfection has been reached in that enchanting spot, it is perhaps well to mention that there are such things as snakes to be seen (and most carefully avoided!), sometimes after rain, when they like to bask in the sun. Cobras are by no means unknown in Ceylon, and the deadly Tic-polonga is also to be found; but less harmful

snakes are more common, and there is no real danger if one is reasonably careful. Bloodthirsty little leeches lurk in the grass if it is wet, and the timid may feel anxious if they happen to notice sinister looking objects hanging head downwards from some of the trees. They are flying foxes, which keep that peculiar position during the day, but when night comes spread their clumsy wings and fly about, helping themselves liberally to the ripe fruits, and making considerable noise in the process. Those queer bird-like animals (really a kind of large bat), are harmless if left alone, but are said to fight fiercely with their formidable claws and sharp teeth if attacked. After all is said and done, however, the drawbacks to a visit to Peredeniya are few—they are very soon forgotten, in the magic of those matchless gardens.

IV

MEMOIRS

Lora St Lo Elizabeth Wilkinson

Diary for the year 1860, Colombo, Ceylon, The Fort

1st Thursday November 1860

At four o'clock drove to call on Lady MacCarthy as Sir Charles is ill. She would not see anyone and sent Lt King the Aide de Camp to tell us so. Then to *Cargills* where Mama dropped her purse and had to send back for it. She did not discover her loss till she had been some time in *Brodie and Logue*. Papa went back and got it. Afterwards we drove, St Lo rode and Colonel Maydwell on Galle Face. There was a heavy shower of rain. Colonel Maydwell dined with us. He is going to Galle to meet General O'Brien on Sunday night.

2nd Friday

We were disturbed in the night by parrots screaming, cages rattling, and got up to see what was the matter in the gallery. Bat and Pet appeared on the ground. They must have been frightened out of their cages by the rats and the cage is strewn

with feathers. At six o'clock Papa and Mama drove, St Lo and Colonel Maydwell rode on Galle Face and round Slave Island. Jet had one black and white male kid. Called him November after the month. Mrs H B Thomson called. In the evening Papa and I rode and the rest drove to 50th Band. We were joined by Colonel Maydwell who had gone to a meeting of the Church Wardens as he is one of them.

* * * * *

5th Monday

This morning I had a solitary ride by myself. We put Prince in the ring. He was unmanageable (sic) enough. At three o'clock we all drove Nero to call on Mrs Thompson, Mrs Darley and Mrs Stewart. Very hot and disagreeable out. Clouds of dust. We had not been home five minutes when Mrs Waddy called. After she left we were going out but it came on to rain. Helen's eggs out and she has three chickens, white ones. Gave 2s and 6d for *Say and Seal* by Miss Wetherell.

6th Tuesday

This morning Papa and Mama drove. Constance and St Lo rode. Put Prince in the ring and very much fear he is a dangerous horse and will never be any use to us. Papa found a snake in his box but killed it before it could make its escape. It was a caravella. Ondine, Constance's parrot very sick indeed. Sent for Mr Demnar who told us to give it chilies and ginger. Last night a soldier of the 50th tried all in his power to get into Colonel Waddy's house for the purpose, as he said, of killing him. He did not, however, succeed but Colonel Waddy went out onto the veranda with him where

there commenced an open combat. He bent his sword but was not hurt. The man was badly cut on the hand. The rifle soldiers were afraid to take him. The 50th did so. He is now in hospital thus well to be in confinement as he is thought to be mad. He was very abusive and says he will have his, Colonel Waddy's, life yet. In the evening we went to see Mrs Waddy who was very much frightened, Papa, Constance and St Lo riding, Mama and I in the carriage. Then to Rifle Band. Home by Galle Face. Mail in. Got our letters at half past nine. One from Aunt. Uncle no better. Going up to Dublin to be near the best and most skilled physicians. None from Grandmama or Edmund. Some papers.

7th Wednesday

This morning Papa and Mama drove. Constance would not go out as she stayed to take care of her parrot who is worse today than it was yesterday. I got into the carriage at the end of Galle Face. We went to Colonel Maydwell's house to look after the cats, dog, horses and all quite well. Home by Cinnamon Gardens and Slave Island. We have got all Colonel Maydwell's letters and papers for him. Set Topsy on ten eggs. A letter from Colonel Maydwell came by the coach this evening for Mama. He says that the General and Mrs O'Brien, with Captain Nichols as Aide de Camp, will be up by the coach tomorrow. He comes with them in the evening. Papa and I rode on Galle Face. Mama, Constance and St Lo drove.

8th Thursday

This morning Papa and Mama drove and I rode. Ondine, we all think, is worse. We can get her to do nothing but drink and have to feed it with little bits of bread and milk. I did not ride far by myself this morning as it is dull work. An invitation from Mrs Darley for

next Thursday the 15th for Papa, Mama, Constance and I. We do not like *Say and Seal* very much. Mrs Charsley called. Papa gone to Marendatin to meet the General. At half past three Colonel Maydwell came in to us. He brought a stick of sugar cane all the way from Galle for the parrots. We gave him his letters and papers and he rode with Papa and I on Galle Face, Mama, Constance and St Lo driving. He dined with us.

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10th Saturday

This morning Papa and Mama drove. I rode with Colonel Maydwell on Galle Face. Mama, Papa, Constance and I and St Lo went to call on Lady MacCarthy. Then left Papa at home to call on Mrs Mackenzie. She was opening a box of dresses bonnets just arrived from England. They saw them. A hundred and ten pounds' worth. Then to Mrs Pritchard at home. They came into the Fort as Papa and I were riding out. They turned with us. We were joined by Colonel Maydwell who had just come from an auction at Braebrook Hall of the late General Lockyer's things. He bought them nearly all for the O'Briens. At the gate gave Constance two books, *The Chelsea Pensioners* and *Common things of Everyday Life*.

11th Sunday

A very dreadful accident occurred to Mr Whitley yesterday evening at six o'clock which lost him his life. He had just finished his sermon and stepped out to look at the old schoolhouse which was being pulled down. He went, it appears, too close to a wall which fell upon him and crushed

him in its ruins. He was discovered by his screams and some that were about drew to the spot. It was some time before they could get him out and then he was quite dead. One of his sides completely broken in. Death must have been instantaneous. Thrice doctors were sent for but although their powers were unfailing they could not restore life. Mrs Whitley lay in a state of torpor all night and is in a very dangerous state. The inquest will be held at seven o'clock this morning and he will be buried at five in the burial ground on Galle Face. He will be a sad loss. Mrs Saunders, Mr and Mrs Fenn, were with Mrs Whitley when the accident received and they will possibly remove her to Kotta this evening. Colonel Maydwell attended the funeral and he with five others, Mr Darley, Judge Temple, Mr Mackwood, bore the coffin from the hearse to the grave. The Bishop preached morning service and there was no evening but we all drove and St Lo rode on Galle Face.

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14th Wednesday

This morning Papa and Mama drove, Constance and Colonel Maydwell rode on Galle Face and Slave Island. Rain. They drove to look at Mr Ledward's things. *The Chelsea Pensioners* by the Reverend G R Gleig consists of six stories, *The Gentle Recruit*, *A Day on the Neutral Grounds*, *Saratoga*, *Maida*, *A Pyrenean Adventure* and *The Rivals*. I have read the two first and the last and they are particularly interesting. We asked Colonel Maydwell to dine today but he was engaged to the 50th mess. Topsy sick. Took her off her eggs for a day and put on Gray. At quarter to four Mama, Constance and I drove to pay some visits. Took Colonel Maydwell with us and left him at his

house. We called on Mrs Molesworth at home and Mrs Dalziel, out. Then on Galle Face where we met Papa, St Lo and Colonel Maydwell. All were going to an inspection of the Rifles on their Esplanade. St Lo got into the carriage and we went to Slave Island with him in case it might rain. Colonel Maydwell lent Constance *The Sayings and Doings of Mrs Partington* and *Others of the Family*. He came home with us, sent for his clothes, dressed here and went to the 50th mess. Ondine quite well. Topsy better. Fairstar had one male kid. St Lo called it Pericles.

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17th Saturday

This morning Papa and Mama drove. Colonel Maydwell and I rode to look at Dr Atkinson's things which are to be sold today as they are going home. Commissioned him to buy some things for us there. Then to his house to look at his bookcase. Saw Mrs Maydwell's table. Very pretty. Left him there and came home. Very hot going across Galle Face and were glad we got inside the Fort. Today we had Tiffin for a long time without Colonel Maydwell as he has gone to the sale. He came into the Fort at quarter to five and went with Papa to meet the General and finish looking at the works in the Fort while we all drove on Galle Face. Colonel Maydwell dined with us. He left us a book called *"The Private Life of an Eastern King"* by William Knighton. We had a game of Race after dinner.

18th Sunday

This morning at one o'clock we were all awoke by someone calling out, "Please Sir the Oriental Bank is on fire.". Papa was

immediately on the spot and found that it was Mr Shand's office and not the bank. There was an unusual crowd. They took everything out of the house. Fire engines were on the spot immediately and were worked by the 50th who behaved gallantly. A great part of it was burnt to the ground. Mr Shand on the spot gave four barrels of beer among the soldiers engaged. We saw the light of the fire from some of our windows. Papa was home at five and was completely covered with wet and dirt. This is a very beautiful morning. The pigeons on the tiles looked so pretty in the sun. Aeneus got two young pigeons. Colonel Maydwell came in and we all went to church in the evening. Mr Boake gave us a very good sermon. Spoke to Judge and Mrs Temple as we came out of church. They have just come from England. When we came home we discovered that Bat had got out of its cage though it was not broken and was nowhere to be found so we searched all about the whole house. Did not go to dinner till near eight.

19th Monday

This morning Papa and Mama drove. Colonel Maydwell and I rode via Galle Face to his house as we wanted Papa to look at his stables. He gave us the books we had commissioned him to buy for us at Dr Atkinson's, *"Winter Evenings"* or *"Tales of Travellers"* by Maria Hack, *"Dred"* by Harriet Beecher-Stowe, *"Abbe du Parnasse Contes a Ma Fille"* par J N Bouilly and *"La Morale en action"*. He gave me a little volume of "Cowper's Poems" and wrote Lora on the front page. He sent a bandy to our house with the chairs, an ice box and three mats. No account of Bat. At quarter to four Mama, Papa, Constance and I drove to call on Mrs Darley. Saw her and her daughter Jessie. Then home and afterwards Papa and Constance rode, Mama and I

with St Lo drove on Galle Face. Papa got into the carriage as he has an earache. Constance was joined by Colonel Maydwell at the end. We all got out to walk. He and Constance got off their ponies and came to walk with us. Left Colonel Maydwell at Fort Gate. He invited us to dine with him on Wednesday. Accepted.

20th Tuesday

This morning Papa and Mama drove, Constance and Colonel Maydwell rode on Galle Face. Then into the carriage and drove round Slave Island. Left Colonel Maydwell at the barrier. The Sergeant Major of the Royal Artillery caught Bat this morning in the ordinance yard just behind the house and brought it up to us. Wonderful how it escaped the rats and crows. To hear its adventures would certainly be interesting. It looked tired and was very hungry probably not having anything to eat since Sunday evening. At quarter to four Mama, Constance, St Lo drove to pay some visits. Left Colonel Maydwell at his house. They called on Mrs C P Layard, saw her and Mary, then to Mrs Gibsons and saw her and her daughter Louisa and lastly to Mrs Brooke Baily at home. Colonel M came in to us and then we rode, joined the carriage on Galle Face and with them to Rifle Band. Papa got into the carriage and Colonel Maydwell and I rode. We parted at our own gate.

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23rd Friday

This morning Mama and Papa drove, Constance and Colonel Maydwell rode on Galle Face and Cinnamon Gardens. I began "Dred". Also began to embroider a pocket handkerchief. A few

days ago I sold October to Constance for 5s 7d. Major General and Mrs O'Brien and Captain Nicholl ADC called as we, with Colonel Maydwell, were going to Tiffin. We saw them. They had taken Tiffin at the Queens House and had seen the Maldivé Ambassador. In the evening Papa and I with Colonel Maydwell rode. Mama and Constance and St Lo drove to 50th Band. Mr Walkern 50th gave us a programme. Very dark clouds with thunder and lightning. Everybody expecting to be soon hurried from the Band. Too true. Rain came and there was a general rush for their respective homes. Colonel Maydwell got into our carriage and we brought him home to dinner. We all played Race game in the evening.

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26th Monday

This morning Mama, Papa, Colonel Maydwell and I drove as my saddle went to be mended on Saturday and had not come home. Papa rode Prince up to Sir Edward Creasey's house to offer him Pol as he in want of a goat. It was readily accepted. Prince was very unmanageable, biting at his feet. They were collecting a subscription for Mrs Whitley as she is in very poor circumstances and leaves for England by the next mail. It is to go to Sir Charles MacCarthy, the Bishop and Sir Edward Creasy today and then to go round the whole of Colombo and I think Kandy and Galle. Colonel Maydwell sent home for his horse Pioneer and I rode with Papa, Constance and St Lo in the evening. Papa did not go far for on coming out of the gate Prince became quite unmanageable, biting at Papa's feet, so that he had to get off. Then as if glad of being relieved of its burden reared, kicked and bucked and lastly succeeding in breaking

away from the horse keeper and dashed straight home. Mr Brooke Baily and his two little children came over to speak to us. Told us that Prince had arrived safe at his stables and thought that Papa had been thrown. The sentry said he had. Papa then got into the carriage and drove on Galle Face. There was Parade. Sir Charles MacCarthy gave us ten pounds to the subscription. It was hoped he would have given twenty. Clouds of dust on Galle Face. The rain has done much good. The rats got into Bunny's box so that we had to bring it upstairs till the box is mended.

27th Tuesday

This morning Papa and Mama drove, Constance and Colonel Maydwell rode on Galle Face. Put Prince in the ring which I fear will do him no good. He is naturally vicious and will never be fit for us to ride. Colonel M (sic) goes down to Mount Lavinia this evening with the General to see the Butt at four o'clock. He came in to Tiffin with us and left at quarter to four. Bought from a moorman three books, "*Tremaine*" by Sir Henry Ward's father, "*Gurney Married*" by Hook and "*Frank Mildman*" (sic) by Marryat. In the evening Papa and I rode, Mama, Constance and St drove to Rifle Band. Spoke to Mr and Mrs Byerly Thomson and Captain Reynolds. Then we all got into the carriage, drove to the bottom walk of the Galle Face where we got out and walked to the end.

28th Wednesday

This morning we did not go out as it was raining. Topsy has got eight chickens out. Finished *Mrs Partington*. Very amusing and will send it back today. Bought from a man at the door "*The*

White Boy" by Mrs S C Hall. Also a book on Russia and "*Cousin William*" by Theodore Hook. At four it began to rain but stopped just in time to let Colonel Maydwell and I take a gallop and the rest a drive on Galle Face. At eight o'clock dined at Queens House. A party of twelve. The company was Mr and Mrs Murray Robertson whom we do not know, Mr Philip Braybrooke, Major Skinner, Lt King, Private Secretary, Mr Princeps, Aide de Camp, and Mr Grunblot. Mr Braybrooke took down Mama, Mr Robertson I. Home at half past ten. There was a large party of 50 at the 50th mess of which Colonel Maydwell was one. Papa had not been asked but had accepted the Governors.

29th Thursday

This morning Papa and Mama drove, Constance and Colonel Maydwell rode on Galle Face. Colonel Maydwell came in to Tiffin. Bought a little parrot with yellow ring, lilac head and long tail, about the size of owlet for one shilling. It is very tame and will not bite. Left Colonel Maydwell and Papa and went to *Cargills*. Came back in the rain. Papa, Mama and Constance dined at the Bishops with Judge and Mrs Temple. Mr and Mrs Brooke-Baily, Mr Bernard, Lt Mainguy, Captain Dudley, Mr Molesworth - Mrs Molesworth not well enough to dine out - Mr Newton and two others whose names I don't know. A party of sixteen. Home at half past ten.

30th Friday

This morning Papa and Mama drove, Colonel M (sic) and I rode, Galle Face, Cinnamon Gardens and Slave Island. A beautifully cool ride but very muddy. After breakfast drove to *Cargills*. Bought some bonnets and Colonel M came in and sat with us. Rain came on. He could not go home so stayed to dinner. Played Race game. Afterwards it was fine so separated at half past nine.

V

FOLKLORE

S. Jane Goonetilleke

The Story of the Twenty-Five Idiots (1884)

There was once a certain gamarala, who had in his employment twenty-five idiots.

In the old times it was customary with Sinhalese high families not to allow their servants to eat from plates; however every day they were provided with plantain leaves, from which they took their food. After eating they were accustomed to shape their leaf into the form of a cup and drink out of it. Now in this gamarala's house the duty of providing leaves devolved upon the twenty-five idiots, who were scarcely fit for any other work. One day when they had gone into the garden to cut the leaves, they spoke among themselves and said; "Why should we every one of us trouble ourselves to fetch plantain leaves when one only could very easily do it. Let us therefore lie down on the ground and sleep like dead men, and let him who first utters a sound or opens his eyes undertake the work." It was no sooner said than done. The men lay in a heap like so many logs. At breakfast time that day the hungry servants went to the kitchen for their rice,

only to be disappointed. No leaves were forthcoming in which to distribute the food, and a complaint was made to the gamarala that the twenty-five idiots had not returned to the house since they went out in the morning. The gamarala with his men went in search of them and found them fast asleep in the garden. After vainly endeavouring to rouse them, the gamarala concluded that they were dead, and ordered his servants to dig a deep hole and bury them. A grave was then dug and the idiots were, one by one, thrown into it. However still there was no noise or motion on their part. At length when they were all put into the grave, and were being covered up, a tool employed by one of the servants hit sharply, by accident, against the leg of one of the idiots, who then involuntarily moaned. Thereupon all the others exclaimed; "You were the first to utter a sound, therefore, from henceforth you must take upon yourself the duty of providing plantain leaves."

On another occasion the gamarala sent them to cut down a huge "bat-kitul" tree – a kitul tree from which the toddy has never been drawn, and by pounding the pith of which a kind of flour is obtained, which is cooked in many ways and is a favourite food of the Sinhalese. They think it very strengthening to the constitution. To prevent the tree from falling to the ground — fearing that thereby the pith might be damaged — twenty-four of the idiots leant against it, while one cut it near the root, with an axe. When the tree fell the twenty-four men who leant against it were crushed to death.

One day the gamarala ordered the remaining idiot to thatch the roof of his large house with straw. "Mahage piduruvahapiya." "Mahage may mean, either, "the large house" -which the gamarala meant it to imply or "the old lady." Having delivered

the command the gamarala went away to an adjoining village on business.

The gamarala's mother was suffering from fever, and the idiot thought that she was to be covered up with straw as a remedy for the fever. So getting hold of her he heaped a whole stack of straw on her, and told her to lie there quietly till the gamarala's return. Having done this he went away for a quiet stroll. He had not proceeded a great distance when he saw an old woman about as old as the gamarala's mother, picking pepper. He ran up to her and seized her by the arm, angrily exclaiming: "Did I not order you to lie under the straw until my master's return?"

Carrying her into the compound he piled another and a larger heap of straw upon her.

The next day when the gamarala returned he summoned the idiot into his presence, and asked him whether he had obeyed his orders. "Yes, sir," replied the man, "come and see for yourself whether I have not properly attended to my work." So saying he led the gamarala to the two heaps of straw in the compound. Pointing to the first heap he said: "I first covered up the old lady with this heap of straw, but she would not remain there. I then brought her and covered her up with twice as much straw than before. "You will find the old lady under the second heap." The gamarala caused both the heaps to be removed, when to his horror he found his mother and another woman quite suffocated. Fearing that it would be dangerous to keep the man any longer in his service, the gamarala sent him away, giving him strict orders never to return again to his house.

The idiot wandered aimlessly about, feeding himself on the berries that grew in the jungle, and sleeping at night under the

friendly shelter of a tree. One day he took it into his head to build himself a house, and at once set about collecting wood for the purpose. Espying a tree on the bank of a river he climbed it half way, and sitting on a branch began to cut it with an axe near the stem. A Buddhist priest who happened to pass by, cried out, "Stop, you fool, when the branch falls you will fall with it into the water." And the man without heeding him continued with his task. The priest had not gone far when his prediction proved true. Quickly getting out of the water the man ran after the priest and said to him, "My lord, I beg of you to tell me when I shall die." The priest assured him that it was impossible for him to say but the idiot would not believe him. He was sure that as the priest knew that he would fall into the river, he must know in some way when he would die. He would not let the priest go away until he had given him the information he wanted. To escape from the man the priest said to him, "My son, I have no authority to tell you this, on a certain night you will be seated under the shelter of a gourd when three drops of dew will fall on your back, at the fall of the third drop you will expire." The man determined to put off the day of his death by a careful avoidance of gourds.

In the course of his wanderings the idiot fell among some thieves, who persuaded him to join them. The man took readily to their ways, and was very eager to accompany them on their nightly excursions. One night the robbers took him with them to test what he could do, and boring a large hole in the wall of a house they sent him in, advising him to hand out to them through the hole in the wall the heaviest article he could lay his hands upon. The man readily went in, and seeing a large kurakkan grinder, thought that was the heaviest thing in the

room, and attempted to remove it. But it proved too much for him alone, and therefore he gently awaked a man who was sleeping in the room, and said to him, "My friend, pray help me to remove this kurakkan grinder."

The man immediately guessed that thieves had entered the house, and accordingly gave the alarm. The robbers who were waiting outside quite expectant rushed away, and the idiot, somehow or other, managed to escape with them. The robbers determined not to take him with them again, yet the man begged and prayed so for another trial they could not refuse him.

The robbers thought they would give him another trial and the next night they took him with them. Boring a hole in the wall of a house, as they had done on the previous night, they sent him in with strict instructions not to make a noise or wake anybody.

The man entered noiselessly and entered a large room, in which was an old woman fast asleep by the fire with mouth wide open an earthen chatty, a wooden spoon, and a small bag of pease [sic] were also placed by the fire. The man first proceeded to roast some pease in the chatty. When they were roasted to a nice brownish colour, and emitted a very tempting smell, the man thought that the old woman also might enjoy a mouthful. He considered for a while how he might best offer some to her. He did not wish to wake her, as he was ordered not to wake anybody. Suddenly a bright idea struck him. Why should he not feed her? There she was sleeping with her mouth wide open. Surely it would be no difficult task to put some pease into her mouth. Taking some of the hot smoking pease into the wooden spoon he put the contents into her mouth. The woman awoke screaming with all her might. The noise roused the other

inmates of the house, who came rushing to the spot to see what was the matter. This time also the man managed to escape with the thieves, who after a great deal of persuasion consented to give him yet another trial.

The next time the thieves went out stealing they themselves entered a house bidding the idiot to stay outside. At the pilikanna of the house there was a gourd under which the man sat — forgetting what the priest had told him — awaiting the return of his comrades. Suddenly he felt a drop of dew fall on his back, then another, then another; at the third drop he remembered what the priest had told him, whereupon, with a firm conviction that he had already expired, he bellowed out with all his might "Ah, I am dead! Ah, I am dead!" The thieves hearing this noise and fearing that they were discovered ran away, with the idiot following them.

The next night the thieves broke into a very large house and sent in the idiot, asking him to hand out to them anything valuable that he could find. The fool went in and returned with a small light basket, which probably contained nothing. Quite out of patience with the man they themselves entered the house, ordering the idiot to wait outside.

The man sat quietly for a long time, but feeling chilly he kindled a fire and sat by it warming himself. He was sitting so long by himself that he began to be impatient, and to while away the time he opened the basket he had brought out of the house and proceeded to examine its contents. The basket only contained a suit of clothes usually worn by the demon, called the "Garayaka."

The idiot immediately clad himself in the demon's garments and resumed his seat by the fire. The fire had almost died out by this time, and the man made a grotesque figure seated at the ghostly hour by the dying embers in the demon's clothes, nodding his head in sleep.

When the thieves emerged out of the house with the booty they had stolen and saw this figure by the fire they thought it was the Garayaka himself, come to wreak vengeance on them for their lawless doings, and immediately took to their heels. The noise they made in running away roused the idiot, who directly sprang up and followed them. The thieves seeing the spectre pursuing them redoubled their speed dropping the booty as they ran along. At length the thieves quite lost their wits and jumped into a well, which they happened to come across, to get away from the demon, the idiot also following suit. They were all drowned, and thus ended the life of the last of the twenty-five idiots.

The Two Peasants (1884)

In a certain village there once lived two peasants, who, being very poor, and having no means of earning a livelihood, sold the little possessions they had, and left their village in the hope of finding better fortune elsewhere. At the outset, one of them said to his companion; "Friend, if you provide out of your purse for both of us, I will do likewise when your money is over."

The other readily agreed to this proposal, and from thenceforth when he cooked his meals he always gave his friend half of it.

The peasant who first began to spend soon exhausted his little stock of money, and when the other had prepared his meals, he coolly began eating it without inviting his companion to join him. Surprised at this proceeding he inquired why his share was not given to him. "You were a fool to spend for both of us," replied the other. "I am not going to imitate you, and waste my money on you." The poor peasant had to starve that day, and for three days more, until he could bear it no longer. When his companion had cooked his rice as usual, he begged so hard for some, that at length he was promised a handful, if only he should allow one of his eyes to be placed out. He was in such an extremity of hunger that he agreed to this condition. A spoonful of rice was then given him, and with the handle of the same spoon which conveyed the rice to his leaf one of his eyes was pierced through.

The rice that he had then obtained helped to keep him up for another three days. At the end of that time he could not but beg for another spoonful, which he received on the same condition as before.

Being now blind of both eyes, he was looked upon by his friend as a useless encumbrance, and he therefore determined to get rid of him. He thought he could do this by walking away as fast as he could, but the blind man was not to be got rid of so easily. Listening attentively to his treacherous companion's footsteps, he managed to grope his way in the direction in which the other went. As they were passing through a deep forest, the wicked peasant took his helpless companion, and, after binding him firmly, left him under a tree to the tender mercies of the wild beasts, and went his way.

The blind man had not been very long under the tree, when he overheard the conversation of some *Raksasas*, who were resting on the tree at the time. One of them said: "All are not aware of the rare qualities of this tree. And a blind man will have his sight restored upon him, if he will only rub his eyes with a little of the juice of this tree." "That is not all," said another, "if a man should eat one of these leaves, he would not be hungry for seven days and seven nights." "More than that," said the third, "if a man eat the fruit that grows on the summit of this tree, he will become the king within seven days."

When the *Raksasas* had gone away the man raised himself with difficulty, and contrived to injure the bark of the tree, and thus obtained a little of its juice, which he at once applied to his eyes, and he immediately recovered his sight. His next care was to free himself, and to eat one of the leaves of the tree. When he had eaten the leaf, he felt quite strong and able to climb the tree, which he did, and ate the fruit that was on its summit with the firm conviction that he would become king within seven days. He set off, and wondering about reached a town on the seventh

day, and during all that time he did not feel the pangs of hunger.

He arrived at the city tired and dusty and entered an *ambalama* rest-house, but it had already been occupied by some men, who, not caring to have in their company so dirty and rugged a man, drove him out. Being quite exhausted he sat down outside the *ambalama*.

[To make the story plain it is necessary to mention that amongst most of the eastern nations, when a king died, the choice of his successor lay wholly with the elephant on which the deceased king was accustomed to ride. The animal was decked in all its splendid coverings, and led along the streets of the town and before whomsoever the elephant knelt that fortunate individual was chosen the king.]

Now it happened that the king of that country had just died, and the royal elephant was led along the street to select its next rider. Seeing our friend, the peasant, outside the *ambalama*, the elephant at once knelt down before him; and he was crowned king.

The treachrous friend of the new king had already arrived in the same city and married the daughter of the prime minister.

One day the prime minister was called away to some distant country, and as he expected to be away for some days, he appointed his son-in-law to act for him. No sooner did the acting prime minister see the new king than he was struck with the resemblance he bore to his companion. But he reassured himself that it could not be he, for, thought he, "how could a blind man regain his sight." But the more he saw of the new king the more

uneasy he began to be. At length he became quite anxious to ascertain whether this was his old friend or not. Fearing to ask the king a direct question, he set to work in a roundabout way to get at the truth.

In the prime minister the king at once recognised his base friend, but he betrayed no signs whatsoever of recognition.

One day the prime minister said to the king, "Sire! Is it possible for a blind man by any means in the world to regain his sight?" The king answered: "It is not an impossibility. If a man only sought it he would find a remedy even for blindness."

The acting prime minister was now quite convinced that the king was his former companion. His ambition was roused, for, thought he, "If a man, whom I had left so helpless in the forest had become a king, why should I not be able to do the same? If only I could get someone to treat me as I treated my companion, then the result must be the same." Thus, deluding himself, he set out from the city with his wife, having instructed her how to act.

First the man provided food for both, and when his stock of money was over his wife treated him in the same way he had treated his friend, and finally left him firmly bound under a tree. Before parting she told him where he would find her when he became the king.

The woman went on till she came to a shepherd's hut. The shepherd's wife was alone at home, and the future king's wife explained to her their prospects and obtained leave to stay with her for seven days, when, she said, her husband, the king, would come to fetch her. In the evening when the shepherd's wife saw

her husband coming home, she ran upto him and told him: "We have a royal guest under our roof, and it is not becoming that you should go into her presence in that state. Go, wash yourself and put on clean cloths before you enter into her presence." She then explained to him how in seven days the king was expected.

Seven days elapsed but there was no sign of the coming king, and the shepherd began to doubt the woman's tale. Another seven days, and he lost his patience. At last he got the true story from the woman, how she had left her husband blinded and bound under a tree in a thick jungle. The shepherd repaired to the spot to find out what had really happened to the man. When he reached the place he found the unfortunate man's carcass surrounded by eagles ravenous birds and animals. When the shepherd returned home, the would-be queen eagerly questioned him as to the fate of her husband, and asked whether he had indeed been crowned king. "Oh, yes," replied the man, "I found him surrounded by so many of his subjects that I could not exchange one word with him, and tell him of your welfare but now you can go and see for yourself." So saying he drove her out of his house as an adventuress.

Jessie Alice Goonetilleke

The Tiger and the Bloodsucker (1884)

Once upon a time a hungry tiger who was prowling for prey happened to meet a bloodsucker, and thus addressed him.

"You are just the person I want. Tell me at once why I should not make a prey of you?" The bloodsucker, who was terrified out of his wits, said, "Pray do not swallow me up immediately; small as I am I challenge you to a fight and request you to give me three months time to prepare myself for the conflict." The tiger accepted the challenge and they parted, having appointed the time and place where they should meet for the fight at the expiration of three months.

When the bloodsucker was left to himself he immediately set to work to prepare for the fight with the tiger. Every morning the bloodsucker rolled himself in mud till his whole body was covered up. He then washed his face and paws and basked in the sun till he was quite dry. At the end of the three months he found himself almost as big as the tiger.

On the appointed day, the tiger set out for the rendezvous, fully expecting that the bloodsucker would not make his appearance, but when he arrived, there the bloodsucker was coolly awaiting him.

The fight began, and each time the tiger struck the bloodsucker, a little mud came off, without in the least hurting him; but the bloodsucker's blows had quite a contrary effect. The tiger was scratched all over, and his wounds were so painful, that he lost courage and beat a hasty retreat, thereby owning that he was defeated.

Away he ran, nor did he pause until he had reached a thick jungle at a great distance from the place of the encounter. Being now quite exhausted, he sat down and began to examine his wounds, and on perceiving so many scratches, he piteously exclaimed, softly touching them, "metanat u keva, metanat keva, metanat keva." "He bit me here, and here, here also."

Now there was in the jungle a wood cutter, of whose presence the tiger knew nothing. When the man heard the tiger's soliloquy he could not restrain his laughter. All his endeavours were in vain, and at length he burst out into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. On hearing the noise, the tiger guessed that somebody had heard him, and was laughing at him, so he turned round to see who it was, and to his consternation beheld the man. The tiger was so ashamed to find that the man had heard him, that he would not let him go without exacting a promise from him never to disclose to anybody what he has seen or heard. The man readily promised what was demanded, in order to escape from the tiger and went his way. Still the tiger was not satisfied, so he thought he would watch the man, and

quietly crept into the pilikanna, the back part of the man's house, awaiting his return.

After getting into bed, the man burst out laughing. On his wife inquiring why he was so merry that night, he informed her that it was something he could not tell her as he had promised not to do so; but the woman would not rest till she knew what it was, and as a matter of course, she had her wish. The tiger was listening outside attentively and was burning with rage at the man's perfidy.

No sooner had the man finished his recital than the tiger burst into the room and carried him off, with the very bed on which he was lying. When he was thus being carried off, he was at his wits end to know how he might escape from the tiger, but he could not think of nothing that would help him, so he gave himself up as lost.

As the tiger was going on and on, the man saw that he would have to pass a tree, the branches of which would almost touch the bed.

On seeing the tree at a distance, the man's hopes began to revive, for he thought he would be able to escape from his tormentor by climbing the tree. Just as the tiger was passing under the tree, the man, laying hold of a branch with one hand, quietly raised himself up to it, and he did this so gently that not a suspicion of what was going on crossed the tiger's mind, and he went on and on, anticipating the pleasure with which he would make the man pay for his treachery.

When he arrived at the place of his destination, he placed the bed on the ground and was just going to drag the man out of it,

when to his surprise and annoyance the man was missing. So he at once retraced his steps in order to look for him. He had not gone very far when he saw the shadow of a man, it being a moonlight night, on a tree, and looking up to see whether it was really a man, he to his great joy found that it was the very man he wanted. Just as the tiger was on the point of climbing the tree, the man extending his hands towards him exclaimed: "Enda epa. me ate katusu biju; me ate nai biju" "Don't come. I have eggs of the bloodsucker in this hand, and in this the snake's eggs," whereupon the tiger mortally frightened at the mere mention of the bloodsucker ran away nor did he again attempt to molest the man.

VI

THE EXOTIC EAST

Constance Fredericka Gordon Cumming

An Artist's Paradise (1892)

Rarely two years later I made my first voyage to the East, touching Ceylon at Point De Galle *en route* to Calcutta. That one glimpse of the lovely isle impressed itself on my memory as such a dream of delight, that when, a few years later, one of my earliest friends was consecrated Bishop of Colombo,¹ I very gladly accepted his invitation to return to Ceylon on a leisurely visit, finding headquarters under his hospitable roof, and thence exploring such parts of the isle as had special interest for me.

These interests gradually widened, owing to the unbounded kindness of numerous friends, and friends' friends; and so it came to pass that so many delightful expeditions were organised, and so many pleasant homes claimed visits, that well nigh two years slipped away ere I finally bade adieu to the green Isle of Palms, to which, I think, notwithstanding the claims of many a lovely South Sea isle, we must concede the right it claims, to have been, and still to continue, the true Earthly Paradise.

On my return to Scotland, after widely extended travels, a selection of upwards of three hundred of my water-colour paintings in various parts of "Greater Britain" were exhibited in their respective courts in the Indian and Colonial Exhibition at South Kensington, and at subsequent Exhibitions in Liverpool and Glasgow. Of these, about sixty of scenery in Ceylon were selected from several hundreds, which, on the principle of "never a day without at least one careful-coloured sketch," had accumulated as I wandered in every direction – north, south, east, and west – basking on the yellow sands of the most fascinating palm-fringed sea-coast, or gliding over calm rivers – gipsying among ruins of mighty pre-Christian cities in the depths of lonely forests, or awaiting the sunrise, on lofty mountain-summits, — studies of exquisite foliage or of strange Buddhist and Tamil shrines, and all enlivened to memory by recollections of picturesque groups of brown men, women, and children of diverse race and very varied hue, some scantily draped, others gorgeously apparelled, but all alike harmonious in colour.

Friendly critics, who say that these sketches have helped them to realise something of the true character and beauty of Ceylonese scenery, have asked me to supplement the brush with the pen, and tell the readers who have so kindly received my notes of travel in other lands something of my impressions of Ceylon. So now I sit surrounded with diaries and letters, travel-notes and sketch-books innumerable, and portfolios in which each page recalls some day of deep interest and many of delight; while the signatures in the corner of each sketch vividly recall the many friends whose kindness did so much to gladden all days, and to smooth all difficulties from the path of a happy guest.

Bella Sidney Woolf

The Perahera Passes (1922)

Eive small children are pressing their noses against the windows of a cosy nursery in a high London house. It is a grey bleak February Sunday morning. Church bells are ringing and the sound of the muffin-bell is also heard in the land. The children know that a morning walk is imminent and they are making the most of the warm nursery before going out into the cold. Suddenly there comes the sound of a band in the distance. Radiant joy lights up each face.

"A percession – a percession!!!" cries the youngest but one, jumping up and down in a frenzy of delight.

Sure enough, in a few minutes, there appears a crowd of men in bowler hats and black coats with red or green ribbons across their chests, some of them bearing aloft huge banners, crimson, green, blue and gold. It is too far off to see what is written on the banners, but the children gaze entranced at the brilliant patches of colour as they sway along the Cromwell Road and disappear from view.

A sigh of regret goes up as the last banner and bowler hat disappears and the tail-end of the procession, consisting of a crowd of small boys and a dog, has no interest for them.

Then nurse appears and whisks them all away with: —

"It is only them Foresters or Buffaloes – you've seen them heaps of times."

Yes – but it never palls. It is a "Percession" – and the banners make a glow of colour in those grey Kensington streets and the band is so exciting.

There is in most human beings a love of processions. And since those long-ago days of the Forester and Buffaloes – the names in themselves were thrilling pp I have never lost the thrill that came to us at the nursery-window. I must always wait to watch those processions of men and women dressed in all their best carrying coconut flowers and marigolds and Temple flowers along the Colombo roads and making weird chantings as they go, and the little boys and girls with sprays of artificial flowers and the weird coloured paper offerings. They entrance me as much as the gold and crimson and blue banners in the far-off days and I hear again the enraptured cry: —

"A percession – a percession !!"

Last week I saw once again that most wonderful of all processions, the Perahera, and, as I watched it, the remembrance of two other processions came to my mind.

Years ago I spent a night in a bungalow away in the North-Central Province lying on the edge of the jungle. I was awakened at midnight by the sound of distant music. It was

Full Moon. I crept out on the verandah. It was an upper storey bungalow. The warm-scented moonlight flooded the world, turning the palm-leaves and plantain leaves to spears of molten silver, weaving a silver mist about the wall of jungle that pressed up to the compound.

The sound of pipes and tom-toms came nearer and nearer and nearer, now plaintive, now throbbing, now triumphant. And then between the trees I saw a shadowy procession of men carrying banners, of tom-tom beaters, dancers, women and children streaming along in the misty moonlight.

The music grew louder, more insistent. The procession passed and vanished, the music died away into the distance. Only the beat of the tom-toms came intermittently, then silence.

I stood absolutely entranced and wondered if this exquisite vision was a dream. In the morning when I spoke of it, I was told that it was a procession of villagers going to a Temple with offering on the night of the Full Moon.

And among many processions in this land of processions, there comes to my mind one in contrast to the moonlight vision. It was in Kandy. One morning I heard the distant sound of tom-toms and a little reedy pipe, far off and subdued, unlike the blare and roll of the Temple tom-toms that wakened me every morning.

I went to the edge of the lake. The misty blueness of morning still clung about the opposite hills, and the sunshine was pale, like a Marechal Niel rose. From Malwatte Temple, seen dimly through the mists across the shining water, came the sound of tom-toms and piping. And suddenly out of the Temple doors

there streamed forth a procession of figures – like the figures on a Grecian urn – a wavering line of faint yellows, pinks and greens, some dancing as they went, others with pipes to their lips.

Poles apart were these two visions from the Foresters and Buffaloes in their bowler hats. I wonder what the five children in the London nursery would have said if they could have been transported on a magic carpet to the Esala Perahera. They would have wished like myself to see it from the beginning. So few dwellers in Kandy know how it begins. As to its origin, that is lost in the mist of ages.

If you watch for it you will see, before the actual Perahera sets forth, a little procession proceeding to the four Dewales,¹ men bearing flags, little boys carrying flaming coconut oil in an implement with a long handle and a bowl like a pipe-bowl, a Kapurala² and men bearing on a yoke flowers and leaves. They walk around the shrine to the beat of tom-toms and then an offering of portions of ehela tree, jak tree, coconut flowers and jasmine blossoms is laid on a flat white stone.

Then the little boys beat out the flaming oil. The men furl their flags and steal away.

Three nights later the real Perahera begins. To my mind there is no view of it that can compare with the one seen from the verandah of the Old Palace by courtesy of the Government Agent. Last week I watched it returning and again the wonder and beauty of it seized me.

The square is a dim dark plain lit by moonlight. Along the road and on the walls the people swarm like bees.

Along the road lying straight before our eyes as if ruled with a pencil, comes the distant noise of tom-toms and then the flare of lights that herald the four processions. Before you have time to think there is a blare and a hubbub, a medley of elephants and whirling, twisting devil dancers, tom-tom beaters, whip crackers, men carrying glittering fans, men with gold and silver umbrellas – the stately Diwa Nilame³ pacing along the road – men on stilts, men playing on gilded trumpets, and over all a sound of triumphant rejoicing – an exhilarating, glorious din. The burning coconut oil flares reveal the people clustered in the roadway and on the walls, lighting up eager faces and white clothes and jackets and then plunging them into darkness again.

Then the Temple elephant comes into view moving forward slowly, fatefully as if detached from the hurly-burly around him. He bears on his back the “carunda” in which the Sacred Tooth reposes. A white cloth is spread under his feet as he walks, rolled up and spread again by untiring and willing hands.

We followed him into the Temple. From a vantage point we watched the procession roll up to the Temple gates. The Diwa Nilame passed through the archway. The elephant followed. The golden carunda was lifted from the golden palanquin and received reverently in silken cloths by the Diwa Nilame. Then he came up the steps preceded by the tom-tom beaters and the trumpet blowers. The Temple Kapuralas, the men with the golden umbrellas, and the men with the fans swarmed over the walls, helter-skelter like a stage crowd. The Diwa Nilame passed through the doorway that led to the Shrine. He passed with stately steps, between two rows of brown eager faces, amid the deafening din of tom-toms and golden trumpets and tambourines.

As he entered the doors of the Shrine the music was hushed.

Then a sudden terrific explosion from a detonator, scattering sparks from the topmost point of the Temple. The "carunda" had been restored to the Shrine.

We watched the men following with other trappings and accoutrements. The tom-tom beaters packed up their instruments in cloths. All was ended for that night.

We watched the Temple elephant, framed in the archway, swaying to and fro – and the other elephants returning homewards. With their long gold and scarlet masks over their heads, with slits for their eyes, they looked like grim, uncanny monsters masquerading dragons in fancy dress.

We left the Temple and went back to the Old Palace.

Everything was strangely still after the noise of the Perahera. Only the sound of the bells broke the quiet of the moonlight night tinkling, clanging, as the elephants returned, the great and the small, to the courtyard of the Temple and were tethered under the palm-trees.

Years ago I remember being awakened on the last night of the procession long after the Perahera had passed. Bells broke the stillness bells passing by a wonderful lilt and cadence, a broken melody of bells elephant bells.

I looked out.

They were lumbering home – elephants of silver they seemed in the bright moonlight and the bells wove the most entrancing melody as they went by.

The last of the elephants passed out of sight, a silver elephant with a man of silver sitting motionless on his neck.

The sound of the bells died away save for a fitful "ting-ting" borne on the light breeze. Then silence.

"Was it a vision or a waking dream?"

"Fled is that music: Do I wake or sleep?"

END NOTES

- 1 The Right Rev. Hugh W. Jermyn, now Bishop of Brechin and Primus of Scotland.
- 2 Shrines,
- 3 Temple Officials
- 4 Guardian of the Temple of the Tooth

A Thousand Jasmine Flowers (1922)

I sat on the verandah of the library by Kandy Lake and watched the tortoises sunning themselves on the stones, and the lazy lapping of the waters against the walls, and the pageant of colour in the sky.

There was a twinkle of a little bell – Kobaiya's little bell – and Sister Goonachari in her little bullock-hackery drove up to the Library. We had met often, the little Buddhist nun and I, and I had driven with her to several temples in her queer little hackery drawn by Kobaiya, the little dun-coloured bull. The nun's soft dark eyes smiled up at me.

"Peace and blessings," said Sister Goonachari. "I am going to Degaldoruwa Temple. Will you come?"

"Indeed I will."

As we rumbled up the road, the little nun said:

"I am about to offer flowers to your happiness." She opened a large sheaf that lay on the floor of the hackery. "Here are a thousand jasmine flowers."

The faint, sweet perfume rose up and caught at my throat. All the vague, intangible longings that Sister Goonachari would never know, longings for joys of the flesh, the exquisite tastes and colours, the heaping-up of earthly joys, "the eternal love and eternal sorrows of all gods and men."

Kobaiya jogged on.

"Candles we will also buy," said the little nun.

We stopped at the native shop, and Sister Goonachari chaffered for twenty-five candles.

We jogged up the hill, and left the native shops behind, and struck the jungle path. Palms and bamboos and plantains rose in a tangle above us the banks were set thick with sunflowers and lantana.

We came down the river and the bullock-hackery lumbered on to the flat-bottomed ferry-boat.

On the other bank we struck a narrow lane, and jogged along between Temple trees and prickly pears and giant aloes. Here and there the white leaves of Buddha's lamp gleamed among the tangle of green. We passed a few native cottages, where men and women lounged and squatted and flung odds and ends of talk to each other, and the naked babies rolled in the dust and pursued us laughing.

A woman in brilliant green draperies, with a brass water pot on her hip, stood watching us curiously. Above her head the creamy flowers of the Temple tree stood out against the sky. It was one of those sudden shocks of wonderful colour which always thrill me anew. Then we passed into the shadow of a little wood, and she was lost to view under the trees. A boy was cutting red amaryllis lillies. We drew up, picked up our thousand jasmine flowers and the candles and left the cart and Kobaiya to Marikar the driver. In the courtyard of the temples a daff boy, with a mop of black hair, was gibbering and dancing. He was horrible. A yellow-robed priest appeared behind the Vihare and drove the mad boy away. Then he bade us follow him into the Temple. He unlocked the great doors, and they swung back silently. The hot, faint scent of Temple flowers and

jasmine and guttering candles streamed out. Sister Goonachari slipped off her sandals. Gradually, as my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, there loomed out the figure of the great recumbant Buddha, before whom Sister Goonachari had sunk in prayer – the strange impassive eyes, the pale, smiling face, the gigantic figure in its carved red robe, stretching away into the darkness, the smaller Buddhas standing round with uplifted hands and the same inscrutable smile; the overpowering heat, and scent – the little kneeling figure of Sister Goonachari in her apricot draperies.

What were her prayers? For me – for me – the “breadth of Death and Life” apart from her hopes and fears. But out of the scented darkness there came to me a great peace. For prayer from the heart is the finest balsam that was never to be bought or sold.

Then we went out into the dying light of day. The fireflies clustered in the trees and winged across our path; the crickets were singing their never-ending chorus. Sister Goonachari smiled up at me as we passed by the Temple gates. I felt as if the tranquillity that shone in her dark eyes was reflected in my face. I had been very near the ancient faith which giveth peace that passeth understanding.

When I came back to the bungalow the lamps were lit. No one was at home. I took my book on the verandah to my favourite perch looking down on the dagaba,¹ and the moving figures at the Dewale. From the Temple the tom-toms began to roll, and the pipes to play. They seemed a summons: —

Enter the path! There is no grief like Hate!
No pains like passion, no deceit like sense!
Enter the path! for hath he gone whose feet
Tread down one fond offence.

Enter the path! There spring the healing streams
Quenching all thirst! There bloom th’ immortal
flowers,
Carpeting all the way with joy! there throng
Swiftest and sweetest hours.
But we of the West cry out for the mortal flowers of
earthly love.

The peace of the Temple gates had fled. The Temple pipes were
the Pipes of Pan moving, alluring, tearing the heart-strings.

The Unchanging East (1925)

We who live in the East fully realise the changes that lie on the surface, but we know also that much remains fixed, unalterable. This one can never realise more fully than by a first impression of the great Temple at Madura. True, there is electric light, an anachronism one cannot but regret, and many of the booths in the Temple precincts are filled with cheap Japanese goods, but these are only superficial changes. It was our great privilege to be led round by one of the Temple trustees, a courtly and deeply read Brahmin, and we realised fully the truth of his saying

"The ritual the tradition of this Temple, are unchanging throughout the centuries."

The sense of mystery enveloped us from the moment the darkness of the Temple swallowed us up from the light outside. Stilled was the unending clamour of the street and we found ourselves surrounded by strange cavern figures of dragons and other fabulous creatures looming vividly-coloured out of the darkness. Fragrant garlands of pink roses and jasmine flowers were flung over our heads by kindly hands. The world where people travel in tubes and men wear bowler hats suddenly receded so far away that one could hardly persuade oneself of its existence. And, as if to convince us still more that we had stepped into the Past, we were led, to the thrilling sound of pipe and conch, between rows of trumpeting elephants and camels raising their disdainful heads high above the crowd.

Then the crowd and the elephants and the camels melted away as if they were figment of a dream, and we were seated before a

shrine where the Temple jewels were spread out in their barbaric splendour. More garlands were bestowed upon us, and scarves of cherry-coloured silk sewn with gold thread. And then we applied ourselves to take in and all the wonderful regalia that go to the adornment of Siva and his consort Menaksi. There were little jackets sewn richly with seed-pearls, garlands almost as thick as maize cobs composed of pearls and uncut rubies, diamonds and sapphires, and a wonderful pendant of uncut sapphires. The latter so fascinated the King Edward on his visit that he desired to buy it. It was "not for sale," but the royal visitor was allowed to take it home to show his royal mother, together with the priceless carpet sewn with seed-pearls and used in the great Marriage Festival. The colouring of the carpet is exquisite.

The priests handed for our inspection the golden foot and stirrup presented by a collector of the early nineteenth century, Peter Rous, a mighty hunter of elephants. That gift was made in gratitude for his deliverance from an infuriated wounded animal. They showed us the marvellous strings of pearls, the massive ruby and emerald bracelets for the goddess, the chains and pendants and belts, and, as in the days of Solomon when silver was accounted of no value, so rubies and diamonds and sapphires slipped through our hands in such profusion that they might have been moonstones.

The jewels have vanished, and now, amidst the dust, we pass from one huge gold and silver animal to another- horses and swans and bulls -borne by hundreds of worshippers in the great procession.

They, too, fade away, and we are in the approach to the shrine of the goddess, never penetrated save by the priests. But in the outer hall are wonderful carvings in the solid granite. Vast columns wrought into the shapes of gods clustered round a golden flagstaff. And here, with that strange bond of homeliness and simplicity which creeps into the tortuous ritual, on a stone table the insistent crow is fed daily.

A group of women wrapped in meditation sat on the floor below the flagstaff. Near at hand the sound of chanting rose and fell. Brahmins sat upon the ground in two rows facing each other, winding the sacred "thread" which none but a Brahmin must touch and wear.

* * *

In the Hall of a Thousand Columns the eye is lost in a maze of granite shafts, and there is silence, coolness, and a sense of being remote from everything— but there is no time to linger; once again we are led through unending corridors and lofty halls, with their guardian caryatids in the form of horses, elephants and gods.

"I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;

I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed slopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
A down Titanic glooms of chasmed fears."

Surely these long, dim, and very terrifying galleries we traversed are symbolic of the soul's long journey after truth.

Then out at last into the light of day and the golden Lotus Tank with its green water lapping the steps. Here is the first intrusion of modern life, the electric standard rising from the sacred water and the modern iron railings, necessary perhaps, but none the less regrettable.

It is impossible to set down more than a vague impression of so vast and so intricate a shrine. Gazing up at the Gopuran, those astonishing towers that guard the gateways to the Temple, one's eye loses itself in the maze of figures and design standing out clear against the sky. And one is lost in wonder at the infinite patience and untiring endeavour of man to raise, whether in Madura Temple or Liverpool Cathedral, some evidence of his striving to expound the middle of life and to the venerate the Creator.

From the Temple to the palace raised by the King Tirumala, who, in the seventeenth century, built a great portion of the Temple too, is a significant evidence of Time's changes. The Palace is now a Court of Justice. The courtyard is still a dream of beauty, with its huge honey-coloured pillars glowing in the sunlight round a pleasant green garden. And within, the pillars would still be a joy, were they not so horribly disfigured by appalling dirt. A further disfigurement is the wooden structure, dirty white wood of the commonest description, erected over the place where court sits. It is incredible that such vandalism should have been tolerated, or that punkahs in rags cannot be replaced. I

commend the suggestion to the authorities, for I must confess they offend the eye deeply.

There is a beautiful half-enclosed courtyard of the palace, also used as a Justice-seat, with carved capitals and cables, and splendid dragons guarding the spot ferociously. The effect is as of old ivory, save where some miscreant has doubled the capitals with whitewash. This courtyard has the air of Italian influence, and reminds one of the Courts of the Doge's Palace in Venice. A smaller court, remarkable for layer black marble pillars, showed a degree of cleanliness which was refreshing and threw into relief the unpredictable dirtiness of the others.

It is worth climbing to the roof of the Palace to see all Madura spread out before one – a sea of flat roofs ... rising in all their fantastic beauty, ... brown against the sky, the bare hills near at hand and the blue Ghants far away. For here the women of the Palace looked out in the cool of the evening, and here one can imagine the tinkle of the anklets, gleam of dark eyes, and jasmine-wreathed hair.

* * *

The Temple is amazingly fascinating in its majesty, but at the sacred tanks of Jeppekulam the spirit finds peace and beauty. Here, at the January full moon, the god and goddess are brought in procession with dancers and golden cars and golden animals, and the tank is illuminated with thousands of lights. The deities are embarked on the Sacred Raft and spend the night on a little green-bowered island.

And, near at hand, is the shrine of Kali, where childless women come and pray. If their prayers are answered they offer an image

of a baby to the goddess. On the roof of the temple figures stand in hundreds, quaint little creatures, embodying the untold joy of hope deferred at last fulfilled. The day we passed two small clay figures, coloured bright yellow, stood in the roadway. The mother had left them there, and eventually the priest would bless them and place them with the other figures. The words of the Tamil ... of the mal Adigar come to one:

"O heart," cries one of them, then ... not the fetters of wedded life; how many ages, ..., will they live yearning for children.' No profit doth the soul gather save the good it hath done, slight though the measures be."

As one returns from a glimpse into this great and unfathomable country, one wonders if one was wise to record such superficial impressions. Vermans says : "He who says 'I know nothing' is the shrewdest of all. He who says 'I am learning' is a mere talker. He who holds his peace is the wisest and best."

END NOTES

A bell-shaped shrine, sometimes of enormous size, containing Buddhist relics.

Nelly Gratiaen

Sunset (1919)

The Artist's brush, thro' hours of labouring love,
Has lingered o'er His picture of the world:
What tender tones He must devise to paint
The morning in her tire all dew impearled:

Pale pastel pinks of roses in the bud,
And blues that call to mind a baby's eyes,
All veiled in timid golds and misty greys
Like incense vapour rising to the skies.

And then what lavish splashes when the sun
Has trapped all nature in his molten flow,
When opening bud and ripening bloom of fruit
And flashing plumage set the world aglow:

The flaunty Flamboyant dripping showers of red,
The pensive Kingfisher's electric wing,
The golden Alamander and the pink
Antiganon tendrils like a fairy's swing.

And now the day is gone, the dawn forgot;
The sun has spent his fire and sinks to rest.
The Artist stays His tired Hand and lays
His glowing palette on the lonely west.

Awhile we see a galaxy of flowers,
The green of boughs, the crimson of the sun:
And then the curtain of the gloaming falls
Across the picture, and the night has come.

Through storm-tossed ocean side by side
Two fishermen
Enamoured of the scene
Stole back to perfect coral shores
From realms of Might-have-Been!

Christina Parkinson

Fishermen (1936)

Mending nets wherein to hide
Their hopes and dreams and prayers denied.
They sing, these fishermen so brave,
Of foes that ride the mighty wave.
While struggling creatures of the beach
Look on I wonder-out of reach.

Two fishermen of Jaffna
Who found a tranquil spot,
While fancy filtered through the sails
Their troubles they forgot.

Strange, unthought of aspects crept
Into the minds where fancy slept.
A magic wand released desires
And caught them up in orient fires.
Two toilers of the deep did ride

VII

THE "NEW" WOMAN

Constance Fredericka Gordon Cumming

Oriental Customs of feminine seclusion (1892)

Each of these missions has its own schools and chapels, scattered over the many villages of the surrounding districts. The most notable feature in all three is the recent recognition of the tremendously antagonistic power of the heathen wives and mothers, "the backbone of the nation", whom it is always so difficult to reach on account of Oriental customs of feminine seclusion; not that these are by any means so stringent in Ceylon as on the mainland. So a great effort is now being made by each of these missions to establish schools, and especially boarding - schools for girls, and in every possible way to win the women.

This effort was indeed commenced at the very beginning of the **American Mission**, when it was found that Tamil parents were willing to send their boys to school, but declared that it was absurd to send girls, as they could no more learn than sheep! One day, however, a heavy tropical rainstorm came on so suddenly that two little girls sought shelter in the mission-house. As the storm continued, they could not leave till evening,

and they were hungry and began to cry. The missionary lady gave them bread and bananas, and the younger sister ate but the elder refused.

Presently the parents came to seek for them, and when they learnt that the youngest had eaten bread prepared by any one not of their own caste (worst of all by a foreigner), they were very angry, and declared that the child was polluted, and that they would be unable to arrange a suitable marriage for her. They were in sore perplexity, but decided that the lady had better keep the child and bring it up.

To this she gladly agreed, and the little one was soon quite at home. Her new friend sprinkled sand on the floor of the verandah, and thereon wrote the 247 letters of the Tamil alphabet, a few every day, till her young pupil could write them all herself. Some little Tamil playmates came to see her, and were so delighted with this new game that they came again and again, and very soon they were all able to read, to their own great delight and the surprise of their parents.

Seeing how happy and well-cared-for the first little girl was, other parents consented to entrust their children to the foreign lady, and thus in 1824 commenced the Oodooville (or, as now spelt, Uduwil) Girls' Boarding School, probably the earliest effort of the sort in a heathen land.

(I may remark in passing that in 1887 several girls in the Oodooville training-school passed way ahead of any of the boys, a circumstance which proved quite a shock to the Tamil believers in feminine incapacity for the intellectual studies!)

The school grew to very great importance under the care of Miss Eliza Agnew, "the mother of a thousand daughters," as she was

lovingly called by the people. When herself a child only eight years of age, at home in New York, her school-teacher, in giving a geography lesson to the class, pointed out the large proportion of the world which is still heathen. Then and there one little pupil resolved that, if God would allow her she would go and teach some of these to love her Saviour.

Domestic duties tied her to her home till she was a woman of thirty, when the death of her only near relations left her free to follow her early impulse and she was allowed to join the newly-established American Mission in Jaffna. There she worked without intermission for fifty-three years, loved and loving, and teaching successive generations, the children, and even some grandchildren of her first pupils. Upwards of a thousand girls studied under her care, and of these more than six hundred left the school as really earnest Christians.

These became wives of catechists, teachers, native pastors, lawyers, Government officials, and other leading men in the Jaffna peninsula, so that the influence exerted by this one devoted Christian has been beyond calculation. Hundreds of these families attended her funeral, sorrowing as for no earthly mother.

The two sisters who told me these details, and who themselves carried on her work and tended her last hours added: "In hundreds of villages in Ceylon and India there is such work waiting to be done by Christian women as that which, with God's blessing, Miss Agnew accomplished in the Jaffna peninsula. Heathen lands are open to-day as they have never been open before; the heathenism is in the homes. It is the women who are teaching the children to perform the heathen ceremonies, to say the songs in praise of the heathen gods, and

thus they are moulding the habits of thought of the coming generation. If we are to win the world for Christ, we must lay our hands on the hands that rock the cradle, and teach Christian songs to the lips that sing lullabies; and if we can win the mothers to Christ, the sons will soon be brought to fall at the feet of their redeemer."

"Zenanas, which forty years ago were locked and barred, are to-day open. We have been told by Hindoo gentlemen that there are many educated men in India to-day who are convinced of the truth of Christianity, and would confess to Christ, were it not that a wife or mother, who has never been instructed about Him, would bitterly oppose their doing so."

They added that in India alone there are 120,000,000 women and girls; that in great Britain alone there are about 1,000,000 more women than men, and yet the total number of women who have as yet volunteered for this honourable work in India, counting all in connection with every Protestant Missionary Society, is barely 500; and knowing from full personal experience the gladness of life and fortune consecrated to this grand cause, they ask, "Cannot many more women be spared from their homes, and cannot more go who are possessed of private means, and here realise how satisfying is this life-work?"¹

END NOTES

- 1 For most interesting details of the work of these two sisters see "Seven Years in Ceylon," by Mary and Margaret Leitch. Published by S. W. Partridge & Co. Price 25 6d, post free.

Caroline Corner

Justice in Ceylon (1903)

Cynthia's first experience of a Court of Justice in Ceylon – indeed anywhere caused her to think fatal condition in woman! Moreover, it caused her to ask questions. Reckless of consequences, as her grandmother Eve, Cynthia's thirst for knowledge goaded her on. Men maintain that once this train is fired in the feminine mind, they are in hapless security of an express ticket to the bottomless pit. Cynthia has not, however, enlisted on the corps of "Shrieking Sisters," nor was she likely to. Cynthia was possessed of a mind that demanded food as did her more material part. Likewise was she endowed with a heart that oft times ached at the injustice of man – not "mere man" mankind in full, broad sense – and sometimes rose in rebellion and hated the cruelties perpetuated on the weak around her. On the verandah where, amid the profusion of tropical loveliness, the little blue-eyed squirrels peeped out of the purple passion flowers, and tiny tortoises took their walks abroad, and Punch and Sprite lay stretched on guard against the scorching sun, Cynthia loved to sit and muse and dream. Europeans thought she must be lonely. Europeans were mistaken. Cynthia was

never lonely. The gamut of her musings was wide – unlimited. The more she thought, the more there was to think and the wider the gamut grew. From the heights empyrean to – well, perhaps the bottomless pit – everything has interest if one did but take the trouble to look for it – search it out. And even in what might seem to outsiders their monotonous life something was always occurring *worth* this “thinking out.” When she sent a lengthy narrative of her Law Court experience to that honoured old friend of her youth, London’s late esteemed Judge, the reply she received was: “May not the Rose of Sharon blossom in the wilderness? But briars abound. Take heed lest they choke the sweetness of the Rose.” But Cynthia had no desire to emulate certain *habitués* of the Courts of Law – her retired life was proof of this. Only from early childhood she had hankered after the active than the passive: never “Do it for me,” but “I’ll do it” being her refrain. Thus it was fated to come about, perhaps, that her life should be no easy one. It was interesting, nevertheless. This propensity for problems was only indulged when other material duties were done. No one could accuse Cynthia of neglect of household duties, nor lack of taste and that finish that only a woman’s hand can impart, and which, when wanting, no amount of expensive luxuries can atone for. This is essentially woman’s *role* in the drama of life, and she who does not act up to it is no woman at all – in the true sense. Problems come after.

A new problem had been born from Cynthia’s late experience. This was it. Why did not her countrymen on taking possession of the island of Ceylon take their own law with them? The Old Roman Dutch law still prevails in this British First Crown Colony. According to this antique specimen of the balance of justice, a wife can at the caprice and insanity of her husband be not only left totally unprovided for on his decease, but

furthermore deprived of her own, a wife being regarded as a mere chattel of her lord and master which tiring of, may be exchanged, *nolens volens*, when the lord and master chooses to transfer his affection elsewhere. Marriage under such conditions sanctioned by the law of Ceylon is either a farce or a tragedy in which the virtuous heroine – the wife – may be the victim.

Nancy M. Wijeykoon

Our Motherland (1918)

Spilling plains and stately mountains,
Star-crowned heights and gem-decked vales,
Golden fields and verdant meadows
Palmy groves and flower strewn dales.

Lanka, mother-land of heroes,
Lanka, famed in legends old,
Ever theme of song and story,
Mother, help us to be bold.

Help us fight thy cause with ardour
Fill us with the love of thee,
Let us revel in thy glory,
Sound thy praise o'er land and sea.

May we hearken to the story,
Of thy fame in ages past,
And with courage born of union
Make thy fame forever last.

"Sons of Lanka," proud our title,
Nor for thrones or wealth untold.
Shall we barter this our birthright,
More to us than countless gold.

Lion-fierce and strong and deathless,
In our veins there runs the blood,
Of the brave and dauntless heroes,
Now at rest beneath the sod.

By that blood, oh Mother Lanka,
Swear we to be true to Thee,
Use our hearts and lives oh Mother
In the fight for liberty!

Rosalind Mendis

The Native Elite (1928)

One hot noonday, when the sun was shining fiercely on the broad dusty roads, numbers of cars and rickshaws had drawn up outside the hotel. Then another car, a two-seater, came rushing along, and pulled up at the entrance; and out of this car there stepped a gentleman, with a bag in his hand, who, having entered the hotel, then hurried up the stairs.

The hotel was the chief one in Kandy, and was patronized mostly by well-to-do Europeans and rich Ceylonese.

The hall of the hotel, which was also the dining-room, was cool and comfortable, and had large exquisite pictures hanging on the walls, which gave a sense of refinement to it. Just now waiters were hurrying to and fro, serving lunch; and a joyous crowd of visitors, seated at the various tables, laughed and chatted noisily over dainty food served on snow-white cloths.

Sitting at one of the tables were an English gentleman and lady. The latter, very tall and fair, had a skin like ivory; and there was not a freckle to be seen on her face. In nearly every way she was

a lovely young woman, but her eyes were cold and hard, and she looked like a person who was utterly indolent and indifferent. But underneath it all, there was a spring of sharpness and alertness, like that of a panther.

The man with her was, however, very different. With a very tall and strongly-built athletic figure, he had sharp, bold features, which included a most arresting pair of magnetic, dark, deep eyes, which peered into faces as if to read the owners' very souls; while a well-formed mouth gave a wondrous charm, to his countenance.

As he sat there with a careless smile on his lips, his face was wonderfully softened like a child's, but anyone looking at him could not fail to discern that he was of a fierce, passionate, and inflexible nature.

"Well, what was there in the gentleman, to look at so intently?" he demanded of the lady.

"Oh, nothing," she answered carelessly. "But why did he rush up the stairs like that? Who is he, I wonder?"

"Oh, do not cudgel your brains out to know who he is, for I will tell you," the gentleman replied jokingly.

"He is a married man – one Doctor Meghawarna!"

"How dare you say that to me!" exclaimed the lady with flashing eyes. "You know that, if I hate anyone it is the natives. They are such a stuck-up set. I do not mean the ordinary people, but the so-called aristocrat who have been educated in the Western fashion. Oh, how I hate them!" she ended, with a shiver.

"Why are you so prejudiced against them?" demanded her companion. "And pray, what have they done to you, that you should speak of them as if they were dirt?"

"Of course, you would side with them," returned the lady, with a scornful smile. "I wonder you did not fall in love with a native woman!"

"Oh, as to that, it will not happen as long as you are near me, my dear," he said good-humouredly.

"So long as I am near," she sneered. "But when I am gone, you might fall in love with a native – is that it?" she asked, sipping her claret.

"Oh, don't talk rubbish, Hilda!" the man rejoined impatiently. "There are many Sinhalese gentleman I am acquainted with who are very honourable and respectable, and I cannot see why you should have taken such a dislike to them." And he filled his glass with claret.

The lady shrugged her shapely shoulders, but her eyes flashed, as she said:

"You are wrong there, for I do not merely dislike – I hate them! dirty, inferior natives."

"My dear Hilda", returned the gentleman, "take care! – that temper of yours is rather dangerous. – But hush!...here he comes! – Hullo, Doctor!" he then called to Dr. Meghawarna; "how do you do?"

The doctor started to look round.

"Oh, how do you do, Mr. Anson?" he then said, walking towards the table. – If he could have foreseen how his whole life would change under the influence of his friend, he would have shunned his presence, instead of walking towards him, — "I came to see a patient," he then explained. And he bowed to the lady.

"It is years since I saw you," observed Mr. Anson. "I hear that you are married. How do you like your new life?"

"I am quite happy, thank you," replied Dr. Meghawarna. "Do you intend to stay long in Kandy?" he asked.

"Oh, no!" answered the other. "I am a sort of rolling stone, and couldn't yet manage to live a month in one place. When the 'roving' instinct seizes I long to go elsewhere." And he laughed, showing two rows of pearly white teeth as he did so. "By the way," he added, "are you coming for the August races?"

"I don't think I shall be able to," replied the doctor. "Of course I would like to very much, but my wife is not well. – Are you running anything?"

"Yes, I have entered a horse for the 'Governor's Cup.' And I also mean to ride in the 'Hampden Whip.' Have a cigarette?" he said, proffering his case to the doctor. "And won't you have some lunch?" he added.

"No, thanks!" replied the doctor with a grateful look. "They are expecting me at home. – So goodbye! I hope we shall meet again." And bowing to the lady, he hurried away.

Sheila de Silva

Jacolis Understands now (1929)

Nanny !"

Hearing no reply, Betty sat up, calling still more imperiously.

"Nanny, I want....."

Impatiently Alice turned to go into the nursery, taking the garrulous lace-seller with her, being loath to leave her on the outer verandah. Trade was not too good, time was nothing to the dusty pedlar and Alice could listen to some gossip from the village.

Selina, how was she? Maggie's daughter, was she married? The temple buildings completed?

"*Aiyo appatchiye!* but I do miss you all, our Sinhalese food, the pinkamas and village fairs ! If it were not for that husband of mine I'd never come here. But, of course, he and I were always at outs, and unruly Miss Betty is preferable to a tyrannical Jacolis."

But the lace-seller's news left Alice decidedly home-sick, yearning for the untrammelled life of a Ceylon village and the call of the *rabana*. A longing to toast breadfruit at a bonfire with a gang of village girls, or to taste fresh boiled sweet potatoes. Could it really be possible that Jacolis had given up his frequent visits to the gambling den at Brampy's ? Could it be true ? Miss Betty could be a handful at times.

Though Alice loved her charge and the comforts of the Armitage bungalow, it was with a curious sense of anticipation that she boarded the 'bus to Gonapola.

Twilight had almost deepened into night when Alice, walking homewards met Mungo, Cornelis's daughter, returning through the village with a basket of ripe chillies. Heedless of the late hour, the girl wended her way leisurely, humming snatches of some plaintive melody, but with such a gay light-heartedness that it was quite apparent her thoughts were elsewhere. Startled, she stopped her wayward song; yet, she forgot to call out a welcome, and Alice passed on, wrapped in the delights of anticipating the stir she would create by returning so soon.

But, the shack was empty ! Even the mangy mongrel whom she knocked against seemed too tired to lift itself out of the way. At last, after much groping in the dark, she found a half empty bottle lamp and lit it. Even in the dim, flickering light the shanty looked tidy and cared for, the room was swept and clean, the remnants of a mid-day meal carefully covered in a bowl, the earthenware vessels washed and turned over to dry. Jacolis indeed seemed to have turned a new leaf. Alice was hungry, the jak looked tempting. Scraping some fresh coconut she took her dinner, forgetting the man for whom it was intended.

In early August, the weirdest or most grotesque *pambayas* are not enough to keep away hare, cattle and flies from the tender grain.

Charms and incantations seldom held good; the poor *goviya* after a heavy afternoon's work in his stock-garden has to go round the fields.

Jacolis, having driven off the insects, turned homewards, walking wearily round the *neeras*, not as would a man returning for his well-earned dinner.

Things look prosperous, the paddy is flourishing, the prices at the Fairs have been satisfactory, his pumpkins were the best at the Gonapola Fair on Wednesday, the chillies ought to sell on Sunday at Bandaregama; but something worries Jacolis.

Suddenly, throwing back his shoulders he lifts his head and laughs aloud, a harsh unmusical sound, mirthless with the utter futility of this existence, forgetting the beauty of this place, the vision of the girls at the river, the tall grass waving in the moonlight, ghostly and startling or the call of the temple drums, low, muffled by the distance, but calling, insistently, sinisterly, calling.

Surely thieves would not enter his lonely hut; for nearly six months now there had not been a welcoming light in his window. Seeing the light he hurried in but when he saw Alice he stared, blinked and stared still harder. Confound it, but what was she doing here? Had Colombo lost its charms?

In spite of his surprise, good natured and forgiving, he turned to his diminished dinner which he finished off with some uncooked cucumber before turning in for the night. Not a comment, not a query from the impassive, mild villager. Probably it was the cucumber, or the surprise, but Jacolis seemed the victim of some nightmare, murmuring incoherently in his sleep of *Elas*, *Velas* and the buffaloes in the mud.

Colombo and the Armitages had changed Alice. The work of planting manioc and sweet potatoes, tending the bitter gourd or cucumber creepers, picking chillies or tomatoes no longer appealed to her. Jacolis was big and strong. Why shouldn't he work to clothe her?

The paddy was nearly ripe and Jacolis really hard-worked looking after his fields. His wife seemed to spend her time gossiping with neighbours, visiting friends in the village or wandering off to some Fair near by. Uncomplaining, the poor man worked unceasingly, and was only too grateful to old Cornelis's daughters for taking his vegetables to the Fairs, thus enabling him to earn a little more for his gay wife to fritter away.

A grilling hot day, but Jacolis did not come in for his mid-day meal, as a rule he seldom stayed away. The heat was too great to wander out anyway, and Alice turned over and fell asleep. When she awoke it was evening but Jacolis's food still remained untouched. After eating some *Kaungs* and taking some tea Alice set out. Instead of walking into the village she wandered in the opposite direction in search of some fruit. Miss Betty? Lovely child, how she would have loved to ramble about here! Strange it was, but one did ...

Sounds, voices cut short her reverie, and turning a bend in the road she came upon Jacolis's friends; laughing, chattering groups were scattered about, gleaming *daikatties* swung as the girls cut armfuls of the ripe paddy. The men stood behind in rows, collecting each armful which they tossed into compact little heaps; the pure blue of the western sky was gradually changing into red, purple and orange, casting a warm glow

over the fields; the low murmur of the ela was lost in the music of the lilting harvester's song. Just a perfect picture of rural happiness.

But Alice felt out of it, the music at Victoria Park was different, the moan and roar of the sea at Galle Face was grander. Even the busy harvesters lifted their heads to gaze at this alien. Jacolis's wife, why didn't she join them now? Was this what Colombo had taught her, daintily to tread her way along the *neeras* for fear of spoiling her beautiful clothes?

Jacolis at the far-end, collecting the sheafs behind a small gaily singing crowd, had not seen his wife. As soon as his corner of the field was bare, cleared quickly by a strenuous spurt of hard work, he turned to go to his stock-garden and pick some vegetables to send to the fair on Sunday.

The harvest looked promising, and Jacolis, intent on trying to calculate the amount of paddy he would measure after threshing, did not notice Alice as she stood poised on one of the *neeras*, clean, tidy and aloof, beautifully statuesque, a strange contrast to the happy, carefree girls who walked by him now after a strenuous day's work because they liked helping with the vegetables as well.

Hurt at Jacolis's unintentional slight, she turned and walked back, the noisy scene only jarred on her nerves, she was not meant for this kind of life however could these girls laugh and be happy at work which left one hot and dusty ? A breath of the town, a drive along Galle Face, the Racecourse on a cool evening with the witty talk of the "boys" and chauffeurs was . . .

.....

Piqued and hurt, Alice reached home and leaving a short note telling Jacolis that he seemed very happy at work, which she simply detested and that he could continue contemplating the charms and graces of Mungo, she walked to the 'bus at Gonapola, to turbulent Miss Betty, Colombo, and the life she loved.

"One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name."

Ina Trimmer

Under Saturn (1940)

Goonay: Hullo Charlie Aiya!

Charlie: Hullo! I say, it is Goonay Silva, no. Why man, I haven't seen you for a long time.

Goonay: Yes, must be three or four months that we met and talked.

Charlie: Why you didn't come all this time and where you are staying now ?

Goonay: I am with mother at Katugastota. We went away and come back again.

Charlie: What you are doing now ?

Goonay: Aiyo, What doing ! I am just stopping; walking about here and there and doing nothing.

Charlie: Then you are lucky person, no – not doing any work but

just enjoying and enjoying.

Goonay: Aiyo, what enjoying for poor man like me ! You are all the lucky people, no? Doing the la-de-da, and driving the big bus, and wearing the grand clothes, and not looking at poor people like us walking the road side.

Charli: Where you going so long ?

Goonay : I went with mother to our home for my uncle's wedding. He is rather old man now, but suddenly he is thinking, must get married. So mother, now what, she is became the magul Kapuwa and making the match.

Charlie: Ah... who he is married ?

Goonay: My! He got a nice girl. Fine red complexion and good constitution. Not thin at all and bones all showing, but nice and fat. Got fine name also- Kamalawathie – and living in tile house.

Charlie: Ah... then your uncle is a lucky man. Even though old he got a nice young girl. She will be strong and work in the house without getting sick for nothing at all. I also don't like these thin girls. They are a nuisance to everybody and always making trouble. When I am marrying I also will chose some one with a good constitution, but just now what for talking of marriage. I must first make money and be the rich man and then I will look round the girls. Three months now that I am driving this fine 'bus. Till then I am just getting little work here there, but now not I am all right. First class job.

Goonay: I thought your 'bus leaving eight o'clock in the morning but you are here even now. Why you are still not going ?

Charlie: Those days we are going at eight but after the AGA started a new kalla-balla that 'buses cannot all go together our time is changed to ten o'clock. Now must go to time-table. This time-table botheration is a real trouble.

Goonay: A-a-a ! This is a fine 'bus you are driving. You are a lucky fellow, Charlie. Always wearing grand clothes and lot of cigarettes to smoke while I am a poor chap loafing in the kaddie without any money to spend.

Charlie: Then why are you also not learning to drive ? Very easy business, no, sitting in one place and turning the wheel. You are not good to walk about in the kaddies with all the loafers. You and I are both passed the fifth standard, no? We are English- speaking people and we cannot do all kinds of dirty work like our parents.

Goonay: I also know to drive – not only you.

Charlie: Ah! Then why you are not driving ?

Goonay: How to drive without license ? I haven't got a licence.

Charlie: Then why are you not getting one ? Nowadays must have licence for everything. Otherwise government not allowing to do anything. Appoy ! real botheration but good also, otherwise everyone driving cars and therefore no respect for us then. Anyway better to get the licence at once if can drive.

Goonay: I am thinking I will wait till the end of the year.

Charlie: What for waiting so long ? Now only February. End of the year long time more.

Goonay: What to do ! This is a very bad time for me so I must wait. Yesterday only I consulted Odirishamy astrologer who is living near my place and he told me not to begin anything till my bad time is past.

Charlie: What bad time ! You are believing all this nonsense.

Goonay: What to do, Charlie ! My mother is a very superstitious woman and she is believing all the stars. She is not doing anything without asking Odirishamy. He is telling lies and taking money always.

Charlie: Then what he told ?

Goonay: Aiyo ! Lot of funny things. He is telling because of Saturn this "Henahura" I must be careful. Saturn is very bad star for anyone and making lot of trouble. If nothing else sure to break a leg even before finishing, I am under Saturn and must make friends with him.

Charlie: Then what you are doing now to get friendly ?

Goonay: (Laughs uncomfortably).

Charlie: Why man ? Why are you not liking to tell me ? You are frightened I also will try to make love to your star ?

Goonay: What is this nonsense you are talking ! What making love. It is so silly that I am not liking to tell.

Charlie: Never mind. Just tell, will you. Then when Saturn is angry I also will do the same. Go on man. You are like a girl, no !

Goonay: Odirishamy says that every morning and evening I must feed the crows.

Charlie : (*Laughs*). In vain why are you wasting money feeding those rascally crows ? They are thieves, no and will steal and eat without feeding them.

Goonay: No – No. they will steal and eat also but I must feed them because of Saturn. Crows and Saturn all the same kind. In English what saying all the one feather. So every day I am calling “Ca – Ca- Ca” and throwing rice to them and they are eating like anything, fighting and eating. Odirishamy telling then Saturn feeling little friendly with me and might not kill and put.

Charlie : (*gives loud guffaw*). Aiyo-o-o. Calling and giving to eat, when they are coming without calling, You are a real fool, Goonay, listening to your mother and Odirishamy. Look at me I am not believing anyone, I am not doing always what I like and I am having a good job. I am earning about fifty rupees a month.

Goonay: (*In awed tones*) Fifty rupees ! I say you are a rich fellow, Charlie, and what I am always saying you are lucky also. What to do. Saturn is not making bad time for you. I am the only misfortunate person- (*slight pause*). Anyway Alpha Co. must be good masters to pay big salary like that.

Charlie. (*Talking in loud whisper*). Come near me and I will tell you a secret. Now don't go and tell anyone because I am

telling you. Pay is twenty rupees a month but always can make little more, this way and that way.

Goonay. Aiyo, if I also can do like that how grand. I can drive very nicely and can easily get the licence but mother always making a noise and interfering. I don't know what to do with this mother and Saturn. If I also can make fifty rupees a month we will have grand fun, Charlie. We can go to the Bioscope always and I will keep a tin of Nice biscuits in the house because I am liking this English food. After going to the English school I am not liking rice only and I am telling mother to buy the salmon and make nice curry. King and Queen must be lucky people, no, always eating the tinned food.

Charlie. (*Laughing derisively*) What Nice biscuits ! That is good for women and children. We will go and play billiards and drink in the Samij Hotel near the station. We are not the just men, we are the big people and we are doing like the masters in the G.O.H. Hotel. They are drinking the whisky, we are drinking the arrack. Now what ! Whisky putting water, arrack drinking just. I am not liking this water business, spoiling all the good taste with the water, and the smell also then not so good.

Goonay. (*Proudly*). I am also used to drinking. There is a fine toddy shop near my place and I am always having a good pull there. Cha ! What a pity this Saturn began doing all this kalla-balla to me. Anyway what to do – I will even feed the crows and see. Can't say then what will happen. Saturn might be not so angry then. I am going now, Charlie.

Charlie: Wait a little, will you, what for this hurry? I am thinking of a grand thing. Get inside and sit down and we'll beat a round and come. Good to go now and see if anyone in the market side wanting to mount the 'bus. Then you are seeing what "shoke" I am driving. I am changing the gears and trampling the accelerator and then the sound like fighting in the Europe, so loud.

Goonay: Aiyo ! please excuse Charlie. I will come another day. Now I must go because if I am delaying mother will get angry and in vain scold me. Now already very late and mother told to come soon.

Charlie: Appa ! You are a real mama's kiripodda. No; always running to the mama's lap. Not ashamed to do like that ?

Goonay: What for telling ! You are not knowing my mother. She is one very fierce woman, just like Queen Victoria. When she is opening her mouth we are shivering and not knowing where to look. If I delay even a little she will scold till kingdom come. In my stomach fire also coming when I am thinking of her and her mouth.

Charlie: Now what if scold a little? What for getting so frightened? You are now a big man and yet you are worse than a louse even.

Goonay: Stopping here and talking it is easy, no. You come to my place and see. Uppoy, can't stop for the karachul. Trying. trying to get rid but can't.

Charlie: Aiyo. I am not frightened of anyone. Even if the devil coming and turning the tail in my face I am not caring.

Goonay: That is the devil, no? What is the devil? You don't know mother, much worse than the devil also. He cannot talk, but mother when opening the mouth can hear to Kayman's Gate even. So I am going Charlie. I will go and come.

Charlie: Wait, wait will you. I am thinking of a grand thing. I say Goonay. Look here man, if I get a car for you to drive next Monday you will come and get the licence ?

Goonay: Eh.... ? (unbelievably)

Charlie: (Laughing condescendingly) I am having rich relations so I can do what I like. My uncle he is a very rich man; he is having a fine big Dodge car and I will borrow and give to you drive. He won't refuse anything when I ask because he is loving me like anything. I am his only sister's son, no? So why don't he love me. he will give his life for me even (-short silence-) why man, why won't you talk? You are just stopping and looking at me like a -like - a, I don't know what.

Goonay: I - I - I say Charlie. I don't know what to say. What to thank You are very good friend to me. What is a brother! What is a relation ! No one ever helping me, only you. I will never forget the kindness. I will pay back even with my life. All this time I couldn't get the licence because I am not having a car to drive, now because of you I am not having a car to drive, now because of you I am all right. God will bless you, Charlie.

Charlie: (Suspiciously). You are sure you can drive? You can get the licence?

Goonay: Aiyo, now why are you asking these things ? I can drive like you, so what for talking? You know Geeris Mudalali?

Charlie: That one living near Katugastota bridge?

Goonay: Yes. He got one market there, and he have a hiring car also. Those days Geeris Mudalali and my mother great friends so he is always teaching me to drive. Afterward he get angry with mother and now won't even look at me. Mother going to scold and that is what happened. He won't even come near now.

Charlie: Very well. I will tell my uncle. He is living at Assgiriya in that big house on the hill. You know where?

Goonay: A.. h... that new house near the temple?

Charlie: Yes. With the wall round and lot of steps. It is called Ferfan. That is my uncle Fernando and my Fanny auntie. I will ask him and come and tell you tomorrow if he will give the car. He is sure to give because he is always kind like that but he will also go with you. He is frightened that peoples will quietly go to Colombo or somewhere in the car when he is not there. But what harm if he come. All the better. Only thing must beat a gallon of petrol because he is stingy also sometimes.

Goonay: Appoy, what is that. Can easily put. I will borrow the money and beat the gallon inside and if your uncle come not harm at all. We will both go to the Inspector to get the licence. Then you will come and tell me tomorrow, Charlie if he is giving the car?

Charlie: Oh yes I will come tomorrow evening about seven o'clock. I am not like that breaking the promises and landing the lies. If I am telling a thing I am doing.

A week later

Goonay: Charlie is a very good friend to me. He told his uncle must give me the car to get the licence and uncle also saying yes. He is a very kind man to give me the Dodge car to drive. Inspector told to come at three o'clock to see to give the licence and now two o'clock. One more hour for me but anyway I will go early to uncle's house and wait. Mother asked where I am going with my new cloth and red handkerchief in the pocket. She thought I am going for to enjoy but I am not telling her. If she know she will only say "Aiyo, my son what for you are doing these things now? Wait till Saturn goes and finishes" and then beginning to scold. What folly this Saturn story! How then I am getting all this good luck if Saturn is my star ? To-day Monday very good day also. In the Sunday papers all the astrologers telling very good day for undertaking (*Knocks at door of uncle Fernando's house*).

Uncle Fernando : Ha ! you came ?

Goonay: Yes.

Uncle Fernando: Very good. You must wait a little till I dress. You sit here and wait. I will go and come. (*Sound of retreating footsteps*).

Goonay: This is a fine big house. My, how nice to live like this. When I am a driver I will collect the money and buy a house

and I will put a fine name, Goonay villa. Then everybody knowing it is my house. When say Villa, sounding very grand. I will have two big lions in the front side with the mouth open and the tail in the air and people will say when looking "Aiyo, must be Aratchie who is living inside." I will dress only the silk shirts and the silk sarong and I must have the white tennis shoes like Charlie. How to walk about without shoes when I am driving big 'bus. My hair also too short. Must have long curls like a brush then I am looking like a proper driver, and Engo Hamy will look always at me and will think to marry me. Now she is turning her face thinking I am not good for her, but when I am a driver she is not good for me. Hanging the konday on the neck and turning this way and that way and walking, thinking she is a great lady because she can beat the rabana louder than anyone. Who wants a rabana ? I will marry the girl from a tile house and she will play the seraphina, might even beat the piano.

Uncle Fernando: (In the distance, voice coming closer). Then I am going, Fanny Nona. What to do must help these young people. We are now having a little money so must do "ping" sometimes, otherwise God will angry with us. I will go and come. Ha! You are ready, young man ? You will drive the car, no?

Goonay: Yes. Sir. Inspector told says to come three sharp.

Uncle Fernando: What for hurrying. Have ten minutes more. You know the house.

Goonay: Yes. Sir. He is living only little far? When say "whoo" can hear.

Uncle Fernando: All right come go. (They set off – sound of car horn in the distance).

Goonay: There—There the Inspector. He is standing in the front and waiting. I told I am coming three o'clock so he is waiting.

Uncle Fernando: Good-day, Sir. Get in Mister. This is the young man who is asking the licence.

Inspector: Good afternoon. I will sit in front with him.,

Drive along Trincomalee Street-

(Sound of rasping gears and acceleration). Now-Now-Not so fast
Mind Policeman-Look out; you nearly killed him - Slowly -
Take the turn slowly, and drive round the lake.

(Sound of acceleration).

Uncle Fernando: What is this going like aeroplane. What for going so fast..... Will kill somebody also before finishing.

Inspector. (In a loud voice) Slowly- I told you to go slowly. No need to hurry.

Uncle Fernando : (Gives loud sigh of relief)

Inspector : That's right. That's what I want. You are getting on quite well carry on. Go round the lake - Very good- stop-
Now here's a good place to turn- Reverse .

Goonay: (with frightened voice). R—Re-verse?

Inspector: Yes. We We'll go back the way we came.

(Sound of acceleration).

Uncle Fernando: My God, man what are you doing ?

Goonay: (Excitedly) I am reversing no?

Uncle Fernando: Stop! Stop! Now enough. No use reversing any more. I am not liking this reversing business. Better to go to the front without going to the back. What is this going back like crab. Now good to go front again.

Inspector: Look out. Don't back any more- stop !

Uncle Fernando: Aiyo My god, stop ! now enough!

(Sound of acceleration).

Inspector: Look out We are in the lake !

Uncle Fernando. Aiyo stop ! enough! enough! Aiyo my car ! My new car! It is going – Going – Gone! You fool ! Catch him, mister ! There he is jumping ! There he is running ! Let me get out ! Catch him! Catch Him ! Catch Thief !

Her Wedding Morning (1941)

Mrs. Fernando. H'n...H'n...Come Leela. Come, come, child. Come to dress. Now getting late.

Leela. Why, it isn't late at all, mother. It's only twelve o'clock and there's tons of time. It's far too early to think of dressing.

Mrs. Fernando. What early! Wedding at three and you are taking one, two hours to dress. How long you are taking with all the "kolung" painting here, curling there! Don't I know what and what you are doing when you are dressing.

Leela. Oh, there's lots of time.

Mrs. Fernando. All right. You wait and see, the bridegroom also having to wait while you are doing all this nonsense.

Leela. What nonsense?

Mrs. Fernando. H'n.... Now enough. You are talking too much. From morning doing nothing but talking. What is this I don't know talking, talking from the time you are getting up.

Those days when I was a young girl brides are not like this, running about for everyone to see, not ashamed at all and bold like lions. When I was young how nice the bride, stopping in one place and not liking to look at people even but sitting quietly with the eyes looking down like afraid. Now! Real "saroopadaya." Appa—a ah ! I don't know what to say.

Leela. Mother you really must not say appa—ah. We were taught never to talk like that. It is not a nice sound at all. English people never say appah.

Mrs. Fernando. (Angrily). Then what are they saying if not appah?

Leela. They say "Oh dear"— or "Good Gracious" Much nicer than appah—(Imitates her mother).

Mrs. Fernando. (Snorting with rage). Coming to teach me. Ha.... Saying I am making the bad sound. I am not making the bad sound at all. You are the one. I am only speaking like all the people. What is happening to this world I don't know when daughters coming to teach the mother how to talk. You think you are the clever person and the great lady just because we scraped and scraped and sent to High School to learn the English. Therefore you think you can teach me. No one can teach me. I knew English before you, and I also went to school, not only you. I am fifty years old now and I have been talking for fifty years. What are you coming here to teach me a chit of a girl twenty years only. Can you teach me when I have been talking longer than you?

Leela. You cannot possibly have talked for fifty years mother though you were ever so clever. You.....

Mrs. Fernando. (Interrupting). And why pray? Why am I not talking fifty years. How do you know when you are not even born?

Leela. You couldn't possibly. How can you when.....

Mrs. Fernando. (Interrupting). Then you are saying I am dumb? This is a nice thing no, when daughters are not only fighting with their mothers but telling they are dumb also. What else! And on the wedding day!

Leela. I didn't say you were dumb. I only said you couldn't possibly have talked for fifty years.

Mrs. Fernando. Ha...! then what is that but saying I am dumb? Aiyo! that I am living to hear this. Here I am talking loud as ever, and always I am talking this way, and my daughter is saying I am dumb. I am getting respect from all the people except my children. What to do! That is the way no! How much all the people liking me, but my children only very wicked and complaining. Everyone this side calling me Walauwa hamoodoorowa even though we are not having a walauwa but just a house. We are keeping the elephant also because everyone thinking very respectable people then. All the people round this place coming to ask the advice from me and I am giving to every one and they are always listening because they are thinking I am the wise person. No one getting married but coming to ask from me whether good match, and I am telling bring the horoscope; how to tell without seeing the horoscope. No one getting ill but coming running here asking what to do and I, I am never saying no. I am always ready to help even all the people, rich and poor all alike.

Leela. But mother you are completely off the point. I never said anything to belittle you.

Mrs. Fernando. Shut your mouth, child. Coming to interrupt when I am talking. Not only calling names to me and telling

I am dumb but showing the "adambara" also and won't listen even to what I am saying. Using the big words for me not to understand and showing off on the wedding day instead of stopping in a corner like a bride.

Leela. But why should I sit in a corner like a naughty child? I am not a child any longer to be pushed into a corner and punished. I am a grown woman now.

Mrs. Fernando. Grown what? You are calling yourself a woman! What woman for you. You must have two or three children before can say woman to you. Anyway, why telling you are a woman when you are so careful to use all the proper words? Not a nice thing to say at all. Woman good only for the common people. Must say lady. Don't say afterwards that I am telling you are a woman.

Leela. (with a sigh). No mother, don't you worry. I shall never accuse you of that. I am quite prepared to be a woman and not a lady. But we have wandered from the point.

Mrs. Fernando. What point? Haven't a point at all. You are just talking like a fool, because nothing else to say. These days people don't know how to talk. Highya- o! What things we are seeing in our time. Our mothers and the grandmother must be turning in the grave but they don't know what lucky people they are.

Leela. Why lucky? Is it lucky to be dead?

Mrs. Fernando. Started again. They are lucky not to have a daughter like you, checking the mother and showing off on the wedding day. What they will think when they see

you fighting with the mother I don't know. They will tell to me "Ango Nona, you have brought up your daughter very badly," and I will say "Aiyo, what to do. We are sending to the fashionable school for the education and this is what is happening, showing the adambara, talking like anything, smoking the cigarettes- when we get, but not much money here for all that".....

Leela: (Interrupting). Mother, you know that's not true. You know I don't smoke.

Mrs. Fernando. (with loud voice). What ! You are telling I am lying? What else? Not enough saying I am dumb now telling lying also.

Leela: I never said you were lying. I only said I did not smoke, and you know that.

Mrs. Fernando. What do I care if you are not smoking. I am seeing other girls with the cigarettes, puffing, puffing like the engine and thinking the young men all admiring. Admiring itself! Appah! What a horrible sight! For me can't say how bad. Cha! What will my mother and grandmother say when seeing all this. They won't be able to talk at all when they look at the la-de-da that now girls are doing. With this botheration of an education all the heads turning the other way. Smoking the cigarettes, wearing the shoes, with the high heels, hanging the konday on the neck and sometimes cutting that also and putting all kinds of names and telling bobbed. What is this bobbed? What folly I don't know cutting the hair that God gave. All the sastharas saying woman's hair the great beauty and singing songs how beautiful the black hair hanging down the back. And

now-cutting the beauty and throwing in the dirt, sometimes barber also taking. Appoi-I don't like to think even like this. Without hair like without clothes.

Leela (Laughing). But it's cool anyway, and so easy. You just run a comb through your curls and you are ready.

Mrs. Fernando. H'n..... Cool! What next! What is this heat! tell me ? When we were young no one thinking about the heat, but now people must go to Nuwara Eliya also to get cool. Spending, spending and going because fashionable to feel hot. Newspapers also writing like anything and printing all the names of the hot people for everyone to read. I cannot remember what, but they are putting a grand word to this running up-country in the April month..... Ex..... ex..... something. I think excitement.

Leela. Exodus. The exodus up-country is what you are thinking of.

Mrs. Fernando. Unne that is the word itself. Long ago I learnt in the Bible about the Jews going Exodus. Now what! Exodus for Ceylon people also, not only for Jews. Everyone is going mad now, and the girls! Appah! They are the worst of all. When thinking the hair is also hot. Then if everything is hot what about dancing? Haven't I seen in the Gymkhana Club turning round and round and going like mad and a man embracing also. Not hot then! Pouring perspiration sitting down, fanning, starting again. Nice things no that we are seeing.

Leela. dancing is the poetry of motion. It is born in us. It is natural to dance.

Mrs. Fernando. I don't know what you are meaning, trying to talk like the books. If natural then why I am not dancing? You think I will go and hop about and tell Lambeth. Walk or something? You think I will go and allow another man to put the arm round and jump with me? When thinking even my stomach turning. Fifty years I have lived and only your father who is embracing me. If I begin to dance he will tell he is not wanting me any more. But nowadays girls not caring who is putting the arm round and all the strange men coming and embracing and telling dancing. Good name! Appah!

I am ashamed to think even what is happening to this world. Drink—keeing—danc—e—eeing—smok—keeing. What and what doing these girls now. Fire coming to my chest, when I am thinking about their end.

Leela. But we are not a bad lot, mother, in spite of all these things. Are we now? We can look after ourselves which you all couldn't. Whenever you went out a servant accompanied you just as if you were a child, while we are at home anywhere. We don't want servants to walk behind us; we are not afraid of anything. You must admit girls of the present day are a jolly capable lot.

Mrs. Fernando. Capable! Ha—a! What can you do?

Leela. We can drive a car. We can earn our

Mrs. Fernando. (Interrupting). Grand thing, no? To drive a car. What for keeping servants then? Capable itself! Like dolls dressed up, finger nails painted, toe nails painted, how to know what else. Lace jacket showing the body. What will

my mother think when seeing that! How to tell that my daughter is doing the same! What a strict person she was! Never allowing to wear short sleeves even, and I am also never asking because I am not brought up like that.

Leela. You really are too old-fashioned mother, sticking to ancient customs. We wear our national dress now while you did not. The skirt is part of the English costume. We are Sinhalese, and we must dress like Sinhalese, not imitate the Western nations.

Mrs. Fernando. Child! Stop talking like that to me; telling I am imitating people. I am dressing like my mother and grandmother. I am not imitating anyone. Other people trying to do what I am doing because they are giving the respect to me. When I am sending you to High School all the people this side started sending their children also.

Leela (Laughing). So you admit you did a wise thing in sending me to the High School, even though I wear a lace jacket, and dance and do all the other things you think so horrible.

Mrs. Fernando. Of course. I am doing the wise thing always. No one can say I am foolish. Your father is always listening to me and doing what I am telling. If he won't I will give him something that he won't forget easily. I am a strong-minded woman no? And what is more I have a strong arm also. I will give it to him properly if he come to argue with me. What for saying we are the Queen of the house, if the men coming to ride on top of the Queen. But he won't come to talk with me. Those days he tried, not now. Now he is holding the tongue.

Leela. Poor old Dad!

Mrs. Fernando. Why poor? What is the matter with him? He is not poor at all. He is getting lot of respect this side and all because of me. I am the person who done everything for the family. H'n...If not for me where are you all? But you are not grateful. You are thinking you are the great person and the capable. What capable? You can cure the sick people like me? You can set the bones, making the pathoos, rubbing the place, just like gus vedda? Sometimes of course not coming right, but doctors also killing people sometimes. I am not the only one. Can you cure the eyesight like me? What and what people coming with the bad eye and I am pouring the medicine with my nail. Took long time to grow in the small finger, and how nice and long now.

Leela. (Yawns).

Mrs. Fernando. You can make cassaya like me? No one can -not like me. When I am mixing the arraloo, booloo-nelli, and putting the other thing in it- I am not telling what because that is a secret- then ready to drink. The taste- appah- what a bad taste but doing lot of good. What for you are making such a ugly face and shivering?

Leela. The thought of that awful cassaya. Ugh..... It will always make me think of the end of the holidays. Horrible stuff.

Mrs. Fernando. Fine horrible. If I am not giving you the cassaya always where will you be? anyone looking at you will tell that you are the Rathoo kell-la and all by drinking the black cassaya. If you didn't drink and keep the health who will even look at you. Now you are getting married and all,

because of me. Last year when next door Haminey trying to make that match for her daughter the suitor coming and saying "Aiyo I am not liking for this girl. See her constitution. Very thin no! But you are nice and fat. No one can say anything about your constitution.

Leela. Don't you think it's time I got ready? We have been taking a long while and it's late.

Mrs. Fernando. Yes-yes. When I am talking it is getting late, but when you are talking then no harm. That is the way with the children nowadays. The poor mother is ill-treated and kicking this way and that way like dirt. What to do-must bear in silence all this.

Leela. Silence!

Mrs. Fernando. Now never mind. Don't come to argue again. I am only giving a little advice. Good for you to listen before getting married, otherwise how to know what you will go and do.

Leela. Oh!, I know what to do.

Mrs. Fernando. What?

Leela. Oh lots of things - social service, tennis, hockey, bridge parties, cocktail parties.

Mrs. Fernando. Child, don't talk like that. It is not nice. No one saying about fowls and cocks before people. That is what you tell about in the back garden, not when putting a party. How much better things to talk about than cocks and hens.

Leela. (Laughing). A cocktail party has nothing to do with fowls.

Mrs. Fernando. Then what for giving that ugly name? Cock-Tail. What is the meaning of that? Aiyo I cannot understand. Just putting names for nothing at all.

Leela. Well mother, I'm off. if I don't get dressed now, I won't be able to get married, and then what will Anthony do?

Mrs. Fernando. Huh!.....Anthony. What about you?

Leela. Oh! I.....I can easily find some one else (Laughs).

Mrs. Fernando. Don't pretend, child. We know how you are loving Anthony like anything. Will give the life even for him. When I am getting married we hadn't this love business. All that now is modern times. When our parents told to get married we obeyed. Now must fall in love. Now, must pick and choose. This one is bad, that one hasn't a car. Aiyo. aiyo- what a life! anyway go, go, go. Dress, will you, like a "thewditchee" with lace jacket and the white saree like a "paynayray." Annay for me, very ugly.

Leela. Ugly! I think my wedding saree is a beauty.

Mrs. Fernando. That is what you are thinking. For me how nice a white muslin jacket and the pink silk skirt. Can buy nice pattern in the Ismail's shop. But you are liking all these new styles and wearing the..... Wearing the.... the — Aiyo I don't know the name but very ugly anyway.

Leela. You mean georgette. My wedding saree is lovely, white georgette embroidered in gold and with my gold shoes....

Mrs. Fernando (Interrupting). Now enough. No use talking anymore. Just go and dress, will you. I will come and put the veil. (Sound of retreating footsteps).

Mrs. Fenando. She has gone and I also must go and see how she is dressing. My Leela is a very good child though I am telling all these things to her. On the wedding day must give the advice, otherwise I am not the proper mother. Leela's father and I are very proud because Leela making such a grand match. Lot of money and family also good. What more to want. If not for me nothing happening and Leela one old maid. Appa— what a though! But I am the one who did everything, thought the High school giving the good education, teaching to talk and to behave nicely, then the young men thinking 'my how nice' I and wanting to marry. Anyway now I am going. Babahamy —Kelle—*where* are these servants? They are also getting frisky and not doing any work. I am going and giving to them properly.

Clare Rettie

St. Anne – Match-Maker

Girls I am tired of this life, tired of saying 'Hullo- Hullo- Is that 9900 or 0099' endlessly all day. Sometimes the voices sound so nice and I long to talk to them, especially, the men, but I am only a means to the end."

"Not means to the end Isobel. Means at the end" said Cynthia Alwis powdering her nose preparatory to going out.

"Oh go on, Cynthia, trying to be clever again. Mean at the end of what. Who's mean"?

"You my dear" said Miss Grey, a tall angular middle aged female settling herself more comfortably in the only easy chair in the room.

"I am not mean. You know perfectly well that of all us girls I am the one ready to oblige anyone who wants an hour or two off."

Isobel looked round angrily with flushed face at the dozen or more girls in different stages of preparation for departure from the dressing room of a large telephone office in Colombo.

"Your education has been sadly neglected Isobel" began Cynthia.

"Goodness - Girls" broke in plump good natured Bertha Mathews. "Why do you bicker like this? We haven't yet heard the whole of Isobel's grouse and I want to know what it is all about."

Isobel Vandenheim pulled her hat viciously down on her mop of black curls.

"I don't know that I shall tell you or anyone else. You are an unsympathetic lot."

She swung towards the mirror and looked at herself critically.

"I wonder why no one has fallen in love with me. I'm not too bad to look at even though I am on the plump side. My complexion may not be chosen as an advertisement for a beauty cream but it is quite good all the same, and my hair's naturally curly so I'll be a cheap wife for anyone; no need to spend on perms. My nose is what really worries me, the wretched thing will turn up."

"What are you getting at?" asked Miss Grey, "why this laundry list of your charms?"

"Well as I was going to tell you when Cynthia interrupted, I am tired of life at a Telephone office and I wish I could get married."

"Why that's easily done." Said Miss Grey.

"Easily done" echoed Isobel, "then why haven't you done it yourself?"

"For the simple reason married life doesn't appeal to me." Miss Grey's tone was distinctly acid.

"Go on, tell me how do you set about getting a husband? Do you wear a placard on your back 'To let a wonderful home-maker' or 'Available a perfectly good wife', or do you advertise in the papers, 'Wanted a husband, good looks and riches essential.'?"

"Don't be silly. Nothing crude and vulgar about it. It is done in the silence of your room and in the seclusion of your bedchamber."

Isobel drew closer, interested in spite of herself.

"What it is Miss Grey? You look really serious."

"I am. Come over here and I'll whisper it. These things mustn't be shouted or the whole telephone staff will be putting up their banners in a month or two."

"Come on Miss Grey," said a crowd of voices. "Let us also have a share of this luck."

"Well, some of you may not believe it but it was told me by my grandmother who believed firmly in its truth. As you know St Anne is the patroness of marriage. You buy a little statue of her and place it in your room and every day and night and morning you repeat before her several times.

"Oh St Anne
Send me a man."

There was a shout of laughter from the girls.

"What nonsense. You surely don't believe old woman's talk?"
said Cynthia.

"My grandmother was old but she could have never have been
accused of talking nonsense. She could have taught young ladies
of today a thing or two worth knowing...."

"Like winning a husband with gibberish" said Cynthia walking
towards the door.

Miss Grey rose from her chair.

"Gibberish or not she had told me it has come true. I wonder
what you will say when Isobel invites you to her wedding."

Cynthia's reply was a superior sniff, but Isobel went her way
very thoughtfully.

A few days later she entered a shop in the Pettah where amongst
other things little China figures of saints are sold.

"I want a statue of St. Anne" she said.

"Yes Lady – what size?"

"About ten to fifteen inches high."

"Three Rupees."

It was a big price to pay for a gamble with fate and she could ill-
afford the money but every human being is a speculator at heart
and she could not resist the venture. After much bargaining St

Anne was hers for two fifty. She placed her in her room on a
little table by herself. Not a word did she say to anyone of her
purchase but every day she knelt before the statue and said with
great fervour.

"Oh St Anne
Send me a man."

Weeks passed into months but no man appeared in answer to
her prayer. No one even showed a passing interest in her, yet
she continued with her jingle of lines, soulfully, assiduously, in
full faith of a miracle being performed. At length weary with
hope deferred so long she sought Miss Grey one evening.

"How long have you to say that prayer to St Anne, the prayer
you told me about?" she asked.

Miss Grey looked at her curiously.

"Why do you ask? Have you bought a St Anne and have you
actually given it a trial?"

Isobel looked round uneasily wondering if anyone had heard.

"N-n-o-o" she said. "But I am thinking of trying it. I was
wondering how long I would have to keep on with it."

Miss Grey laughed. "It's impossible to say how long. May be
years. Nothing like making a really good effort. Good luck to
you Isobel. Who knows, perhaps next year this time you'll be
married."

And Isobel tried again. But there is a limit to human endurance.
There came a day she felt she could no longer look on that serene
face that seemed to her to have no pity in it but just a calm

satisfaction that was quite impersonal. She went up to it and said aloud,

"No. I will not kneel to you. You are incapable of helping me or you don't care. Either way you are useless to me."

She put on her hat, picked up the statue, made a neat parcel of it and with it under her arm hurried to the Wellawatte station. She was late that morning; her interview with St. Anne had taken longer than usual.

"Never again" she said to herself. "I've had enough of you," and decided to leave her parcel behind on the seat. She was sure no one would notice it till she was well out of the way; the office hour crush would be her protection. But not so easily could she shake off her companion of many months.

A voice called to her as she left her carriage

"You have left a parcel behind."

Trying to be gracious she said "thank you" and with the statue once more in her possession she reached the office. "What can I do to get rid of you, you miserable creature?" she muttered.

It was a trying day altogether. There seemed to be more calls than usual, and the thought of the unwelcome package waiting to go out with her at the end of the day made her head ache. "I'm off for a long bus ride" she told the girls, and together with St. Anne she boarded a bus bound Mount Lavinia way. It seemed to her they were inseparables. Then inspiration came to her like a flash of light on her gloomy thoughts. She would leave St. Anne in the bus, to ride where she will, till someone rescued her and gave her a home. Guiltily she left her on the seat when

the bus stopped at Mount Lavinia and clambered down the steps with heart and hands light because of the encumbrance left behind. Once on the road she was safe; there was the shelter of the crowds. In her hurry to reach her refuge she stumbled and nearly fell. Never did goal seem so remote. Then a shout made her look round. "Your parcel Miss. You have left a parcel." A fellow-passenger came forward holding it out to her. With as good a grace as she could muster she thanked him. What to do with it? How to get free of it? These thoughts chased each other in a never-ending circle as she walked aimlessly along the road that led to the sea.

A brain wave assailed her. What better resting place for this unwanted woman than the depths of the sea. She was determined not to take her home again and see her standing with that watchful gaze for ever upon her. She must dispose of her somehow and at once. She took off her hat and let the cool night air blow through her curls and with a sigh of relief saw the hotel lights ahead. Over the railway lines she picked her way and then down the embankment to the sea shore.

There were few people about. The usual crowd who came miles to bathe in this special bit of sea had gone home, for already dusk had deepened into night. In the distance the Galle Face lights glittered like a chain of jewels against a setting of dark velvet. A soft breeze stirred the coconut palms by the shore while a calm sea threw little feelers of waves on the soft wet sand. It was a scene of brooding peace but its charm did not enter Isobel's soul. With heart beating rapidly and nerves tense with excitement she walked along the water's edge her one desire to be free of this thing which was a load in her hand. It was an obsession she could not shake off.

Once more she prepared to get rid of her burden. Lifting her hand high she held the statue aloft and flung it with the added

strength of exasperation. But no ensuing splash followed. Instead there was a dull thud and an exclamation of surprise and annoyance. She ran up panting with horror and disgust.

Striding through the waves came a man in bathing costume carrying the brown paper parcel in his hand and shaking the water from his hair and eyes.

"I'm awfully sorry. Did I hurt you? I didn't mean to hit you. I aimed at the sea," she said and burst into tears. The events of the day were more than she could bear any longer.

"Evidently I am a bigger target" said the assaulted one, "What is wrong? Don't cry."

But tears were a relief and she sobbed unrestrainedly and did not notice his amused brown eyes looking down at her.

"It's St. Anne" she said between sobs. "I cannot get rid of her." And out came the whole story, how tired she was of office life, and how she longed for a little home where she could make someone happy, and she had bought the statue of St. Anne because she had heard of her wonderful powers and had recited those silly lines till she was sick of them. But St. Anne had not helped her and now she could not get free of her for try as she would there was no parting for them. Sobbing afresh she told him of the incidents in the train and bus.

The young man looked at the parcel in his hand.

"Poor ill-treated lady," he said. Let me give her a home."

"Oh take her, please do. I never want to see her again."

He laughed gently and led her higher up the beach. "I can quite understand what a tiresome day it has been. We'll sit here and rest awhile till you have recovered enough to go home."

It was only the lateness of the hour that made them say "Good night." Isobel's nose was tilted saucily at the world again and her hat perched even more jauntily than usual on her shining curls. Her hands were free of encumbrances for he carried St. Anne very carefully and tenderly.

"Good-bye St. Anne" she called. "I'll never see you again."

But St. Anne had done her good deed for the day, and very soon came her reward. Pride of place is hers in her new home, for she is the Patron Saint of the little household where Isobel reigns as queen.

VIII

**MYSTERIES OF THE ORIENT OR THE
CHARMED TALE**

Bella Sidney Woolf

The Copper Bowl (1922)

I was sitting on the verandah of a small bungalow that looks out upon the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy. The sun was setting and the sky above the Temple roof was a blaze of scarlet and flamingo pink. The golden spike of the Temple glittered against the palm trees on the opposite hills. In a little while the evening tom-toms would blare out and rend the still air. The interminable tinkle of the elephant bells was hushed, for the elephants had gone down to the river to bathe. The shadow of the Bo-tree lay long and faint across the grass; the heart-shaped leaves fluttered ceaselessly, and the sound of the breeze in the coconut trees was like the noise of running water.

The sky faded to lemon-yellow. I sat in the radiant peace of evening.

* * *

"I have brought you a present."

The voice made me start. I had not heard my host, the Antiquarian come through the bungalow.

"A present for me?"

He held in his hand a small copper bowl. The fading lemon light showed that it was worn and dented.

"Guess what it is."

I took it in my hands.

"A copper bowl."

"Oh wise young woman. But its purpose? It was fashioned a hundred years before you were born."

"So old? Was it used for flowers or rice or begging?"

"Not for one of them. Will you give it up?"

"Yes, I am no hand at riddles – but I like it very much. I love old things, things that have seen unconsciously such strange happenings. So do you, I know."

"Indeed I do. They are the joys of my life. And this was a clock in the days of the Kings of Kandy."

"A clock! You're poking fun at me."

"Indeed I'm not. Hold it in the light. What do you see?"

"A little hole. But that doesn't make a clock!"

"It does. Listen to this."

* * *

He fetched from the bookshelf the calfbound volume of Knox and read: —

"They have no clocks, hour glasses or sun dials, but keep their time by guess. The King indeed hath a kind of instrument to measure time. It is a copper dish holding about a pint with a very small hole at the bottom. This dish they set swimming in an earthen pot of water, the water leaking in at the bottom till the dish be full and it sinks. And then they take it out, and set it empty on the water again and that makes one "pay." Few or none use this but the King, who keeps a man on purpose to watch it continually. The people will use it upon some occasions as if they are to sow their corn at a particular hour to bring the good lucky season, then they make use of the copper-pan to know the time exactly."

"How very, very queer," I said. "What is the Sinhalese name for it?"

"Patetiya. The Greeks had a water clock too and called it klepsydra. It toned the hours on flutes or reeds."

"And how did the Sinhalese mark time?"

"A peya is a Sinhalese hour and is 24 minutes of our time; sixty Sinhalese peyas equal about 24 hours of our time. They have 24 vinadi – call them minutes to their hour and 24 tathpara, which corresponds to seconds, to the vinadi."

"May I time my little bowl now? I'm as pleased with it as a child with a new toy."

"Of course, it's yours. Boy – Boy!"

* * *

The "boy" came flying from the go-down at top speed, returned at the usual pace after receiving the order, and came back less tempestuously with a basin of water.

I dropped in the bowl and together we watched the water ooze through the little hole, while the minute hand crept round the dial of the Antiquarian's watch.

The shrill little cadence of the pipes that heralded the beating of the Temple tom-toms smote the air. The sound seemed to carry us back to the days when there was a man kept on purpose to watch the flowing of the water that marked the flow of time. The bloody tyrants, the barbaric splendour and the savage deeds that the little copper bowl had survived, rose before me with the clearness of a vision. And every moment that the water rose seemed to me a more visible ebbing of time than the stiff hand of the watch.

"Of what are you thinking?" said the Antiquarian.

And the words came to me as if I were the mouthpiece of the spirit that breathed them:

"Time lent us flies away in the time that is lent us, every minute coming being the death of that is past....After a hundred years eternity is just as long as it was.

* * *

The little bowl was nearly full.

The tom-toms blared and rolled and the pipe rose triumphant as if in defiance of my words.

The little bowl was full.

I saved it as it sank. It was nearly dark on the verandah now. Only a star shone faintly above the golden spike of the Temple.

The Fortune-Teller

Celestina, my little ayah, used to sit for hours in the doorway of my room working. She made me think of a little bronze idol. I wondered what thoughts passed through her head, or if she thought at all. The birds flew in and out above her, making a soft chattering.

Sometimes I sat in the room and worked, and it was then I learnt of Celestina's profound faith in fortune-tellers. It was through Celestina that we consulted the oracle.

"This is a very unlucky time for me," said Celestina.

"Why, Celestina?"

"Everything is going wrong. I ask the man who sits at the road by the Maligawa, and he is saying so. I shall not be lucky till Pebruary month."

And Celestina smiled her dazzling smile as she contemplated, with true Eastern fortitude ten months of misfortune.

"What man do you mean?"

"Missie has seen him. He is telling peoples what will happen. Some gives ten cents, some more; he is a very good clever man."

"You mean a fortune-teller."

"Yes, missie, that's what is called. Last year when my husband and I takes the boarding-house, I am asking him, 'Will this be good?' And he is saying, 'No, you shall not.' But I will do it and now everything gone."

"What sort of a boarding-house did you keep, Celestina?" I asked, for this was a new episode to us.

"For native peoples what works in the shops and schoolboys. But my brother-in-law he is a very bad, cruel man. He brings people what comes and eats and doesn't pay. There is one man – I am making hoppers for four peoples, and putting them on the table. He comes and eats all."

"But why did you let him?"

"Can't help, missie. My husband is a very stoopid man."

With this philosophy Celestina goes to the almirah¹ for our dresses, for tea-time was approaching. Eleanor, my cousin, joined us and I explained to her our conversation up to date.

"And what did the people pay?" I said, reverting to the boarding-house.

"Some ten rupees a month – that schoolboys; some fifteen, some twenty. Then one of them is stealing my jewelleries from my box and goes.

Like the musical comedy actress at Home, there was never an ayah in Ceylon who had not had her "jewelleries," stolen at some time of her career. It is a story as ancient as the confidence trick.

We murmured our sympathy with Celestina. "Everything I am having is going," said Celestina. "When peoples ask I must give. There was once in Colombo a woman and she asks me, 'I am going to my brother's wedding, and lend me your konde

kura."² It was a kura with nice pretty stones and gold. So I am lending it. She is going and not coming again. Then my husband say, 'You are a stoopid woman; you will not see your konde kura again.' But one day in a boutique I see the woman what took my kura and I run, run for the policeman, and he takes her to the police station. She is a very bad woman, missie, and she is telling the judge plenty lies and I am not getting the kura. When she comes away I pick up some sand and throw in her face, and am saying, "May you die so."

Celestina's face expresses intense satisfaction at this illegal method of recrimination.

"But what about this fortune-teller?" said Eleanor. "Is he any good?"

'He is very good missie. He is telling me, 'You soon gets work' and I come to missie."

After this example of wisdom we could not do less than expend a rupee on the future. Celestina was requested to bring the soothsayer on to the verandah.

"They say," said Eleanor, "that these Eastern fortune-tellers are perfectly marvellous. They can actually read the future like an open-book. They have a gift of second-sight. Magic, of course, and all that kind of thing was cradled in the East – yogis, soothsayers, prophets, prophetesses, palmists – what are they but the followers of the Occult and —."

"Man came, missies," said Celestina, cutting short Eleanor's little lecture.

"Personally, I haven't much faith in these things," I said.

"Oh, but you must have faith," said Eleanor. "That's so necessary. Wait and hear what this creature tells you. I feel sure we are going to be startled."

We followed Celestina on to the verandah.

He was a long, lean, brown man, and he wore a black and white check cloth, a seedy grey coat, and a red handkerchief knotted round his head. He clasped the inevitable umbrella and salaamed to the ground. Then he squatted at our feet.

"You first" said Eleanor, "and don't let him tell you anything unpleasant."

The man looked up at me.

"Lady," he said, "I tell ze trooth, good or bad."

We felt rebuked, and would not have dared to suggest any amelioration of the tragedies he might see in our hands. I held mine out meekly.

He glanced anxiously at Eleanor, then at my hand.

"Lady, zere is tings what must be tell in secret." Eleanor laughed.

"Evidently he suspects you of a Past. No, no, you tell right away," she said to the Fortune-teller.

"There are no secrets between this lady and me."

He wagged his head sadly.

"Tell not your heart's secret to ozzar womens," he said in a

sepulchral voice. Then he fumbled in the pocket of the seedy coat brought out eight brass dice strung together, and a book full of cabalistic signs.

"Missie do so."

Missie threw them on the book, and he examined them with painful solemnity.

"Christian name, missie?"

I wrote it on a piece of paper, and he scrutinised it, holding it upside down.

Eleanor began to chafe.

"This is tiresome," she said. "Hurry up, old man. We can't sit here till tomorrow."

He glanced at her reproachfully, screwed up his face in the most appalling grimace, and rapped out these words of wisdom: —

"Missie going long way, not knowing why. Missies sad! I know not wiz friends, husband, or children (he glanced up in my face), missies sad now, having stomach-ache or smarting chest."

Eleanor gave a choke and gasp, and disappeared into the bungalow.

"Thank you," I said, rising hastily. "I think that's quite enough. Eleanor! Eleanor! It's your turn."

But Eleanor was not there.

"More telling," said the plaintive voice of the fortune-teller; "Missies coming back."

Eleanor re-appeared, advancing with a strained expression from the other end of the verandah.

"Is it all over?" she said.

"Yes; your turn now."

"No, thank you. I'd sooner hear more about you. Go on. Don't be stupid."

"How like you, Eleanor!" I said. "Well, after all, I haven't heard much for my money yet." I sat down and held out my hand.

"Missie getting much money; missie seeming proud, not really; missies going in the temples and giving money just like Governor."

"Ah!" said Eleanor, sotto voce, "he saw you give ten cents in the Temple of the Tooth this morning."

The fortune-teller mouthed horribly.

"All missie's friends very rich. Missie remembering I am a very poor man."

Eleanor winked at me.

"Missie unlucky time ending five months and five days from this day. Missies finding good, kind gentleman and ten childrens."

I dared not look at Eleanor.

"That is quite enough for one day," I said, "and now tell the other lady something."

Celestina, who never grasped any conversation for directly addressed to her, beamed on us and remarked irrelevantly, "He is a good, clever man."

"And what do we pay this good clever man?"

I asked.

"Some peoples is giving a rupee," said Celestina.

"It's not worth ten cents," I said, but I handed a rupee to the good, clever one, and bade him depart. He salaamed obsequiously, gathered up his umbrella and departed, protesting that he was "a very poor family man."

"They sat," I murmured to Eleanor, "that these Eastern fortune-tellers are perfectly marvellous. They can read the future like an open book, they can —"

Eleanor ignored me.

"If those are your Eastern fortune-tellers," she said, gazing after the retreating figure, "give Me Bond street, a red lamp, and a pair of bead curtains."

* * *

Long afterwards I realized that we had entertained an angel unawares. Amidst the dross there had lain concealed a grain of pure gold.

"Tell not your heart's secret to ozzier womens."

Priceless above rubies is that piece of shrewd advice – the Eastern soothsayer's reputation is vindicated. I apologise to the "good clever man." Would I could double that rupee. To all my sisters I commend the blazoning above their door-posts of "Tell not your heart's secret to ozzier womens."

END NOTES

- 1 Cupboard
- 2 Ornamental hairpin

Monica Patricia Gunasekera

Faithful Unto Death (1926)

High above Kandy, where the hills are high and green there stood a lovely estate bungalow, where Mr. & Mrs. Brown and their little girl Betty, lived. What an isolated spot it was. Hills and Jungles all around, and not another bungalow to be seen. Especially in wet weather, they seemed entirely cut off from the rest of the world.

In spite of the glorious scenery, Mrs. Brown led a lonely life, especially as Mr. Brown had to go to the Head -office in Colombo once a month to get the money to pay the coolies etc. Betty who was just four was the delight of their lives. She had golden hair, and big brown eyes and she was a veritable ray of sunshine in the house. No wonder everyone was devoted to her.

One day, Mr. Brown had to go to Colombo, and was to stay away for two nights. It was the monsoon and owing to the damp and chilly weather, Betty had caught a severe cold, and was far from well. The next day, the little miss seemed worse, so Mrs. Brown sent down to Kandy, eight miles below, for Dr.

Wijesekera the D. M. O. He was a nice little doctor, just returned from England, where he had been studying.

He buzzed up on his motor-bike and examined little Betty. His intelligent little face was rather stern and grave and he said that he feared that Betty was in for pneumonia and he gave Mrs. Brown suitable instructions.

"Do you think it is going to be serious?" asked poor Mrs. Brown.

"No, I don't think so if we are careful" replied the Doctor, "but of course this weather is rather against her. Well, I'll come up again in the evening and see her." "Oh yes do. Please do." said the anxious mother.

"Oh, rather, nothing shall prevent me. I'll turn up even if I die" was the Doctor's joking goodbye, as he mounted his motorbike, and rode off down the steep and rather narrow road.

Little Betty seemed worse in the evening, the hours dragged on and Mrs. Brown was beginning to think that the Doctor was not coming after all.

The rain poured down in torrents, and the wind howled round the bungalow. The sick child moaned, as she tossed from side to side. At last the hall clock struck twelve in its deep solemn tones.

"Oh supposing my little Betty dies." sobbed Mrs. Brown. "If only the Doctor would come, I feel sure he could do something." Just at that moment she saw the Doctor had come, and was standing by the bed. She had not heard him come in. He looked

ghastly pale, and his clothes seemed dripping with mud and his left arm hung limply at his side.

"Oh doctor, I am so glad you've come. But oh, what has happened? I am afraid you've had an accident."

"Yes," said the Doctor quietly "I have had an accident. But I promised to come, you remember."

Then he turned to examine his little patient. After a few moments, he said:

"The crisis is past. She'll do well now. Goodbye, Mrs. Brown, you and the Dorai were always nice to me."

"Oh thank God. My Betty is better." Said Mrs. Brown, not noticing at the time, the strangeness of the Doctor's goodbye. She was just going to offer him wine or coffee, but she noticed that he had already gone.

"That's queer" she thought. "I didn't hear him come and I didn't hear him leave. Ayah," she added, rather sharply. "Has the Doctor Master gone?"

But the ayah stolidly maintained that she had neither seen nor heard anything of the Doctor's visit, and Mrs. Brown concluded that the woman had been dozing throughout

.... The next morning was bright and cheerful, with no trace of the storm the night before. Betty was wonderfully better and sat in bed demanding her favourite "Baking" (bacon). Mr. Brown was home by nine o'clock having come by the night mail from Colombo and motored up from Kandy.

He seemed rather sorry about something and almost the first thing he said was: "Have you heard about the accident yesterday?"

"Why? What?"

"The poor little D.M.O. was killed yesterday morning as he was returning from here to Kandy. It seems his motor-bike skidded on that beastly Hantane hill, and he was thrown over the precipice, and must have been killed instantly. His poor body, fearfully injured, was found by some coolies at midday."

"But, but" cried Mrs. Brown horror struck. "The thing's impossible. He couldn't have been killed yesterday morning. I tell you dear, he was here, seeing Betty last night."

"My dear girl, you must have been dreaming" said Mr. Brown. "I assure you the poor little Doctor was killed yesterday morning. And very, very sorry I am – He was a most conscientious and trustworthy fellow, and I liked him very much."

Then, indeed, Mrs. Brown's blood ran cold, for she realized that it was the Doctor's spirit which had come to her, the night before.

"Faithful unto death" she whispered while tears streamed down her cheeks. "Yes, and beyond Death. May he rest in peace."

Mabel Fernando

The Cup and the Lip (1937)

"Look Menike, the procession is passing beneath us now. Here comes Weliwita Rala with a great gold collar round his neck, and there's the black horse which they say is a gift to him from the Dutch. See, is it not a beautiful animal?" Sirima peered excitedly over the painted banisters that railed in the open gallery, and pointed in the direction of the noise that came from below.

Drums beat, and people cheered. It was evident that the returning Ambassador was receiving an enthusiastic welcome from the crowd, among whom it was rumoured that his mission as a diplomat had proved as successful as his military operations were.

Half-unwillingly Lilavati rose from her seat, a slim beautiful figure in her bright saree and gleaming jewels, and slowly advanced to the railings by the slave girl's side.

The awning of cloth that was stretched overhead shielded her from the fierce afternoon sun, but the heat beating on the dusty street, or some inward emotion, made the colourful scene below swim for a moment in her eyes.

The escort of soldiers who headed the procession had already marched past, but as Lilavati looked down, the four drummers whom the King had granted as a special token of honour to the conqueror of Morawaka were rattling by; and behind them, attended by his umbrella and fan-bearers came Weliwita himself, a young man of soldierly bearing, splendidly attired. His dhoti and sash were of rich blue cloth; he wore a heavily gold embroidered doublet, and on his flowing locks was a velvet cap adorned with a jewelled gold flower.

He was on foot, having dismounted at the entrance to the Capital as etiquette demanded, and as he passed by the tall two-storeyed house, it seemed to Lilavati that he cast a quick upward glance at the balcony where she stood.

As she started back, he had gone by, and the procession closed after him with more attendants, soldiers, and a long train of sweating bearers carrying white draped packages which contained the rich presents the Dutch had sent to the King.

Long after the party had wound away towards the Palace, Lilavati sat by the balustrade gazing out, paying no heed to her attendant's chatter, till Sirima, noticing her absorption quietly slipped away.

Motionlessly she sat on, with hands clasped on her lap and a wistful look in her expressive dark eyes, while the afternoon shadows slowly lengthened. Her thoughts suddenly breaking

away from the firm control she exercised over them, were flitting away over the past twelve months, to the time when with her exquisite beauty she had been the most admired lady-in-waiting at Court, and Weliwita Rala a handsome but obscure nobleman there.

Only a brief year ago, but how life had altered for both of them in that time! Weliwita and she had loved each other then, but his suit had been rejected by her father, the ambitious old Dissawa of Undugoda, who had arranged for her instead an alliance with Unambuwa Banda, a wealthy and influential Courtier who was said to possess princely connections.

The girl had dutifully submitted to the shattering of her romance and married the man of her father's choice, while her disappointed lover had gone away to the Southern Border, to plunge into the fierce irregular fighting that was going on there with the Dutch outposts.

Fortune had then suddenly smiled on him in her fickle, ironic way. As the days passed reports had frequently spread to the Capital of Weliwita's extraordinary valour, and of the unfailing success that attended his daring excursions. Very soon he had risen high in royal favour. Rajasingha who was always quick to appreciate military talent made him a General, and he was often summoned to Court to be loaded with fresh honours.

The latest was his being entrusted with this important embassy to Colombo. Lilavati knew that if Weliwita had accomplished it successfully it would further fret the temper of her husband for Unambuwa Banda, who had a haughty and suspicious nature, was bitterly jealous of his former rival, his resentment being

increased by the knowledge that his wife had married him merely in obedience to her father's wishes.

Lilavati found herself musing wistfully how different life would have been if she had not submissively taken that step, and had dared to follow the dictates of her heart. She was still lost in profitless reflections on what might have been when she was startled into the present by her husband's entrance.

"So you must have seen that upstart returning from his precious errand," he said with a sneer on his dark frowning face, "A great deal truly he seems to have accomplished though he took so long over it!"

"Why, has he not brought back a favourable reply?" she asked timidly, for she disliked talking to him of Weliwita.

"A favourable reply," he repeated derisively, "Why, the Governor's letter makes no reference at all to the opening of the Ports which the King and Council demand. He has merely offered to return all the territory which they have taken from us during the last few years. Of what use is that to us if the ports are to remain closed?"

Lilavati checked herself on the verge of a reply, thinking it wiser to remain silent, and Unambuwa took an impatient turn or two about the gallery.

"Other people know of quicker ways of rising in the world than by flattering the King's vanity," he observed darkly, stopping in front of her. "Thou mayst not believe it of me, but I have the means of rising to the very top, as thou wilt see very soon."

He turned and strode away abruptly, leaving Lilavati a prey to great uneasiness. She rightly suspected that he was deep in another plot. During the few months that had elapsed since their marriage she had not known a time when he was not scheming, either against the King or for the downfall of fellow-Courtiers who had roused his resentment. Lilavati felt as if she was living on the edge of a precipice, for she knew well what the terrible penalty would be if his treason was detected, for him immediate death without trial, and for her worse still perhaps - degradation to the Rhodiyas.

But Unambuwa Banda, shrewd plotter that he was, experienced none of the anxiety that alarmed his wife. He was playing for a big prize, and he had formed his latest plan so carefully that he was absolutely confident it would not fail. If it worked out well, all his soaring ambitions would be gratified. He would be able to place on the throne his popular kinsman Ambawela Rala who was at the time a fugitive in Colombo. But the substance of power would of course then remain in his own hands, and he would be able to sweep out of the way all his enemies, including that upstart Weliwita.

But, on the other hand, he congratulated himself that even if by any unlikely chance the plot should miscarry, there was not the least risk of his being implicated in it. The weight of suspicion would fall on other heads chiefly on Weliwita's; he had cleverly arranged for that.

Impatiently he paced up and down his room, awaiting the arrival of the emissary whom he had sent to carry out the initial part of the scheme. Presently he was ushered in, a soldier in travel stained clothes— for he was one of the escort that had accompanied the Ambassador.

"It was hard work to get away from the Palace. There were so many watchful eyes to evade," he excused himself as he saluted profoundly.

"Well, what news, Konappu?" What said the Hollander?" asked Unambuwa eagerly.

"He seized your offer as a fish swallows bait," replied the man. "All your terms are accepted, and on receiving news that the deed has been done Ambawela Rala will be sent at once with a force of five thousand soldiers and the amount of money you requested for expenses."

"That is well," observed the other joyfully. "But the means that I asked for, has it been sent?"

"Ay," returned Konnappu with a broad grin. "Among the presents which were sent in the care of our loyal general there is a package of the choicest wines obtainable in Colombo. What you wanted is in a bottle marked on the bottom with a blue star."

"Thou hast done thy part excellently. And wilt be fittingly rewarded," said Unambuwa approvingly, "Go, tell Uttiya about the marked bottle. Let him arrange the matter tonight itself. The King is sure to ask for the Dutchman's wine while his heart is touched with the messages of love and devotion they have sent!"

After the man had departed, Unambuwa resumed pacing up and down the room in order to calm his sense of elation. He had reached the zenith of his career of intrigue, and dazzling success was at hand. It would not be spoilt by any awkward fumbling

this time, for taught by previous experience he was employing very few agents. Besides the trusty Konnappu, the only other man in the Kingdom who was in the plot was Uttiya the King's taster, and him Unambuwa had heavily bribed to pass the poisoned wine.

Also it added in no little measure to his satisfaction to know that the fatal cup would be presented to the King under his own eyes, for according to the privilege of his rank he was a server at the Royal table.

With a light heart he arrayed himself more carefully than usual, and preceded by attendants with lighted torches set out to the Palace to perform as he expected his last service to the King.

He arrived at the Banquet hall just as the trumpeters in the outer Courtyard announced the hour of the King's evening meal. Smiling grimly to himself at the humour in the action he tied loosely round the lower part of his face the white muffler which he received from a page on entrance, for it was part of the strict Court etiquette that the breath of the servers should not defile the King's food.

As he took his place among the other muffled nobles who had likewise assembled in attendance, he flashed a quick look at Uttiya, an ample figure of a man, who stood at the further end of the room, beside a large table which was laden with an array of gold and silver dishes covered with white cloth.

The man returned a scarcely perceptible nod, but it sufficed to fill Unambuwa with an unholy elation. He almost started guiltily as the imposing figure of the King entered and seated himself at the low table, spread with white linen, which stood in

the middle of the Hall. Silver oil-lamps, burning on earthen brackets along the wall, shed a bright illumination on the scene. The few favourite Courtiers who accompanied him placed themselves behind the Royal chair, and among them, as the conspirator noticed with a frown, was Weliwita.

Either the flattering despatches the latter had brought or some other occurrence seemed to have put Rajasingha in great good humour, for he talked and smiled with his attendants more freely than was his wont.

One nobleman placed before him a gold platter lined with a green plantain leaf, and the others hastened to bring him the various dishes handed to them by pages under the direction of Uttiya, who had previously tasted of each concoction to prevent the risk of poison.

Rice fragrantly cooked in ghee, savoury curries of vegetables, meat, tastily dressed by the fair hands of the Portugese women who partly staffed the Royal cuisine, sweets of various forms, and ripe fruit brought from all parts of the country were in turn offered on bended knee by the obsequious nobles. But the King ate sparingly, almost toying with the food, and capriciously rejected his favourite dishes.

"No, not that, bring me wine," he said to Unambuwa Banda, waving away the bowl of scented sherbet which the latter proffered him.

Unambuwa hastened to obey with a beating heart. The moment he had waited for had come, though it took him by surprise that the fatal draught should have been asked of him. He had not expected that, and had indeed begun to fear that the King would not call for wine at all that night.

With hands that trembled with excitement and his mind agitated by a queer medley of feelings which he could not understand at the moment, he took from Uttiya the tall crystal goblet filled with sparkling red wine, and crossed the Hall with a slightly unsteady gait.

His gaze fixed fascinated on the deathly liquid frothing in the cup, he was unaware that the King was watching his advance with a strange gleam in his fierce dark eyes.

As the nobleman drew opposite the table Rajasingha stopped him with a gesture.

"Is this the wine that was brought from Colombo today?" he enquired.

The Taster hastened to assure his Majesty that it was so. But the King scarcely heeded, and continued to gaze at Unambuwa intently, almost curiously, as if at a strange animal which he had not seen before.

The guilty noble paled sickeningly under that piercing scrutiny. A cold sweat broke over him, and in spite of his efforts at steadiness his hands shook so much that a little of the wine splashed on the marble floor, and trickled away like a thin stream of blood.

"Thou dost not seem to love the beverage of the Hollanders as much as thou dost their gold," said Rajasinha at length with a slow terrible smile, "that thou mayst get accustomed to it drink now of that cup."

The words convinced Unambuwa that the game was lost. He felt dizzy as if a fearful chasm yawned at his feet. Still his wits

did not completely desert him, and he hazily recollected the specious arguments he had prepared for such an eventuality.

"Your Majesty," he stammered with a spurt of returning confidence, "it was Weliwita Rala who brought the wine."

"Drink!" said the king again, inexorably, quietly, but in the tense silence his voice sounded like the booming of a cannon.

Unambuwa pulled himself together with a strong effort. He realized that his fate had overtaken him, and it occurred to him that Rajasinha, with his saturnine sense of humour, was offering him an easier course of expiation than the law decreed. With a firm hand he raised the cup to his lips and drained it to the dregs.

Even as the priceless goblet - a gift from a Dutch Governor - dropped from his nervous hand and shattered on the floor, he crashed down beside it in a convulsive heap.

The King rose and surveyed the twitching figure with a sardonic smile. "Truly our Dutch friends spice their wines well. It is good thou wert not tempted to taste of the liquor thou brought me, Weliwita," he remarked turning to the young General, who like the rest had been looking on at the scene in utter amazement.

Weliwita started. In his surprise he had not grasped the insinuation made by the fallen man, but as he realized the nature of the plot it struck him that there was strong room for suspicion to fall on him likewise.

"Your Majesty, I was absolutely ignorant of aught" he began to protest, but Rajasinghe cut him short.

"Nay, I know thou art innocent," he said graciously, "This traitor plotted directly with the Dutch, but the agents whom he employed, Uttiya here and the spy whom I sent in thy suite, informed me of his evil design and that reminds me I ought to send them at Colombo an assurance of my excellent health. Bid the guards take this carrion away and bring me information if he dies."

He left the Hall to stroll in the cool overhanging balcony, and the courtiers followed, eagerly discussing the event.

Weliwita went with them, his heart pulsing with a sudden new gladness of which he felt somewhat ashamed. Whether Unambuwa succumbed to the poison or revived to perish under the executioner - elephant's hoof's, Lilavati would be free again. The thought throbbed in his brain, but he dared not let it revive his dead hopes, for it was quite possible that Rajasingha might, according to his practice, visit his vengeance on the entire family of the traitor.

Weliwita considered anxiously whether in that case his new-found favour with the King was strong enough to let him intercede for Lilavati. Knowing Rajasingha's uncertain temper the young nobleman did not feel very hopeful he would succeed, while there seemed to be a greater chance that he himself would thereby incur the Royal displeasure.

Some minutes passed fraught with acute suspense for him. The King called him up and leaned on his shoulder as he walked. The young man was trying desperately to find words in which to press his request when an officer came to announce that Unambuwa had expired.

"It is well," said Rajasingha indifferently. "His goods are forfeit to us; let them rot where they are. As for his wife " he paused as his glance suddenly fell on Weliwita's strained and anxious face.

The unspoken entreaty in it revealed to the astute Monarch more plainly than words could have done his favourite's secret. He was touched, and one of his rare kind impulses moved him from his usual severity.

"No, not so, I grant all the traitor's property and the lives of his dependants to Weliwita Rala, as a reward for his loyal services in the recent embassy. Make a note of that gift," he concluded abruptly signing to a Mohottala who was in attendance.

Weliwita prostrated himself as much from gratitude as to conceal his incredulous and overwhelming joy.

"Maharaja, may your Highness attain Buddhahood. I am humbly thankful for your great bounty," he said gratefully.

As soon as he could leave the Palace he sped through the darkened city to Lilavati's house, intending to inform her of the fatal occurrence as gently as possible, and to assure her of her own safety.

But the ill news had already reached her, and he found her in a state of great distress, as much at her husband's sudden and violent end as at the dreadful fate which she apprehended was in store for her. Weliwita's unexpected entrance startled her at first, believing that he had come to see the King's sentence on her carried out.

"Nay, thou hast naught to fear for thyself. The King intends to do thee no harm; he has given thee over to my care," he assured her soothingly, and was rewarded by seeing the glad surprise and gratitude that lighted up her beautiful tear-wet face.

"Then thou has surely interceded for me with the King. He would not be so generous otherwise," she murmured as she bowed to him, a great surge of joy filling her heart at this sign that he still cared for her.

In the days that ensued the romance that had been nipped an year ago quickly revived again, as the shadow of the tragedy passed away from Lilavati's life. A few weeks afterwards the lovers were happily united, Lilavati's father heartily acquiescing in the match this time, for by now the ambitious old man had become profoundly impressed by Weliwita's increasing wealth and the great popularity which he enjoyed at Court.

The Curse of the Cobra (1938)

For the last half mile the narrow path which wound up the hill to the rock temple on its summit had grown increasingly steep and uneven, and the walking party were obliged to pause now and again and take breath.

The younger people did so on the excuse of admiring the view, which was.... Mr. Templeton, middle aged and heavily built, frankly mopped his brow and felt the antiquary's zeal, which had inspired him to undertake the journey, rapidly oozing away under the heat and exertion. The others of the party included Clare, Mr. Templeton's daughter, her husband Donald Leigh, and their guide and informant, Mr. Kerrick Meluille. Clare and Donald had come to Ceylon for part of their honeymoon, and they had been joined here by her father, who had also come out to the East in the pursuit of his hobby, the study of antiquities. For the past week the three of them had been leisurely making their way over the romantic hills and ruin strewn jungles of the central parts, charmed alike by the scenery and the archaeological remains they had discovered.

"What made them build a shrine in such an inaccessible place, Mr. Meluille? Was it the view from here or is there a legend about this spot?" asked Clare curiously.

They were nearing the summit, and all around them as far they could see the country side spread in a rolling sea of green. From the wooded depression at their feet the view ranged over smooth grassy hillock and sombre jungle clad hill, with vivid patches of paddy fields interspersed among them, till the eye was intercepted at length by the distant wall of purple veiled

mountains which projected against the sapphire blue of the sky. "Well, the view no doubt was a factor, replied Meluille. "But as you have guessed, there is a story also about the origin of the shrine. According to local tradition a medieval king once took refuge in the cave above during an invasion of his capital. There the god Vishnu is said to have appeared to him in a dream and promised him victory within seven days. The prophecy was fulfilled, and the king in his gratitude converted the cave into a temple, and had his vision among other tales painted on the walls. You will find the frescoes looking quite fresh still."

He went on to discuss, for Mr. Templeton's benefit, the age and artistic merits of Ceylon frescoes, showing incidentally an extensive knowledge of the subject. Occasionally there were unconscious orientalisms too in his talk, but that rather agreed with his description of himself as a Ceylonized Englishman. For the rest, he was lean and tanned, with the suggestion of a twinkle in his eyes, and his age might have been anything from 35-50.

The tourists had made his acquaintance at the Ritigalla Resthouse where the four of them happened to be the only guests, and learning that he was familiar with the locality, they had asked for his guidance to places of interests in the neighbourhood.

The road had widened again, and it set off little side tracks to the mud and thatch houses that nestled half hidden in the hollows. At one junction they came upon a little boutique perched by the roadside. In front of it a knot of rustics had gathered round a gypsy looking fellow who was squatting before a bit of clothes spread on the ground. "What can they be doing over there?" inquired Leigh.

"Oh, the fellow is a juggler demonstrating quite a common trick," said Melville. "He is making a magic mango tree sprout up from a seed. Let us push on. Here's the dewale in front of us."

Ascending the shallow steps cut in the steep slope they arrived at a levelled space before the famous rock. The Kapurala or priest of the Dewale, an imposing looking old man, opened the thick wooded door which guarded the entrance to the cave, and civilly led them in himself.

Within the shrine it was so dark that at first they could see nothing, though the overpowering scent of na and jasmine flowers at once assailed their senses. Then, gradually, in the dim flickering light cast by a few burning candles, they made out the large figure of god, carved out of solid rock, which faced the entrance.

Mr. Templeton switched on an electric torch and fell to examining the paintings which covered the uneven ceiling and walls, while Claire and Leigh started a leisurely survey of the building. "Is there anything beyond this?" asked Clare, coming to the rock partition behind the central image.

Melluile interpreted the question into Singhalese, and smilingly conveyed to her the Kapurala's answer. "He says there are several small caves beyond inhabited by deified cobras, the guardians of the shrine. Would you care to go and have a look?"

She gave a scared look over her shoulder and the next moment was at the door "How frightful! I wouldn't have gone in if I had known," she gasped.

Melville and Leigh, who had followed her out, laughed. "There is nothing to be alarmed about. Those creatures are accustomed to seeing people, and they don't harm anyone," said the former, "but if you don't wish to go on in, come and admire the view from over there: You can even get a glimpse of the sea."

He led them to the ascent behind the rock.

"We seem to have admirers ourselves over there," remarked Leigh indicating a little group of people who had gathered on the rising ground and were watching them with interest. They seem to be the same knot of villagers they had passed on the road, for the juggler was in their midst.

"I think Mrs. Leigh is the attraction," laughed Melville, "a white woman is rather a rare sight in these parts."

He was interrupted by a sudden shriek from Clare. She pointed in terror at a lithe black form which was gliding towards them over the broken ground.

Leigh jumped forward and struck it sharply with his walking stick, and the cobra reared itself and hissed.

"Don't strike," called Melville, but before he could interfere Leigh, in his excitement, had struck again. The reptile turned over and writhed, dashed its hooded head impotently on the ground, and lay still.

There was a sudden tension of the atmosphere, and a confused murmur arose from the spectators. Still shaken, Clare glanced around, and was alarmed to see the sudden hostility that had gathered on the faces of by-standers. She turned to Melville, but he appeared quite vexed.

"You must get out of this quickly. Take them both away, Mr. Leigh," he said peremptorily, and turning to the villagers he spoke a few words in Singhalese.

Clare clutched Leigh's arm "Let's go, Don," she said, urgently. But before they had taken half a dozen steps the Kapurala stood in their way. They quailed before the cold fire in his eyes as he pointed an accusing finger at the dead cobra.

"You have murdered a guardian of the shrine," he exclaimed, "and the curse of the Deva fall on you. May it follow you sleeping and waking, wherever you go, depriving you of health, of body and peace of mind, till you meet the same fate as you inflicted on the Naga! Go, within seven days the curse will be fulfilled."

Though they did not understand a word, the young people shrank instinctively before his impassioned speech and gestures. Then Donald recovered himself and shrugged as he turned away. "What a fuss to kick up about one cobra when they have caves full of them! Here Mr. Meluille, please give him this as compensation with my apologies, for the incident. Come on, Clare, don't look so frightened at a little abuse you can't understand."

As they walked away, he explained airily enough to the bewildered Mr. Templeton what had happened. "Rather regrettable," commented the other absently. "I would have liked to study those frescoes a little more, but I suppose the priest will not admit us again."

"Well, let us go shooting this afternoon for a change," said Leigh. "There is good cover in the woods behind the rest house," and the two men fell to discussing arrangements. Clare, however, could not dismiss the incident so lightly from her mind, and when Meluille rejoined them she asked him what the old man had shouted at Donald.

"It will rather amuse you," he said somewhat grimly "He put Mr. Leigh under the curse of the dead cobra, and all my excuses afterwards failed to placate him. He would not accept the money either."

Donald laughed "Then I am a doomed man," he said lightly. "Will it be safe to go shooting this afternoon?"

They had a good day's sport, and in the evening were reclining in the verandah, healthily hungry as they awaited dinner, when a loud clamour from the back of the house startled them to their feet and sent them flying thither.

From Sarnelis the rest house keeper, who appeared to be terrified as the two "boys," they learned that one of the servants had seen a cobra descending to the wall from the roof, but on hearing his shout it had drawn back again and disappeared. That was all, but the information sent a little unpleasant thrill through the hearers.

"Probably it's only a rat-snake," said Meluille cheerfully, "and it must be as much frightened out of its wits now as these fellows are."

Nevertheless their high spirits were damped, and they went through dinner in a depressing silence.

"Why do these fellows look so frightened?" asked Leigh somewhat irritably, glancing at the servants who were whispering uneasily. "Is a cobra such an unusual sight in these parts?"

"They are superstitious like all villagers, you see," explained Meluille. "Apparently they have heard about the morning's incident, which they would regard as a sacrilege, and they must be deducing now that the snake they saw is either the dead cobra's spirit, or its mate come, in keeping with local belief, to take revenge. It would be impossible to disabuse their minds."

"This is a horribly eerie place," said Clare with a shudder. "We must leave tomorrow, Dad. Let us go off to a town and civilization. I have seen enough of the primitive for a time."

The cobra did not show itself again, and the night passed without incident except for an occasional clattering of the tiles overhead, and several false alarms on Clare's part.

She was wan and heavy eyed next morning, but Donald looked positively ill. His face was unnaturally flushed, and there was a feverish gleam in his darkly ringed eyes, while his pulse throbbed and leaped. Even absent minded Mr. Templeton joined Clare in urging him to remain in bed, and after a few weak protests he agreed, admitting that he had slept badly and had a pain in the back, probably a touch of lumbago.

The nearest doctor lived twenty miles away, and Clare awaited his arrival anxiously, for Don's temperature kept mounting rapidly, and as the fever increased he began to murmur incoherently, writhing continually as if in pain.

Dr. Wickremasinghe, when he came, confessed himself puzzled by the case. "There is nothing wrong with him internally, and he seems quite strong. Did anything happen to upset him?"

Clare related hesitatingly the previous day's events, but the doctor laughed. "No. Mrs. Leigh the age of Black Magic has passed. A dead cobra can't become a ghost, much less make a man sick. I think your husband has had a touch of the sun, and he will be quite well after a day or two's rest. But I wouldn't advise you to move him today. Tomorrow perhaps. When the fever has gone down, as it will when he takes a mixture I will send him. Don't worry he will be all right soon."

The confidence which Clare gained from the doctor's words was to be rudely disturbed by lunch time.

Sarnelis apologetically informed them that he had only tinned provisions to serve them as the cook and the "boys" had decamped. They were convinced, it appeared, that the sick gentleman was under a curse, and they had refused to stay in a house that was haunted by a cobra bent on revenge.

Clare looked out eagerly for Meluille's return. He had left early that morning on one of his solitary expeditions, and no one knew where he had gone. Clare felt that, with his knowledge of the country and his shrewd penetrative outlook, he was the only person among them who could gauge the baffling situation correctly.

The rest house keeper, however, told her that Meluille was accustomed to stay out till nightfall when he went for a ramble. Then he imparted another piece of information ingratiatingly.

"There is a man outside telling he will charm away the cobra from the house if lady give him ten rupees. I think lady better do it. Then the gentleman will get better soon, and the servants also coming back. Shall I bring the man to lady?"

"No, no tell him to go away," She said distastefully, "and don't mention to me anything about that wretched cobra again. I don't want to hear about it."

She felt she was getting hysterical, and was immensely relieved to see Melluille coming in. He did not seem surprised to hear about Leigh's illness. "I expected something like this would happen," he remarked. What did the doctor say?"

She told him. "And the rest house keeper has been trying to persuade me to pay a man to charm the snake away," she said, "I think he is still outside."

Melluille looked thoughtful, "Um, a snake charmer? That sounds interesting. You should have got him to attempt the job. That would at least persuade the servants to come back. Is that the man? He looks like the juggler we met yesterday."

He called Sarnelis and ordered him to tell the man to capture the cobra and bring it for his inspection. "Now about Mr. Leigh," he said turning to Claire, "if you and your father will do as I suggest, I think I can be reasonably sure of curing him."

"How?" she asked eagerly. "By placating the offended Deva," he replied gravely. "Believe me, there is more in this than appears on the surface. But I will explain all that later. The important thing is can you persuade your father to accompany me on Leigh's behalf to the Dewale and hand over a propitiatory offering? I will get it ready and attend to everything else."

Clare agreed at once. As she expected, it was not difficult to persuade her father to visit again the shrine, where he could have another look at the frescoes he so admired, though he protested at what he called "pandering to village superstitions."

"Accordingly he and Melluille, who had been busy all afternoon holding consultation with Sarnelis and dispatching messengers on various errands, left by evening for the Dewale, taking with them the offering which consisted of a length of blue cloth for a curtain, five kinds of flowers, joss sticks, sandalwood and candles.

Clare was cheered to see how hopeful he looked on their return. The news of their impending visit had spread, it appeared, and quite a crowd of villagers had gathered to witness the offering being made. And the priest had promised to recite prayers ceaselessly from six that evening till six the next morning. All would be well now.

With a lighter heart Clare watched by the sick man. The doctor had called again, but there was no improvement in the patient's condition. All night long he tossed and muttered in a delirium, but towards dawn he became quieter and fell into a doze.

Melluille expressed satisfaction when he heard of it. "That's good. He will be all right when he wakes. I think you can safely make for Lihinigama this afternoon. There is a good hotel there."

"You are very hopeful," Clare told him. "Have you been to the temple again?" "Yes, I looked into witness the completion of the

ceremony. You should have heard the cries of thanks giving when the priest announced, that the curse was called off. Ceylon villagers are really very soft hearted people."

His prophecy proved correct. Leigh slept heavily all morning and woke up in the afternoon, weak but well and conscious.

After they had got him into the car, Clare turned to Melluille, "I have a feeling that you have had a laugh up your sleeve since morning. What is it?"

He laughed. "I would have preferred to keep the joke to myself, but I suppose it must be out," he said, "Would it surprise you very much to know that Leigh's illness had been neither caused nor cured by supernatural forces?"

"Let me explain," Melluille went on. "First of all it was not a temple cobra that Leigh killed. It was just a common or gardens one, belonging to a snake charmer."

"By jove!" exclaimed Leigh, "Wasn't there a juggler near that temple at that time?"

"That's right, he was the originator of all the trouble, though, of course, he had never meant any such harm. He had followed us and released one of his pet cobras, hoping merely to wheedle some money out of us by piping it up before us and pretending that he had captured a wild one. But, unfortunately for his plan, the cobra did not conceal itself, it ran into our way. In the face of the after development the fellow did not dare confess, and both the bystanders and the priest believed that Leigh had committed sacrilege. In the circumstances it was generally

expected that the curse would take effect, and so it did too, but only through the tremendous force by the mental concentration of the whole neighbourhood on that issue."

"But the other cobra that appeared here," said Clare doubtfully, "How do you explain its presence?"

"That too was the doing of our friend the juggler," he replied. "After the incident at the Dewale, he let out another snake, knowing that it would rouse the superstitious fear of the servants, and that he could drive a bargain to capture it. It was when I heard of his offer to Mrs. Leigh that I began to suspect the trick. That was why I insisted on examining the captured snake, and I found as I had expected that its fangs had been removed. After that I extracted the whole story from the fellow, but of course the curse could not be called off."

"I mean the village mind could not be entirely pacified by revealing the actual facts. So we carried on with the propitiatory ceremony, which I took the liberty to advertise widely through the servants, and it answered quite well, didn't it?"

"I am too bewildered to understand it as yet," said Clare. "All that I do know clearly is that you have been extremely kind. I can't imagine what would have happened if you had not been here."

"Well, I would have hated it if you had gone away thinking that Ceylon is a land of Black Magic," he smiled, as he closed the door of the car. "Believe me, no country is free from it. And now, as all malevolent influences have been diverted from you, I hope you will enjoy the rest of your visit. Good-bye!"

The Mistake (1938)

He maintained afterwards, Harmanis had not thought of committing the crime when he started digging the well. He had merely wanted to have water at hand so that his wife need not have occasion to go to the river. But when he and Juan had bored to a depth of fifteen feet and failed to tap water the idea had suddenly occurred to him, and his jealous mind had fastened on it as the best way of ending the exasperating situation.

And then as fate would have it Selina had delayed again at the river that evening, and when she finally returned home, with her long hair hanging loose after a bath, she had replied with a defiant silence to his angry suspicious questions. It was then that he had finally made up his mind to commit the crime.

The next morning when Juan the odd-jobs man came to continue the work, Harmanis expressed a doubt as to whether it was advisable to do so.

"At this rate we may have to dig another ten feet before we strike water," he remarked, "and then the well will be too deep. No, I don't think we will go on with this."

Juan peered into the dry depth and shrugged. "Then what do you mean to do?" he enquired, wondering whether this was a move to withhold compensation for his labour. Harmanis had a reputation for dealings of that kind.

"I am going to fill this in," announced the other, and he started shovelling in the gravel, Juan joining in half-heartedly.

After a few minutes Harmanis paused. "We'll leave this. I can attend to it myself later on. But we must start digging another well, as I want to have the work finished by the time Selina returns home," he said, and meeting the other's look of enquiry gruffly explained, "she went to her village for a few days. Yes, by bus this morning. Her mother is ill. Now which place do you think would be best? Let us try that hollow over there."

The second attempt was more successful. They came on water at quite a shallow depth, and Harmanis seemed to get a weight off his mind when the work was finished.

With his usual surly taciturnity he appeared to take no notice of what the village gossip said about Selina's absence. It seemed to be the general belief that she had left him because he ill-treated her, for their frequent quarrels were common knowledge, and many were sure that Selina would not return.

"You couldn't expect her to do so after the way he used to assault her," said Punchi Nona the village oracle, when more than a week had passed and Selina had not come back. "And lately it was all because he was jealous of her talking with Romiel when she met him by the river. Not that there was any harm in that because she had known Romiel before she came here, but Harmanis has such a jealous nature that he is suspicious of everything and everybody. It is a wonder Selina put up with him so long, but now that she has got away, mark my words, she will never come back again, however many wells he may dig for her."

It was a few days after this that the body was found in the river.

Two bathers had discovered it and brought it ashore, and when Sub-Inspector Hussain arrived to investigate he found nearly all the villagers gathered at the spot and gazing with morbid curiosity at the sodden pitiful object on the bank.

"Is any woman missing in this village?" he asked examining the corpse.

The onlookers seemed to count themselves over and emit a breath of relief as they answered in the negative. Then someone suddenly remembered Selina.

"Who is Selina?" rapped the policeman turning round sharply.

"She is Harmanis' wife," replied Punchi Nona venturing to speak for the rest. "And she has gone to her village. Harmanis said so."

"Then you are not sure if she went or not. When was she supposed to go?"

"Two weeks ago this Wednesday," volunteered Juan. "I remember very well because that was the day we started digging the new well in his garden."

"Dug a new well? What was wrong with the old one?" asked the Inspector nonchalantly as he glanced at the corpse again.

"There was no water. We failed to find a spring that time," explained the informant. "So Harmanis sank another well." "There must be one when Selina comes back" he had said.

Harmanis did not like her coming to the river, because she used to meet Romiel here sometimes," put in Punchi Nona by

way of explaining the situation more fully, "He used to come in search of her and quarrel whenever she got late."

The young Sub-Inspector thought quickly, his alert mind piecing together what he had heard. A jealous husband, a missing wife, the latter's rumoured departure from the village, and now a corpse found in the river: the case seemed a simple one.

"What is this woman Selina like?" he asked suddenly.

The crowd gaped as an idea of what he suspected dawned on them. Awestricken and expectant they told him that she was a small, plump woman, rather fair and pretty, and all the time their fascinated eyes scanned the sodden unrecognisable form for traces of resemblance to the description they gave.

"She had very long hair, just like this poor creature's" added Punchi Nona drawing closer to the corpse. Then she became garrulously excited. "Look at this cloth! The colours have run together, but isn't it a blue and red checked camboy? I saw Selina wearing one like this a day or two before she disappeared. There is no doubt this is she, poor thing, and she must have been lying at the bottom of the river these two weeks while we thought she was at Godapitiya!"

The surge of excitement that went through the gathering communicated itself to Sub-Inspector Hussain also. The trained instincts of the crime-hunter were fully roused.

"Where is Harmanis?" he demanded of the chattering and gesticulating rustics. From their breathless replies he learned that the man would be at work in his field, and thither he

hurried, with the bolder ones among the crowd hanging at his heels.

They took Harmanis utterly by surprise, for the suspected man was quite ignorant of what had transpired by the river.

The Inspector seized him at once. "I arrest you for the murder of your wife. I would advise you to come quietly," he said.

Harmanis made a feeble attempt to shake himself free. "I did not kill her. She has gone to Godapitiya," he said trying to speak unconcernedly, but his teeth chattered and his dark unprepossessing face had turned sickly pale. No one who saw him could have doubted his guilt.

"You can reserve that defence for your trial," retorted the policeman, "but I may tell you that her corpse has just been found."

The accused man shuddered convulsively as if he already felt the halter round his neck. "It can't be Selina?" he protested hoarsely.

"We can see about that later. The fact remains that the corpse has been identified as that of your wife."

Harmanis started, his close-set eyes gaping with amazement.

"But there wasn't any water, not a drop!" He stammered. Then he paused blinking as through the clouds of his terror and bewilderment it flashed on him he had made a slip.

"You are right," agreed the Inspector laughing exultantly as light broke on him. "I made a mistake, but since you have cleared it up..." The handcuffs snapped round the murderer's wrists. "Take him to the Station, and come back yourselves."

"There is more work to be done," he told the couple of constables who had come with him.

Later in the evening Hussain entered the Chief-Inspector's Office to submit his report.

"Found the corpse in the well alright, Sir, wrapt up in a mat and with the hair twisted round the throat. Looks as if she had been throttled. Did he make a statement after he was brought here?"

The Chief nodded. "Yes, I have got it here. It appears he throttled her in her sleep on Tuesday night, and kept the corpse concealed in the house the whole of the next day, meanwhile spreading the news that she had gone away. That night he threw it into the well and half-filled up the hole. People saw him doing the rest of the work next day, but with Juan digging away at the other well there was nothing to attract attention."

Hussain grinned. "It sounds simple, Sir, but if it were not for the discovery of the other corpse it would have been a long time before we stumbled on this murder."

"Have you traced the identity of the woman in the river?" queried his superior.

"Yes, that was a woman reported missing at Udupola, ten miles further up the river. She had been carried away by the current when she attempted to wade across. A simple case of accidental drowning, and I guessed as much when I saw the corpse."

"Did you?" "Well your guesses prove surprisingly correct, in this case Hussain."

"Oh ! As for that I merely took advantage of a mistake, Sir," returned the other as he saluted and took his departure.

Anitra Kemp

Let Them Lie (1939)

"Phil, I've got my chance at last. The firm has chosen me to go out East and put up their fridge plant in Ceylon. It's really Government work, you know, because the order is from the Home Government. Here's my chance to show what I can do. Isn't it wonderful news and quite unexpected?"

"Oh Chris! It is wonderful! When do we go?"

"Not so fast, old thing, so far as I could gather from what the boss said he mentioned about houses being scarce in Trincomalee and I had better go first and see how things are and you follow. He'll give me details to-morrow."

"I hope I won't have to wait here alone. I want to go with you. I'm quite willing to rough it in.... what's that place you said?"

"Trincomalie."

"What a mouthful! Where is it? Chris... and why do they want a fridge plant there?"

"And you a little school teacher and don't know where Trincomalie is." he said teasingly as he put his arm round her and led her to the tea table in the little sitting room which overlooked the minute bit of garden of their house on the outskirts of Reading. Phillipa and Christopher Wade had been married for five years. He was employed at Coutland Jones' refrigerating works and folks said she was lucky to get him although she was a school teacher of a cut above Chris in family and education. Her father, Colonel Dare of the Indian Army, had died several years ago and she was alone in the world. Then Chris came into her life, big, good tempered and trustworthy with blue eyes that knew no guile. They were perfect foils to each other: Philippa with her dainty dark beauty, eyes as black sheen in it... her five feet three of slim girlishness compared with his six feet of brawn and muscle.

Phillippa poured her husband a cup of tea and handed it to him, hardly aware of what she was doing.

"Where are your thoughts Phil?" Christopher asked "Miles away in Trincomalee I suppose?"

She looked up with a start and smiled at him.

"Yes, dear, miles away, I was thinking of India. How strange I should be going East again. I cannot remember a thing about it 'cos I left India when I was born in Southern India and so was mother. I wonder whether in the years gone by I had an Indian ancestor?"

"What nonsense, Phil. You are as English as I am though your hair is like the raven's wing and your skin like the champak blossom. I am quoting you dear, I am sure I shan't recognise a

champak blossom if I see one" He bent forward and stroked her hair lovingly.

"Beautiful hair and with such a wonderful sheen on it."

He was home early next day...

"Phillipa, come and hear the news."

She hurried out with sparkling eyes.

"Good news, my girl. Pay will be three times what I am getting now. But Phil, dear, I am afraid you won't be able to go out with me – at once I mean" as her "oh" of disappointment interrupted him. "Cheer up. It won't be for long, certainly not more than six months."

Phillipa's eyes brimmed over with tears. She clung to him as if she would not let him go.

"Oh, Chris, can't I come with you? It will be awful to wait here alone and I don't mind going through anything so long as I am with you."

"We'll talk it over when we are having tea. Till then dry your tears and look more cheerful. We are a lucky pair you know. There's nothing at all to cry about."

She was convinced at last that Chris should go out first and make a home for her, and she would join him later.

"How long will you be away?"

"A year I think, may be a little more. I cannot say until I get there and start work."

The day soon came when he had to sail and Phillipa saw him off on board. It was Chris whose eyes were wet now, while she smiled bravely.

"Hurry up, Chris and make the nest ready for me. I am impatient to come to you."

Right, darling, I will. Good-bye."

God bless you, dear. Good-bye."

Chapter 2

It was almost a year before Phillipa got her summons to join her husband in Ceylon. Set-backs occurred, no house available, delay in some of the necessary materials reaching Trincomalee and Colombo having temporary work elsewhere. Then at last came his letter telling her she could come to him.

"Phil Darling.." he wrote.

"Isn't it grand? You can come out at last. I am almost through with my work and I don't think it will take more than another five or six months. The house I have rented is not a beauty by any means, but well be here such a short time that it doesn't matter. It is very old and it is supposed to be haunted but I know you won't mind that. I don't all I care about is that you will be here soon."

The days flew by for both of them. She had the excitement and interest of the voyage and he was busy pushing his work through as fast as he could. All day he worked by the beautiful land-locked harbour and only his evenings overlooking the maidan, a newspaper unheeded on his knees and a cigarette

burning itself out in his hand. To-morrow morning he would be leaving for Colombo to meet Phillipa whose boat was due at ten. The following day they would return in the slow, dusty train, travelling from morning until evening. It was a hot and tiresome journey but Phil would love it and enjoy the newness of everything, the forest they would traverse, the wild monkeys leaping from tree to tree, the deer which, if they were lucky, they would glimpse and perhaps even an elephant, the king of the Ceylon jungles. Then his thoughts turned towards the house. What would Philippa think of the old barn like rooms – her home for the next 4 months? They were gloomy and ill-lit, the walls were uneven and crude and when an extra big gust of wind shook the building, large pieces of lime plaster would clatter down to the cracked cement floor or fly in powder through the house. But these were minor drawbacks. What worried him the most were the strange sounds he heard in the house so often in the stillness of the night when the town was asleep. The tale that the place was haunted was rubbish but he could not account for the soft footsteps, outside his window as of bare feet dragging wearily along the verandah, the sighing, so human, so distinct that he would go out and look round fully expecting to see someone, but it was either only the sun tats flapping against the pillars to which they were fastened, or the antigonon creeper over the wall outside, tossing in the breeze. There was no one there or in the narrow strip of garden with its decoration of empty beer bottles, the effort of a farmer tenant to turn it into flower beds though nothing had grown except the antigonon creeper which covered the low wall by the road with a wealth of bright pink flowers.

Uneasy and wondering, he would come in and force himself to think it was the wind and nothing more. "Ghosts don't exist," he would say to himself and turn over and fall asleep.

Chapter 3

"Well, and how do you like it?"

Christopher looked anxiously at his wife and waited for her reply.

She was standing by the antigonon creeper, and, lifting a trail of the little pink blossoms, laid them across her hair.

"What lovely flowers Chris."

She turned suddenly and ran up the steps to him. "Everything is perfect. I've had a delightful trip."

"But the house Phil." What do you think of the house where you'll have to live for the next three months?

"Oh! The house? It is not too bad, dear. I expected something much worse and after all, we won't be here long."

But one day a month later she greeted him with troubled eyes. "There's something queer about this place, Chris."

"Oh what's wrong with it?"

"I don't quite know. I have a funny creepy feeling that there is an unseen presence occupying it with us. I don't know what else to call it 'cos I haven't seen anything. I feel it particularly at the further end of the front verandah by our bedroom. I haven't mentioned it before, thinking you might say I am fanciful, but to-day it has been especially bad. The worst is that I have a queer urge to go to that part of the verandah.

"Of course I don't think you are fanciful. As you know the place is said to be haunted but you and I don't believe it do we dear?"

"No-o-o-o," she replied dubiously "But the east is a strange place. The people know far more than we do about such things."

Neither of them referred to the footfalls of the midnight walker. He wondered whether his wife had heard them but thought it best not to speak of it. They talked of other things, of the coming football match between the Navy and the town, of an evenings bridge with friends in the dockyard, then later when the sun had set they went down to the sea close by to swim calm as a mill pond it lay like a giant sapphire that by some strange fate had been imbued with life. A gentle heaving of its broad bosom at intervals gave it the appearance of breathing but only at the edge was there real movement where little waves like feelers were thrown softly on to stretches of golden sand.

Phillipa looked like an exotic flower that had drifted down with the tide as she entered the caressing warmth of the deeply blue water, her swim suit a crimson sheath that enfolded the exquisite lines of her youthful figure. They remained in the sea splashing and swimming until the moon came up, showing its golden rim over the edge of the horizon.

"Have you ever seen anything more beautiful?" Phillipa asked, running up the beach and shaking the water from her hair. "There's no doubt Trinco is a lovely spot. Look at those head lands cut out of cardboard and stuck along the shore."

They walked home slowly and after an early dinner went to bed. But Chris was restless. About midnight, tossing in bed, he saw his wife stir and sit up.

"Phil" he called her softly. But she did not hear him. Hurriedly rising from the bed she walked bare footed into the sitting room, straight to the great old-fashioned door that led outside.

"Phil," he called again louder. She took no notice, she was intent upon opening the door. Before he could reach her she had lifted the heavy wooden bar that kept the top half of the door closed and placing it quietly on one side, undid the latch that held the lower part and walked noiselessly out to the further end of the verandah. He could see her every movement as clearly as in daylight for the moon was at full and the sleeping world was lit by its effulgence. Even the verandah was suffused with light. By the wall against the antigonon creeper stood a figure. It came forward to meet Phil.

Chris held his breath, afraid to move. Then a blaze of anger shook him. How dare she? His Phil whom he trusted implicitly, Phil thought so pure to come out and keep a tryst with God knows whom! He made a step forward, then stood stock-still. The figure was speaking. In soft musical tones it asked in Tamil. "Why have you been so long Kamala? I have waited there many years for you and I have been weary with watching."

Chris strained his ears to listen. He could just understand what was said for daily intercourse with a thousand Tamil labourers had taught him a smattering of the language.

Phil advanced closer to the figure. "Ah! Kumaran," she said replying in Tamil, "I could not come before for I was far away. At last the gods have set me free and here I am."

Amazed Chris listened. What did she know of the strange tongue in which she spoke? How did she learn it and where?

Then in a flash came knowledge. This was not Philippa, it was Kamala, a Tamil maid. It was not his wife but someone centuries old in whose past he had no part. Unwillingly he had stumbled on a scene that belonged not to this world, but to the unseen realms of spirit land where ghosts are reality and spirits living truth. Strange to say, all fear left him. He had to be there to guard over his loved one when she needed his help. The figure was speaking again.

"Five centuries I have guarded your box of jewels, Kamala. I now give them to you. At last I am free of the promise I made our father. Take care of them" he said to me "they are Kamala's dowry."

"Where are they, Kumaran?" she asked. The figure pointed close to the wall.

"Buried here beneath this creeper. They are worth much money and you will be a rich woman."

She made a gesture with her hands. "Take them Kumaran, I do not want them. There is blood on them. Father killed the princess for her jewels to give them to me. Her curse will follow me if I touch them."

A note of anger entered the voice that belonged to the figure.

"Those jewels have held my spirit here earth bound for five hundred years. Will you have me soil my hands with their uncleanness. Let them lie where they have lain these many centuries. Hidden underground they are safe and the curse with them. Let them lie forever there. My promise is absolved, my spirit is released. Farewell."

The figure vanished as if an unseen hand had wiped it away.

Chris jumped forward and caught Phil in his arms as she swayed and fell in a dead faint. Tenderly he carried her inside and placed her, on her bed where she gradually drifted into sleep. He decided he would stay at home next day. He was afraid to leave her. She woke heavy-eyed, late.

"Chris why are you at home to-day?" "I thought I'd take a day off," he said watching her closely. "The kachchan' is blowing hotter than ever and a rest will do me good."

"I feel very tired, I don't know why. I think I'll stay in bed but be near me Chris, don't go away."

"Of course not, dear. You must leave for Colombo as soon as I can make arrangements for you to stay somewhere. This climate doesn't suit you and I can't have you getting ill with some tropical fever."

"Thank you, Chris I'll be glad to go. The house somehow has a peculiar effect on me. At times I feel as if I have been here before and though I didn't speak of it I have heard footsteps at night outside our window as if some one barefooted was walking up and down the verandah."

"Nonsense, my girl. I thought I heard it one night so I went out and investigated and it was only the wind against the tats that keep off the sun.

She gave a little sigh of relief.

"Sit close to me and hold my hand. Don't leave me."

Her deep breathing told him that healthy sleep had laid its soothing touch on jangled nerves. He could see that the events of the past night had left no trace in her conscious memory and he decided that never would she hear a word of that strange meeting of brother and sister at the dead of the night, in a distant land. Kamala had lived centuries ago. She was a spirit of the past. Phillipa was flesh and blood, his little wife whose home was England. And the jewel box! He felt a sudden desire to dig the sandy patch of ground to which the figure pointed. Untold wealth lay there, his for the taking. Phillipa and he would never want again. Then clearly he seemed to hear again a strange melodious voice saying like a benediction. "They are safe and the curse with them. Let them lie forever there. "Yes let them lie. Phillipa must never know. Her peace and her sanity depended on it – and their happiness.

Christine Jonklaas

The Gypsy (1939)

The piping had gone on all day, and all day, and all day she had sat under a blazing sky indifferently watching her husband and son catch snakes for the planter dora.

She was proud of her boy. Already at seven, he had learnt to play the six tunes of the snake charmers' craft with professional skill, and knew no fear of any snake... see him, how boldly he walks into the treacherous tangle of under growth, his small fingers dancing on his pipe-stem, see how his bright eyes watch for the snakes to come to his piping and how when it appears, he seizes its tail himself before calling for his father to pin down the head with a stick and grab it by the "throat". Yes, he was a son to be proud of! Never had the clan known one so young, so clever at the trade.

And she – she was young herself to be the mother of a child of seven. Young and very comely, yet she had been given in marriage at nine. All these years of married life had not spoilt her looks, for Ramasawamy her husband, had treated her well.

Now at eighteen, she was in the prime of her beauty and in her wild way was aware of it and knew that men cast desiring eyes at her.

Being something of a coquette she took trouble with her long black hair, oiled it and smoothed it well so that it did not hang matted like that of the other gypsy women; and she had a way of gathering her bright scarlet and blue and emerald cloths into many, many folds so that they foamed around her silver ankleted feet and dipped and swayed with every movement of her lissome hips, and her voluptuous mouth, not yet spoilt by betel chewing, as it would be in time, was only the more attractive for the crimson stain of the betel juice. Very red it seemed, set in the rich glossy brownness of her face. In her own way she was undoubtedly beautiful and the old hags of the clan said Ramaswamy would do well to keep a watch on her. Yet she had always been faithful to him.

Her jaws worked as she thoughtfully chewed her betel. The flat, round snake basket at her side was getting full. Five snakes they had caught and now they were after another. The dorai and dorasamy were very excited. They followed every movement of her husband and son as if they suspected a trick. Did they think that half a dozen snakes could be hidden about the person and miraculously produced after a little piping without anyone noticing it? Did they not know that no poisonous snake could resist the call of pipes, with its promise of tender mice and frogs?

How well old Rama played... often as she had heard him she was not unmoved by the throbbing dominance of the high wailing tune But he was becoming timid as time went by.

She who had watched him work for years, sensed his growing diffidence, and covertly noticed the diminishing sureness of his touch in handling the more dangerous snakes. One day his hand would falter, and then she knew in her heart of hearts, in spite of all his wonderful charms and antidotes, he would be fatally bitten. Had she not read it in his palm, though she had never dared to tell him in case he should beat her?

And her own fortunes? She glanced at her upturned hand, but it could tell her nothing, and she had never had it read by the other women. After all, what did they know that she herself did not? Idly she traced a line that meant romance but when? And with whom?

The answer to that at least she knew. Her thoughts stole back to a recent incident in the camp, of herself, and of another, whose good looks matched her own, meeting face to face in the jungle by which the tribe had pitched their talipot-leaf huts.

Anagi had stared at her as if she were an apparition, his bold, dark eyes appraising her loveliness with the sureness of much practice.

"Whither away so fast, lovely one?" he had asked boldly.

"Let me pass!" she had cried fiercely. She knew this Anagi who had newly joined the comrades and made free of the maidens in every village and hamlet through which they wandered. He had piqued her, intrigued her, but their paths had never crossed before.

"Not so fast! Why have I not seen the prettiest woman in the clan before?"

"Because you have eyes for so many that you miss the jewel for the dross," she had replied audaciously and with a pert swirl of her skirts had passed him, splashing him with the water from her chatty.

That had been the beginning of it. His easily excited passion had developed quickly, as hers had into a love that neither had dreamt of. And now, she knew that for Anagi she would gladly die.... If not for stupid old Rama how happy they could be together. Yet Rama had been kind to her, ever since the time her parents had sold her as a little girl to him, the middle aged Chief of the clan. She sighed and dug her heel vindictively into the soft sand.

They were all coming towards her now, the dorai and dorasamy and a dozen estate coolies, jabbering like monkeys, following in the wake of her husband and son. What was that Rama had in his hand? A Cobra? That size? But what a large one ! And what was all the chattering about?

Apparently the dorai wanted to see this snake de-fanged too, and Rama was refusing. "No, dorai. We have removed the teeth of the other five for you, but this one is different. See how large it is, how fierce.....! Of the seven kinds of cobra, this is the most savage. When we get home, not now, I must remove the fangs and collect the poison for medicine. See, this black stone... it is made of the crushed teeth and the venom which we squeeze out of the sockets.. when this is placed on a snake bite it sucks up all the poison..."

Idly she watched them arguing and talking, conscious only that she was hungry, and that she would like to be back in camp where Anagi was. She wondered jealously what he was doing...

At last the palaver ended, seven rupees changed hands. One rupee for each snake and one for a snake stone. Good, they will be well-off for many days to come. She struggled to her feet, stiff after her long wait and beckoned to the boy. "Son, you carry the python sack. I'll take the snake basket; it is heavy now with its burden of extra snakes. Your father will relieve you of the sack when we get to the bottom of the road..."

It was evening and they had many miles to go. By the time they reached their encampment, the moon was shining brightly. Wearily they threaded their way between the talipot-leaf-huts and the donkeys that carried their possessions on the march, until they reached their own hut, rather larger than the others, a little apart from the rest. The smouldering embers of camp fires glowed dully in the chilly moonlight, for the gypsies liked their meals early and plenty of sleep.

Away in a banyan tree an owl, that bird of ill-omen, moaned and the trees took up its sadness in the sighing and tossing of their branches. The woman shivered suddenly, "the night is full of trouble," she murmured.

Rama was tired and turned on her roughly. "Woman, cease thy wailing". She kept silent, for there was something in the air that stilled the quick retort on her lips – a strange urgency fostered by the pulsing moonlight.

Quietly she cooked for the man and her son. She could eat little, herself, and when, having finished, they lay down to sleep, she, driven by her longing, went out into the night and leant against a tree, alone, to dream awhile. Then, when she had been standing there sometime, though she heard nothing, she knew that she was not alone and that Anagi was beside her.

Neither of them smiled nor greeted the other... but her breathing quickened perceptibly.

"Come with me and we will find another tribe where we will not be known and where we can be happy together," he whispered urgently. She did not turn.

"The boy will not leave his father. How can I come without my son."

"There will be others, finer fairer, in the years ahead. Come with me quickly ... Now....!"

His hands gripped her shoulders and bruised her flesh. She felt her whole soul go out to him, and yet she held back, the love for her son fighting against the love for her sweetheart.

"No. No I cannot. I am afraid.."

He laughed at that mockingly. "A fine gypsy, you, to be scared so easily. Perhaps it is better I should find a woman of greater courage."

She turned anguished eyes on him. "Don't speak like that! I will come... only give me time... Not to-night there is evil in the air tonight ! But soon... Tomorrow perhaps."

His arms went around her. "Tomorrow, love."

At last he left her and wistfully she watched his lithe figure melt among the shadows. Then slowly she went back to her hut.

Rama and the boy were asleep. The moonlight fell on their relaxed figures, and on the bulging snake basket at Rama's side.

She sat down silently, her chin on her hands, thinking, watching them.

And as she watched, she heard, in the utter stillness, an ominous creak of wicker and saw the string that looped the lid of the basket slip gently asunder.

Instinctively her hand reached out to refasten the lid. Rama should have put the great cobra by itself into another basket. Suppose it escaped and bit someone? Why it might be Rama himself! The other snakes were fangless and harmless enough, but this one!

Then the thought flashed upon her. Had she not seen that Rama would die of Cobra bite? That was strange, for here was she about to prevent that occurrence. His death would give her freedom and happiness with the man she loved. Fool, to defy fate! Why not let it happen? She had only to sit its course... The big cobra would slither out first and Rama directly in its path, by the doorway, would awake as it crawled over him and hit out .. And then....

Slowly she withdrew the hand she had instinctively stretched towards the quivering basket. Who was she to defy fate ?

The lid creaked and shifted fraction by fraction... Fascinated, she watched it heave, almost imperceptibly, and subside. How her eyes ached... Then very slowly it rose again higher and higher, until at last it fell softly on to the python sack beside it. The moonlight glinted on the shining coils of the snakes so closely packed in the basket. Then she saw the cobra lift its long neck questioningly forward, and its hood swell like fans on either side of the narrow eager head.

In his sleep Ramaswamy stirred, as if conscious of the menace threatening him. Far away in the trees a night-bird shrilled exultingly breaking the deadly stillness. In the further corner of the tiny hut the woman crouched frozen beside her sleeping son, staring at the loathsome creature, now quite beyond her control.

The hood swayed gently, alert for an emergency; then as no one moved, it dwindled and went flat, and the sinuous form glided softly over Rama.

The woman's finger nails dug into her flesh as she tried to silence her breathing ... the moments seemed an eternity... and passed – for Rama never moved.

As she relaxed her tension her foot touched the child, and he turned right over in his sleep, his hand flung towards the escaping cobra. In a flash the cruel head rose and with swelled-out hood struck deeply into the little arm.

His mother's anguished cry stabbed the night like a dagger... She had not known that in her palm it was written that she would be the slayer of her son.

IX

IMPERIALISM: COMPLICITY & RESISTANCE

Caroline Corner

Bird of Paradise (1903)

Cynthia had only arrived in Ceylon that morning. Passing her stupendous load of luggage through the Customs at Colombo, and seeing it stowed away in a big bullock-cart for a six miles' journey, had occupied the time till tiffin at the Grand Oriental Hotel, familiarly called the GOH. Later on, some couple of hours, she found herself seated on the verandah of her new home, an idyllic home so far as appearances go.

"A Grecian temple set up in the Garden of Eden," she had likened it to at first beholding. "Can ordinary mortals live ordinary lives in such abodes, and such surroundings?" she asked. Personally, she thought it impossible; so might any newcomer.

Now she sat or rather reclined on a "lounger" on the broad stone verandah covered over here and there with a few soft Indian rugs – wondering! What was her life here to be?

The heat-laden atmosphere was not conducive to speculation, however. Heavy with the scent of tropical blossoms in profu-

sion – the orange, the myrtle, the passion flower, rat mal and areca, the air seemed to be possessed of narcotic properties, or was it merely fatigue that overcame and caused her to feel drowsy? So drowsy that when a Bird of Paradise came and peered inquisitively at her, she fancied she was indeed in the Garden of Eden, so lovely a creature surely suited this fair illusion. Cynthia's eyelids dropped and flickered as the sunbeams glinted on the proud bird's gossamer tail, flickered and drooped until they closed.

Silence. Not a sound, not a rustle. Only heat and golden sunshine and silence. All nature was asleep – slumbering in a golden bath. Even the talkative tit-willow was silent, taking a siesta with the crows – that noisy crew – and the sparrows – those overgrown fellows – and the little dark-eyed squirrels and tiny tortoises – all were silent, at rest.

Only the Bird of Paradise was awake and abroad. Very much awake, he trod the verndah with the air of a king, glancing every second in the direction of the young Englishwoman, whose head lay back on the soft silk cushion, whose eyes were closed in sleep.

"A newcomer, eh? Enraptured with our lovely isle, I'll warrant already. A contrast, certainly, to your foggy London and its dirty sparrows. Bah!"

Yes. It was the Bird of Paradise speaking and proud as he was handsome he looked.

"Well, it's kind of you to invite us to afternoon tea. My wife will be here presently. All feminine creatures love the gossip-hour. We are mere escort-noblesse oblige. By the way, I hear that ex-

pression is becoming obsolete amongst your people. Ah! you didn't know we could talk and are given to discussing your affairs? There's something yet to learn. Perhaps even we of the jungle could teach you something if you gave us the opportunity. We often 'talk you over,' as you say, and sometimes terminate the discussion with a vote of censure on some of your ways." Whew! Here comes my wife."

A dowdy little bird some might call "homely" fluttered down to the side of her magnificent mate. She had penetrating, round, black eyes, though that she fixed upon him. A little of the "starch" went out of him then, and he appeared to shrink.

"Too personal, am I? Well, that is bad form, I know. But Betsy, my love, now doesn't your own blood boil when you see wholesale slaughter of our loveliest – golden orioles, dainty kingfishers, jays of the heaven's blue, parrots and parakeets – for what? To adorn the womenfolk's headgear. I saw a specimen at the King's House the other day. A-ye? Very well, Betsy, my dear, I'll say no more. Qur-rh! How the mosquitoes bite! It's not all bliss even in Paradise. You'll find that out if you stay long enough. It's the custom of the country."

"Adam, the father of all, found something wanting when driven out of Eden. He parted from Eve on the Plains of Mesopotamia prior to his banishment to Ceylon, the Paradise of Adam. Chuck-chuck!" The Bird of Paradise chuckled but pulled himself up quickly in the face of that penetrating, round, black orb of his mate.

"Yes, yes, I've got my wife. I'm aware of that, Betsy, my dear. Eve only was banished to Hadjaz, since called the Paradise of Eve. Poor Eve – no Adam! Poor Adam – no Eve. What Paradise!"

"But we are becoming sentimental; and sentiment" – turning to the sleeping girl, fresh from the world's metropolis – "sentiment's out of date. You don't think so. The moon's made of honey still Eden. All right, Betsy. I'd only have her know that this is the Paradise of Adam and I, I and the king." And turning, this beautiful creature shook out that magnificent tail so that it presented all the appearance of regal robes set with priceless gems. Then there was a flutter, the patter of barefeet, and a voice. Cynthia awoke.

"Dinner-gong, lady."

It was a chocolate-coloured man in white, wearing a "poll-comb," resting on the crown of his head, who spoke – an appoo, or head servant.

Cynthia arose. No Bird of Paradise was there, no "Betsy" – only a few remaining crumbs on the stone verandah.

The sun had set, the moon was rising. From a vision of gold, the scene was changing to a dream of silver beauty.

The birds had flown, but the verandah was aglow with fire-flies; and though many blossoms had closed, others had opened at the call of the night.

"Paradise – the Paradise of Adam!" mused Cynthia. "What of Eve?"

East is East and West is West...

Cynthia cannot bring these reminiscences to a close without mention of the Civil Servants of Ceylon – those "little tin gods," as Kipling aptly designated them. The Civil Servants are the "blue blood" of Ceylon – particularly in their own estimation. They take precedence both of the naval and the military.

One becomes conscious of this fact immediately upon leaving Aden on the voyage out, for there are sure to be some of the "blood" on board.

"What's the matter with the men?" asked Cynthia of the captain in whose care she first went "out." The captain smiled. "Look at them!" she added, waving her hand in the direction of two or three couples swaggering along the deck in what, to her unsophisticated mind, was a curious sort of dinner dress.

"What are they walking like that for? And listen! What a drawl! They weren't always like that. What's the meaning of it?"

The captain laughed right out. Cynthia sat at his right hand at table – in spite of the other ladies petitioning for a change of seats on leaving Port Said. The captain was amused at her *naïf* remarks and pertinent (perhaps Mrs. Colonial Grundy would say *impertinent*) comments. He was now.

"This, I see, is your first introduction to the Anglo-Ceylonese *in the East*. With the *cummerbund* and white dress jacket he blossoms forth on leaving Aden. There he goes – swagger, drawl and all," was the Captain's reply.

"Good Heavens!" said Cynthia – no more.

But she *thought* – a chapter!

But that there are brains among the Civil Servants of Ceylon is, however, an incontrovertible fact – even among the cadets.

These rise and in some instances distinguish themselves in more ways than one. For example, the gentleman who, to gratify the intellectual taste of a certain Governor of the Island *protem*. – who had an earnest desire as well as human sympathy with, an earnest intellectual as well as a humane desire then – to behold a descendent of the deposed King of Kandy, dressed up in costly raiment of jewels, a low caste but good-looking Tamil tea-plucker to play the part. So well was the part played that His Excellency unsuspecting manifested great interest in the “Princess,” descendent of a royal but ill-starred house, and the whole occasion – a very festive one – passed off with *eclat*.

Alas and alas! The ingenious device of the Civil Servant was found out. Herein lay the mischief. His papers were requested to be sent in. And so the Civil Service lost a star. Other stars likewise have risen to set prematurely; for instance, a Servant of the Government who, desiring to take unto himself a second wife while yet his first wife lived, undivorced, sought the novel expedient of exchanging the religion of his forefathers and compatriots for that of Mohammed. By so doing his desire was gratified – legalised – in a way. The idea spread. Like a flash of lightening it brought inspiration to other masculine minds.

The Government, fearing a wholesale flight to Moslemism, requested the originator of this brilliant idea to “send in his papers.”

Another “star” in Ceylon’s Civil Service had set. Ant yet the service survives and flourishes, fresh blood always coming in; red blood, “black” blood and mixed; all, however, considering itself “blue” in this First Crown Colony! Its ramifications extend all over the Island, the best perhaps and the most practical human value being the medical organisation.

Hospitals there are in all parts of Ceylon ably presided over by qualified medical men, all under the direction of a Principal Civil Medical Officer, the present officer being deservedly one of the most honoured men in the Island.

The military are the military all the world over – for chivalry incomparable. But to sum up.

East is East and West is West,
And never the two will blend,

As Kipling says. This is true. Cynthia, humanitarian to her finger-tips, tried it. But no! the Oriental and the Occidental may meet, but never mingle. Their minds view things from different angles. To the European, the Oriental way is the way of topsyturvydom; probably ours is to them. Nevertheless the magnetism of the East is subtle and strong, narcotic one might say; for does it not numb some faculties while it evokes and excites others? If one needs a bath of Lethe one should go to the East. If one is desirous of developing certain psychical faculties dormant in the workaday West one should – go to the East. Other moods, other capacities, faculties, potentialities are awakened there – providing, of course, one does not relapse into the condition of inertia, physical and mental, as so many, perhaps *most* Europeans, out in Ceylon do – especially women.

Now Cynthia always endeavours to carry out that trite old saying, "When in Rome do as the Romans do." One need not be so literal as to eat with one's hands. But to adapt oneself is prudent – or *try* to. At all times and above all things not to carry one's hard and fast habits and customs and dogmatise to those who all the while are scarcely in doubt of one's sanity. This many Europeans do. Missionaries may preach; everything remains as it was – *below the surface* – and some time or other the best "converted" will fall back to his own flesh and blood, for blood is thicker than water, heredity more potent than preaching.

On the other hand – for are there not always two sides to a question? – Oriental philosophy (not religion) is pure, unselfish, sublime – sublimated agnosticism, one might say. Furthermore, every Oriental is a born philosopher. He has a moral axiom to meet every emergency and is never nonplussed. Talleyrand might have learnt much from the Oriental, for his axioms always tend in the right direction, that is selfward, and emanate likewise from his own personal point of view. A study, an intensely interesting study, is the Oriental, a product of the ages, of the soft sunlit scenery, of the physically enervating yet thought-inspiring clime. He meditates asquat on his heels for hours, his eyes gazing far away, into infinity apparently. The European looking on him thinks him stupid, bovine. *Is he?* All the while thoughts are animating his subtle mind, a reservoir too deep for the average European to fathom, with all his "cram." But the European of reflective tendency is speedily caught in the mental magnetism of the East. And then comes the fascination. Then inner eyes seems to open, hidden faculties awaken, psychical sense unfold, and another life – a life within this life – is discovered or revealed. Many Europeans experience this in its *initial*

stage in a greater or a lesser degree. If the former, they can never forget it – *never shake it off*. If their temperament be aesthetic, it comes to them as food-light-air does to their material requirements, only *that*, being more subtle-ethereal, it possesses greater charm, greater fascination than any more substantial sustenance. Herein lies the *true* "fascination of the East."

X

THE COLONIZED "OTHER" WOMAN

Caroline Corner

The Ladies of the Harim (1903)

Mount Lavinia the Beautiful! Indebted indeed are the Europeans in Ceylon to your refreshing breezes from the wide, gleaming ocean!

Seated on the verandah of the palatial hotel formerly the seaside residence of His Excellency – one realizes not the fact of the equator's proximity; one only realises a dream – a dream of nature's loveliness unsurpassed on this wonderful, beautiful earth.

"The Paradise of Adam," Cynthia was thinking as she sat alone, save for her companion Punch, in a shady, secluded corner where mosquitoes cease from troubling and the European is at rest. "The Paradise of Adam. What of Eve?"

Perhaps it was coincidence only that at that moment a group of exceptionally strange attired individuals and one does see strange garbs in Ceylon – passes through the cocoanut wood

down below. The courteous manageress was coming that way just then, "Who are they?" asked Cynthia, waving her sunshade in that direction.

"The Ladies of the Harim of Arabi Pacha and party," was the reply.

"Indeed! How interesting!" Cynthia was up and looking after the group instantly – Punch likewise.

Coincidences are very curious, inexplicable except one has a knowledge of the stars and their courses, which, however, does not explain – it only signifies after all. That evening Cynthia's husband said, "I had an interview at the Secretariat today with some one who would interest you – Arabi Pacha's son. He tells me he has taken a bungalow down in the wood for his wife, who is undergoing treatment for her eyes and has to be near Colombo. He appears to be a very intelligent fellow. Shall I ask him up?"

"By all means. You know how interested I am in people who are interesting. How much I should like to visit the ladies of a harim, and see if all that the missionaries say about them is correct! We can't ask them to dinner; we don't know what they eat and what they don't eat."

"They're Mohammedans, so they may not take their wives about with them," put in Cynthia's husband.

"Besides," said Cynthia, "we shouldn't know how many to allot to each. Well, let's do as the up-to-date society lady does and invite the men and leave out the wives. It's so easy to satisfy

men – cigars, whiskey and soda – oh! I'm forgetting again – they're not Christians. Well say – lemon squash. We'll make the thing go, anyhow."

At five o'clock that evening the visitors came: Muhamed Ibn Admed Arabi Bey, eldest son of Arabi Pacha and Ali Fehmy Pacha, a distinguished soldier, who for bravery has been rewarded with a wife of noble birth direct from the Kedivial Marim, the Palace of Ismail Pacha. Save for the Fez, little was there in the dress appearance of these two gentlemen to distinguish them from Europeans. Gentlemen they were in every respect. There was a plaintive note in the Arabi Pacha's son accentuated by the fact of his being totally blind in one eye, The brave Ali Fehmy Pacha took the tone of the major rather than minor, literally as well as metaphorically, as he had done doubtless throughout the campaign terminating in the battle of Tel-El Kebir (July 1882), when Arabi, leader of the Egyptians in their revolt against injustice and oppression, had given up his sword to our General Lowe.

"Politics had best be avoided," Cynthia had said prior to the visit. "I'm desperately patriotic when away from my native land." It was difficult though, to keep up to the decree – politics would "crop up," would enter into the conversation. With such fairness, such clemency these Egyptians spoke, however, that, as Cynthia said, "there was little fear of fighting Tel-El-Kebir over again under the mangoes in our compound." The visit passed pleasantly, amicably, instructively.

"Had the English but understood us and our purpose – our desires – your brave Lord Charles Beresford need not have bombarded our Alexandria. Personally we love as we admire

the English, and are proud to say we have many friends among them," said Arabi Bey.

"And we trust madame will do our ladies the honour of calling upon them. My wife, Lady Aidell, will be delighted," added Pacha Ali Fehmy.

"Indeed I will tomorrow," said Cynthia. And she did.

At four o' clock next afternoon Cynthia wended her way to the bungalow on the cocoanut wood. To be straightforward, Cynthia had taken extra pains with her toilette and general appearance for this exceptional occasion. As she approached the verandah a couple of Sinhalese ayahs came forward as escort. "Lady coming, please, this way," said they treading the stone steps that led to the verandah. Once there Cynthia was first apprised of Moselm seclusion. Instead of the verandah being open to light and air, except for the sun screens as usual, this was draped and darkened. Nor were there the usual Singapore chairs and lounges – the ladies of the harim were not wont to take their ease and the air on the verandah apparently. At the entrance to the bungalow, which was also curtained, contrary to the "customs of the country," a maid whose khol blackened eyes shone out large and lustrous from the top of a yashmak came forward and took up the escort, the Sinhalese ayahs falling back. The room they entered was large and furnished à l' European. As a matter of fact the bungalow had been let to the Egyptians "furnished," and remained as it was except for a few trifling additions such as photographs, flower-vases, and c. That evidenced feminine occupation with a certain refinement. Here, sinking into a Singapore chair, Cynthia overcame the fatigue and heat of walking, waited. A minute only, then – oh,

was it possible? A tall, handsome, thoroughly European-looking lady in tailor-made skirt and white cambric blouse, entered, smiling and bowing and extending her hand. "Madam, this is kind of you to come to see us! I am the wife of Arabi Bey, and daughter (she meant daughter-in-law) of Arabi Pacha." Then her black eyes gleamed.

"But oh, madame! Comme vous être belle! What a toilette! From Whiteley's not? Ah, how delightful to see Whiteley's! One hears so much. And the figure – pardon, madame, may one ask how to keep the fat off? When the fat does arrive, hélas! Our *marie* loves is no more! But how then, madame, to keep the fat off? Comment?"

Cynthia's eyes opened wide, very wide. Then she laughed.

"I thought," she said, "Mohammedans – liked fat. Christians always say so."

"Ah, madame, *mais ce n'est pas vrai*. Pardon! Madam is English – not? I then must *pailer l'Anglais*. My *gouvernante* she was French. Such a pity – not? Ah! Now comes Lady Aideen, and you have not told me of the fat, madame."

Bella Sidney Woolf

When Dreams Come True (1922)

I remember in my childhood kneeling by a chair in the library, wearing out my stocking knees, and reading – reading – reading, heedless invitations from lively brothers to join in games. And one of the most cherished volumes was a great fat brown book – the Arabian Nights, adapted for children and illustrated by brothers Dalzell. Very often there was a thick yellow fog outside and this seemed to add cosiness to the library with its wall-lining of books and its dog-grate with the leaping flames sparkling on tiles of vivid green and blue. After reading story after story, I remember the small girl of years ago used to sit thinking, dreaming of beautiful princesses and genies and bowls of jewels, and rock and rose gardens, and palm-trees till the unwelcome voice of old nurse broke in with: —

"Bedtime, please."

And all through the "good nights" and kisses to father and mother and the subsequent going to bed, the Princess

Badroulboudour and the Prince Caralzaman and wonderful colours and shapes and fancies clung around her. But she never thought that the dreams would come true till one day she stepped into "Villa Stamboul" and found herself in the pages of the Arabian Nights.

Through a graceful avenue of coconut leaves and fluttering flags and under the pandal that bade all guests welcome, we drove to the house of our hostess. On the doorstep we had the first glimpse of the wonders that waited us. The doorway was festooned with delicate garlands of jasmine blossoms, ropes of the flowers ending in fragrant balls swung from the door-posts. The scent of it was exquisite. At the foot of the stairs, was a group of Moslem ladies, the Reception Committee, and here we had a first glimpse of the feast of colour that had been prepared. Their wonderful rainbow-hued saris were thrown into relief by the white garlands of jasmine that made a bridal bower of the staircase. It was jasmine, jasmine, all the way, and it is impossible to describe the beauty and the fragrance of these fragile festoons. The cool blossoms brushed one's face, the scent of it enthralled one. The garlands had travelled all the way from Madura and the flowers were as fresh as if just picked. They hung everywhere – in doorways, archways, verandahs. Some ideas of the quantity of the garlands may be gained from the fact that over a mile of them – 2,500 yards to be accurate – had been made for the occasion.

In the reception room a wonderful dais has been erected. It was similar to the wedding throne on which Moslem brides sit. Gold and silver and mosaic work made a glittering whole and when it grew dusk the canopy overhead was lit up by the soft-coloured electric lights in white, rose and blue.

Just before H. E. Lady Manning arrived I gazed around and wondered if I were awake or dreaming. The room was lined with ladies of all communities – Moslem, Sinhalese, Tamil, Burgher, English, Malay – and each contributed to the wealth of colour and the flash of jewels. On the adjoining verandahs, there sat on divans Moslem ladies – many of the Borah community – wearing most marvellous nose jewels, chiefly pearls, often three in a row. When I try to conjure up for the benefit of others who were not there the gorgeous glowing colour, my pen fails, It was a bewildering array of cloth of gold, silks of gold and crimson, gold and purple, white with silver lace, hand-made and exquisite beyond belief, every shade of flame and orange and lemon and apricot, vivid pinks sewn with gold and thickly embroidered with gold thread, delicate shell-pinks and flame colour, creamy yellow, sewn with real gems and pearls, sea-blue with golden borders, dove grey and silver, vivid blue like a summer sky with soft heliotrope. There were wonderful silken jackets fastened with jewelled studs, and heavy gold and jewelled necklets, and delicate seed pearl and ruby bangles, and golden anklets appearing below silken trousers and velvet slippers sewn with gold, and a marvellous nose jewel of diamonds with one glorious drop pearl, and priceless diamond pendants and wonderful brooches fastening the saris to beautiful dark hair.

I wandered from room to room and came to one, set round with silken divans heaped with coloured silken cushions and hung with curtains of richest crimson silk patterned with soft deep blue, lit by bronze Egyptian lamps that shed a mysterious light through glass, of mottled green and brown and white. On the divans sat or reclined more Moslem ladies in all their glory of

silk and gems, and it seemed to me that all the colour I had ever sighed for under grey Western skies was heaped up and running over here. I lost myself in the wonder of it, feeling like one who has stepped into a dream-world, transported by the scent of jasmine blossom into a fairy tale. What would Dulac with his magic palette have given for a glimpse of this? But no man's eye might revel in the enchanting picture or meet the soft glances of those dark eyes under curling lashes.

There was a flutter and a rustle of excitement. Lady Manning had arrived. She was conducted to the reception room and took her place upon the wedding throne.

There was a short speech from Lady Manning and then each Moslem lady was presented to her.

Following this pleasant ceremony, the leading Moslem lady threw a sparkling chain in graceful Eastern-fashion round Lady Manning's neck and presented her with a cuscus fan sewn with silver thread.

Then we were bidden to take refreshments and below we found two great dining rooms with tables laden with a profusion of Eastern sweetmeats, cakes, and jellies, Egyptian coffee, and all manner of other attractive food and drinks.

"Jellies smoother than the creamy curd,
And lucent cyrups, tinct with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferred
From Fez; and spiced dainties, everyone,
From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon.

From the white terraces, through a fringe of palms,

One saw the sea, and beyond a flaming sunset of orange and gold.

* * *

Darkness had fallen and we went out into the garden or on balconies to see the fireworks. The whole house was lit with soft-coloured lights and strings of them hung from tree to tree. It was a fitting ending to a gorgeous scene to watch gold dust raining from the sapphire blue sky, to behold cascades of golden rain springing from the ground and to see a basket of light scatter sparkling flowers upon the turf. Then the words "Good Night" shone out in glittering silver balls and faded. The wonderful party was over. The guests took their leave, the carriages and cars of the Moslem ladies began to roll up. Some of them veiled their faces with silken hooded cloaks through which there was a transparent little peep hole of golden-meshed material; others donned a garment of dark silk like a "yashmak." Others wrapped themselves in long cloaks of white embroidery and stole like ghosts into the vehicles shrouded in black American cloth.

It was my privilege to wait until the last guest and hostess had vanished. I rubbed my eyes. Had it been a vision?

There were the jasmine garlands, but all the throng in their gay plumage, all the flashing jewels had vanished. A sense of desolation came upon me for a moment.

For in and out, above, about, below,
'Tis nothing but a Magic Shadow-show,
Play'd in a Box whose Candle is the Sun,
Round which we Phantom Figures come and go.

Manila Swinithasekera

The Picture (1922)

I gazed upon the sea in ecstasy
And took my brushes and prepared to paint
Its changing hues, And as I looked around
I saw a winsome maid of Lanka seated
Upon a swing. She stretched her limbs and swung herself
With laughter-loving eyes,
She swung herself so high
My tongue was dumb, I could not move.
High up and higher up, and higher still
She swung with reckless gaiety,
Till she had touched the waving palms
That bent their graceful crowns towards the sea.
And there she stood swaying in mid air
A figure neither of the earth nor sky,
Heedless of danger, knowing not one little slip
Would hurl her body to a watery grave
Or send her crushing 'gainst the mighty palms.

I thought how like a radiant bride she looked,
Innocent and chaste, and happy and so trustful,
Unconscious that some trees bear poisoned fruit.
And this I mused, until a look of horror
Spread o'er her face, and she abruptly turned
To stay the giddy twisted swinging
Before she could descend to earth again.
And once again I mused upon the terror
That she had felt when danger seemed so near,
And in the picture of the bride I saw
A weeping, wilted, wounded, shrinking woman

A Memory, 1923

I saw three faces as I strode
To be whirled out upon the road
The first a face of saintly beauty rare
That made me gaze at her in awe and fear;
Her anxious eyes did show her soul's distress
As walking fast she checked a lustrous tear.

O maid, preserve thy chastity
E'en with thy mind's simplicity!

The next a face so full of winsome charm,
Re-pictured on the child upon her side;
With smiling lips and gleaming, joyous eyes
She pressed her husband's arm in happy pride.

O wife, so sweet, thought must be balm
To all who long to find life's calm!

The last a face of bitter, deep despair,
With sad reproaching eyes, shrinking in shame,
A hunted figure crying out in vain,
"Hear ye, my tale before I bear the blame!"

O woman crushed by man's brute hands
Despair not, dear, God understands!

And these my sisters past me strode
And I was whirled upon the road.

XI

NOSTALGIA

Irene Crofton

Ouvah: "Forest Echoes" (1919)

Tripping o'er the downs of Ouvah,
Where the Rhododendrons grow.
Listening to the wild elk barking,
And the little wood-cock crow.

Hark! I hear the huntsman's bugle,
Now my heart is in the chase,
Up the steeps and down the valleys,
Oh! The glory of the race!

See! The great red sun is sinking,
Forest echoes softly die,
Bonnie Downs of happy Ouvah,
Fare-thee-well, and fond good-bye.

Mary E L Nock

A Song of the Patnas (1921)

Tis over the Patnas rugged and vast,
I would be roaming this beautiful morn,
where dewdrops are sparkling 'neath the sun's rays
Shining in splendour to herald the dawn.

There's joy on the hills and in rustic glades
Where bracken abounds and silver streams flow.
The blue oristoea and wild orchids blend,
While yonder ahead the sweet wattles grow.

Huntsmen are out and the beagles "give tongue,"
Away goes hare! the chase has begun
List to sound as far it re-echoes
Sharp on the air, the report of a gun.

Ah! Fair is the day and good is the sport,
Out on the Patnas with hearts full of glee.
So leave the white road and noise of the town,
To stray for a while where nature is free.

Absent Days

Borne away from the Eastern Isle,
Where the feathery palm trees sway,
Gently whispering soft and low,
Cool their shade in the heat of day.
There on some calm and starlit night,
'Neath velvet skies and crescent moon,
Oft have I watched the silver waves,
Thro' moments sweet that sped too soon.

Up in the hills where the rugged peaks,
Clad in dark green and golden brown,
Tow'r great heights to the azure dome,
O'er the vales they look proudly down.
There the sun in his splendour shines,
Fragrant breezes do gaily blow,
The air is fresh and flow'rets thrive,
While babbling trout streams onwards flow.

A land of colour rich and bright,
Where treasured footsteps silent fall,
Quaint bull-carts rumble down the road,
Past groups of dusky children small.
Its lakes and ruins still I see,
The paddy fields and temples fair,
Through absent days I long to dwell,
Once more amidst the beauties rare.

I love you for your bird like voice,
 It makes me glad, my heart rejoice.
 I love you for your great a mind,
 With mighty brain and thoughts refined.
 I love you best for your sweet soul,
 'T will reach at last the heavenly goal.

Venetia Stambo

To those who love (1930)

I love you

I love you for your winsome face;
 It captured me with charm and grace,
 I love you for those lustrous eyes.
 That seem to speak, so sweetly wise,
 I love you for your soften lips,
 The taste of which is nectared sips.
 I love you for your lofty brow,
 T'is like a queen's to you I bow.
 I love you for your oval chin,
 The hearts of many you will win.
 I love you for those tiny ears.
 Such perfect things such perfect dears
 I love you for your slender hands
 That bind me round like golden bands.
 I love you for your fairy feet,
 Such dainty things and yet so fleet.

Suvenetha

Suvenetha of the pearly isle,
My heart doth long for thee, my own,
I seem to see thy pure sweet smile,
In dreams alone.

Suvenetha, soon with thee I'll be,
No need, ah then, to sigh for me,
I'm coming, love, across the sea.
Suvenetha of the palmy isle,
My soul's bright star, my eastern flower,
To yearn for thee, Ah, all the while,
Yes, every hour.

Suvenetha of my native isle,
I leave behind the glam'rous west,
No longer will I be exile,
With thee is rest.

XII

"OTHERING" THE EAST

Bella Sidney Woolf

Butler or Boy? (1922)

The vagaries of the "boy" are so numerous that it is difficult to know where to begin. He makes life one long surprise packet.

He will delude you into thinking that he has grasped the constitution of your afternoon tea tray as laid down by yourself. One fine day when you have a small and select party he will produce tea in an ancient teapot with half a lid, or having packed your husband's clothes successfully for a decade, he will suddenly send him away in a dinner jacket and blue serge trousers.

All goes well in fact until the fatal day when he begins to think. I remember a crusty old uncle of my youth who was reported to engage every servant on these terms: —

" the moment you begin to *think, suppose or believe*, you quit my service."

But the "boy" adds far more to the mirth of nations than the butler. Take for instance, the menus he writes out. I am always amazed that he can do so, and still more amazed at the result. On one occasion a menu finished up with the depressing word "coffin." Our best Mocha hardly deserved it. On one occasion at a dinner given at the Pearl Fishery, where fruit was unobtainable, the boy, not to be baffled, wrote the ingratiating word "Plates" in lieu of "Dessert." If not the rose it was the next best thing.

There are innumerable stories on the subject, some too hoary to quote.

There is one trait of the "boy's" which is most irritating and must be borne with patiently. He will pretend he understands you and will go away without the foggiest notion of what you mean. When I feel inclined to be annoyed at some tiresome incident arising from this peculiarity, I soothe myself by the thought:- "It is typical of the immemorial East – the age-long desire to be polite at all cost and to do and say what you think the other party wishes you to do and say."

Some of these efforts are worthy of commendation, showing a gallant struggle to "make it out!" A friend told the "boy" to fetch his "fountain pen." He appeared in the garden carrying the large flowered "counterpane."

Another example of the "boy's" resourcefulness occurred when H.E. the Governor, who was on tour, was expected to tea by a certain Civil Servant. The lady of the house had prepared by her own hands a chocolate cake of surprising beauty. She had left it to cool and was proceeding leisurely to take a bath, when to her horror His Excellency arrived several hours too soon. There had been some mistake in the itinerary. She dressed hastily, while

her husband entertained the distinguished guest and before joining the drawing room party, she dashed into the kitchen to see how the cake was progressing. It was still steaming and the entire household was standing round – fanning it.

Yes, give me the "boy" and keep your butler. I like these white clothed, willing folk, who, when you establish a cordial relationship with them, give you faithful and untiring service. To you they come with all their troubles, and descriptions of ailments, couched in language which would make Shakespeare blush, and quite inoffensive when delivered in unblushing ignorance. To your medicine chest they pin their faith, and I remember that the gift of a hot water bottle in one case affected a cure on a Tamil housekeeper's wife that elevated the bottle to a god. They will arrange your flowers like a first-class florist; fold your clothes like a French maid, produce anything you want from anywhere. Stock your garden from your neighbours' beds; guard your possessions zealously; see you depart Homewards with tears in their eyes; greet you on the jetty, as you set foot on the red roads again, with a beaming face – not a "superior smile."

Colour Contrasts

I was amused at the difference of opinion the other day among a party of four people discussing in the moonlight that inexhaustible subject, the respective merits of England and Ceylon.

The enthusiast newly-arrived was descanting on the astounding beauty and variety of colour that the island produces.

"It simply takes away your breath," she said.

"Just as it takes away everything else," said the cynic. "Takes away your colour – your energy, - your sense of humour. It's not any satisfaction to see a flamboyant tree in bloom when I know my own face is, and will permanently remain the colour of dirty chalk; in fact that, however much best soap and water I may apply, I shall always look like the A. B. in Punch who, when reproved by the Captain for an uncleanly appearance, was pleaded for by the petty officer on the grounds that he 'dried dirty'.

"We'll never get a good word for the East out of you," said the elderly member. "Personally I agree with our enthusiast. Thirty years of service here haven't staled the wonder of the colour for me. In fact I always say I prefer two-pence coloured to penny plain. You've got to pay the extra penny in health probably, but you get more for your money, more sunshine, more colour, more mystery. I don't want to disparage England. For beauty she is hard to beat, but when you get a climate described by the New Zealand soldier as 'nine months of winter and three months of bad weather,' give me a 'cycle of Cathay,' and keep your fifty years of cold and damp."

After they had gone I sat thinking. It was Wesak night, a full moon pouring silver radiance out of a powder – blue sky flecked with soft white clouds. Along the road passed bullock carts with Japanese lanterns like great golden melons bobbing up and down. Occasionally two carts would face each other and we would have a thrilling five minutes. It usually ended in a bump. Perhaps they were conducted on the principles of bumping races. My thoughts went back to the last May Week at home and the beauty of the "Backs" in June. There seemed to pass before my eyes a procession of visions of Cambridge, the pale green veils of the willows, drooping to the water, daffodils nodding in John's Wilderness, a carpet of crocus, blue, gold, and white in Fellow's garden, then the time of lilac, huge purple spires nodding over Clare Bridge, hawthorn and laburnum throwing a wealth of white fragrance of golden trails over grey walls, high summer with the hum of bees in the lime-trees and then in autumn the golden pomp of the elms standing wind-still in the pale sunshine.

All exquisite – delicate as a cameo or a pastel.

Then I began to draw comparisons, which some uncompromising Westerners will say was odious of me. However, "tastes differ, all is well and wisely put" as the poet says. And although I yield to none in my admiration for the beauties of England, I maintain that you have not realised what "colour" means till you have journeyed East.

Both schemes are exquisite — the delicate tints of the West and the glowing colour of the East – but upon some of us, whose lot for many years was cast beneath grey skies, the wonder of the Eastern colours can never pall.

Of late, when most folk who can escape Colombo are up-country, the city has been flying its gayest flags. The whole place has been a-flower, a riot of flame-colour and gold. There are no words to describe the beauty of the flamboyant tree against a blue sky. It gives you a shock of intense surprise and joy – it is the colour of the heart of a fire flowing out in a mass of blossom scarlet, orange, flame. Eye cannot imagine anything more vivid, more luxuriant, more glowing. And by its side rises tree upon tree with great golden spires of flowers – like horse chestnuts goldened. Botanists have given it a hideous name, *peltophorum ferrugineum*. It is enough to rob one of the enjoyment the tree gives. When I asked a Sinhalese boy what he called it, he said:

“ We are calling it ‘*kaha-mal*.’ ”

And this means The Yellow Flower. Nothing could be more adequate. For while it is in full blossom, it scatters largesse of gold beneath its branches so that the Colombo red roads are carpeted with yellow flowers.

It is only rivalled in Peradeniya in March by *bigonia unguis*, a sight which few of the inhabitants of this island see. This *bigonia* flings itself in cascades of gold from some of the highest trees in the garden. It is again one of these pieces of pure colour that make one gasp. Like paddy green which is so much intenser than any other green – an emerald flame – so the yellow of *bigonia unguis* leaps at you. A copse of primroses or a field of dancing daffodils soothes and delights you, but with the faint tinge of sadness that is always in the air of England. I think it is the sense of the swiftly-passing spring and summer days that gives that feeling of nostalgia. Here in the land of never-ending summer we can lose ourselves in a rapture of enjoyment. The flowers may fade but the leaf will not fall. There are no chill winds to follow.

But flowers apart, the colour of the crowd in the East is an unfailing source of wonder to those who are accustomed to the black dun crowds of the West. On Wesak day there passed the bungalow processions of men and women going to the temple bearing flowers in their hands. One long line I remember especially. It consisted chiefly of young women and the colours of their ‘cloths’ ran through all the delicate shades of pink and yellow and blue. They were a vision of delight as they moved along under the yellow flowers, the sunlight dappling their black hair and bronze, rounded cheeks and arms.

I thought of one woman whom I have never forgotten. I saw her years ago in the temple of the Tooth in Kandy on a poya’ day. She was dressed in vivid pink and round her neck was a necklace of sparkling pink stones. In her hands she carried pink lotus flowers. She was taller than most Sinhalese women and there was something very arresting in her face and its large sombre eyes. Her mouth and throat were like Rosetti’s Beata Beatrix. There rose to my mind Swinburne’s lines:-

I am queen Ahinoam,
Like the throat of a soft slain lamb

Was my throat, softer veined than his:

My lips were as two grapes the sun
Lays his whole weight of heat upon

Like a mouth heavy with a kiss:

My hair’s pure purple as wrought fleece,
My temples therein as a piece

Of a pomegranate’s cleaving is.

She stands out in my memory as does a Tamil woman, seen suddenly on a motor tour up-country. We came upon her at a bend in the road standing out-lined against the sky - a gorgeous figure in orange draperies, which the Tamil woman adjusts in such classic folds. She was a beautiful woman and the grace of her figure deserved immortalising in bronze.

My thoughts strayed to the West and to crowds that pass along our streets, streaming homeward from the City. Could there be anything more drab and monotone? I thought of the villages streaming along the road to Kandy on a *poya* day to the temple, like birds of gay plumage and then of the last Bank Holiday crowd I saw near Birmingham. Every man wore a dull tweed suit and tweed cap and every woman wore a raincoat. It happened to be a wet day. True you see the 'flappers' in gay coloured jumpers, but vivid colours do not tone so well with our skies. And folk who walk barefoot and wear few garments — and those bright ones — make more of a picture than folk in cheap shoes and ill-fitting layers of garments.

Yesterday, I saw a handsome carter lad with a scarlet shoe-flower behind his ear. I cannot forget the contrast of the flower and the brown skin and curly black hair. Behind him came a rickshaw containing an ayah and a small European child both half buried in bunches of flamboyant flowers. And in the road behind them were two Buddhist priests one in silken orange robes, the other, evidently a novice, in sulphur yellow.

With that curious volatility that thoughts possess, mine flew to a Tube lift and the "straphanging" that preceded or followed it. I saw the long grey streets and the fog and heard the roar of traffic. It has its charms and when we are back in it the contrast and this

old familiar tone of it catch at our hearts. But for all that the "penny-plain" does not allure me like the beat of the distant tom-tom and the flaming flowers and the fold in gay garments, passing up and down the red roads on brown and noiseless feet.

The Azure-Blue Delphinium

I know that something wonderful has happened, for outside my window I can see an azure-blue delphinium. Beyond it there is a hedge of heliotrope and over the hedge are clumps of pink and red carnations, and beyond them a wall of sweet peas. The azure-blue delphinium stands up straight and fresh – a solid rod of bloom, the colour of the sky on the best summer day that occurred.

Yesterday I was looking at a clump of flame-coloured cannas, backed by crimson amaranthus, and against the flaming sunset flamboyant trees burned their own intense fires. Some enchanter has waved a wand, I suppose, and has transported me on a magic carpet into temperate climes.

For yesterday in Colombo was hot. I do not record this as a "grouse" but merely as an incontrovertible fact. I have lived too long in lands where the appearance of the sun is so intermittent that we begin each day, and practically every conversation, with a reference to the weather. I am consumed with pity when people at Home trot out that well-worn question: — "Don't you ever get tired of the sun? Tired of the sun! Why, my good friends, I do not live in the Sahara, I live in Ceylon. We have our spells of the fiery furnace, but we have our rains, our rainy days, our overcast days. And in the dry season there are many of us who feel the joy of the sun-worshipper, when we look out of our windows and day after day are greeted by a flood of sunshine.

Let me whisper in your ear, Oh dweller in the West! It is the Briton's privilege to "grouse" in a pleasant unconvincing manner – just as it is his peculiar trait to "rag." You must not

take him seriously and least of all when he tells you that he'd swim Home if he could. It pleases him to picture England on its best days. He gets a letter like one I received last mail. The writer was in Sussex and said: — "We are here for the weekend in the most superb spring weather. You can't imagine how perfect the weather has been this year. The garden a mass of pear blossom, plum blossom, daffodils, wallflower and polyanthus. We went for a week at Easter to Cornwall, ten miles from Land's End. Brilliant sun the whole time and the whole place golden with gorse." Yes, one can picture the beauty of it all – incomparable. But how long did it last? Will not May bring cold winds and icy showers and nip the blossom and batter the daffodils?

Give me the fadeless tree – the lands of never-ending summer and foremost among them this "brave land very fruitful and fair," where within ten hours you can pass from the sun, that lays a hot and heavy hand upon you, to the cool airs and tempered sunshine of the hills.

It is not the enchanter's wand that does it. The ticket from Maradana to Nanu-oya works the magic. But it is all in the nature of a dream. You drive through Colombo in the evening with a strange sense of exhilaration upon you – the schoolboy-off-for-the-holiday feeling. The air is heavy and thundery, but there is (to the Colombo lover) attraction in Colombo in all her moods. She has erred on the sultry side for the past week, but we would not leave her permanently just when her flamboyant trees are making a riot of colour with the red roads. Still, like the whale, we shall enjoy coming to the surface, metaphorically, and breathing the fresh air.

There are some who grumble at the night mail, but, granted inevitable discomforts, which have attended travellers ever since the days when Moses took his tribes into the wilderness, I content that there is an air of adventure and romance about the night mail.

Once settled in the queer little room that is unlike any other bed-chamber you have occupied before, you sink into a strange uneasy slumber. You know that you are being carried through the indigo blue night past the palm tree and plantation country up into the mountain-region. At stations there are queer flashes of light and murmurs of voices, and hoarse shouts, and then you fall fast asleep and awake to find the dawn creeping through the green blinds. You give a shiver – you are quite cool – you pull up the blanket.

The train stops at the station. If you have energy to creep out of your bunk you will see groups of sleepy looking coolies, most of them with handkerchiefs tied over their heads as if they had a toothache. There are family parties in an extraordinary assortment of clothing. One group at Hatton I remember particularly. The Tamil mother was in her draperies of a peculiar pleasant yellow; the Tamil father was in his white coat and cloth, with a white turban. The children were dressed respectively in a frilled frock of Victorian make, and in a white coat and knickers, black stockings and bright yellow boots. Those children were a sad blot upon the landscape, and bright yellow boots are extremely offensive at 5 a.m. I was glad when the train moved on and there suddenly appeared a wonderful view of the Peak lying calm and blue against the golden sky. The mountain slopes wore those mystic lights and shadows that

dawn brings and filmy trails of mist floated in and out of hollows. The tea bushes, so smug and unromantic in the broad light of day – became part of a fairy world; little streams trickled musically through ferns beneath feathery grevilleas.

Then the welcome cup of tea brought back the workaday world and the necessity of getting up and packing up.

At Nanu-oya greetings exchanged with sleepy or brisk friends – it just depends how the early morning hours take them. And a friend's welcome car to speed us along the four miles to Nuwara Eliya, leaving the less fortunate ones in the "toy train," that makes more ado than did the night-mail when taking us up the Pass last night. The air is like "dawn in Paradise." Dew lies heavy and sparkling on fern and bush. The white solanum hangs in bridal garlands from tree to tree, and when we drop down into Nuwara Eliya just as in Cornwall "the whole place was golden with gorse."

And now I sit and thank the gods for a week-end in Nuwara Eliya, for the good company, for the good air and for the azure-blue delphinium outside my window.

Clare Rettie

Aviation, Canoes, Snakes and a Literary Aspirant (1929)

Ovid mentions of Ceylon, or "Taprobane" as it was known in his day, as being exceedingly remote, and indeed it was, until modern steamships changed conditions, and brought the lovely island within comparatively easy reach of Europe. The voyage is a pleasant one, even the intense heat to be felt at times when passing through the Red Sea, need no longer be dreaded, owing to the general use of electric fans on the big liners. It is, however, as well for those who are indifferent sailors to avoid the monsoon whenever possible—October till May being considered the best months during which to travel East.

Although railways in Ceylon are well managed, and good accommodation is always provided for travellers, there is no doubt that the ideal way in which to get about the Island is by motor. Unfortunately the motoring comes rather expensive, particularly if cars have to be hired, as the charge made invariably includes the return journey. There are public

motorbuses in some places, but—as has already been mentioned, they are rarely used by Europeans, and leave much to be desired. Some day they will be improved, though it is certainly true that the East cannot be hustled, and it will take time.

As coolies nearly always carry baggage on their heads, the merciful traveller avoids too large or heavy boxes, and it is almost unnecessary to say that, in addition to the fixed tariff of charges, a santossum (tip) is always expected, and if not produced, will be unblushingly demanded. It is wise to err on the side of generosity, for coolies, more especially in towns, can be very fluent on occasions. Their language might not be understood, but there is never any doubt as to the nature of their remarks, which are uncomplimentary to say the least of it.

So far aviation as a means of getting about has not become popular in Ceylon. It seems rather doubtful it ever will, as the ranges of hills and the steamy heat of the low country, make it difficult to fly long distances. Some of the naval aircraft pilots, when they happen to be in Colombo, take the opportunity of flying about the coast and district, to the delight of the Natives, who are much impressed. Otherwise aeroplanes are seldom to be seen.

From modern flying machines to primitive Sinhalese catamarans is a far cry, but some pleasant hours may be spent in one of these canoes, which are more comfortable than they look, and have the merit of being very safe. It is possible to go out in a catamaran in Batticalo, for instance, a peaceful little place on the East Coast, and, at the same time, to have a chance of hearing, the so-called "singing fish" which are a peculiarity of that part of the Island.

After dinner, on a moonlight night, it is delightful to skim the dark waters of the lagoon, and listen for the faint musical sounds, like the tinkling of fairy bells, that sometimes come, so mysteriously, from the depths below. What causes them? Are they the far distant strains of music made by some lover serenading his mermaid mistress, as she combs her long tresses in a cave away down amongst the corals? Or is the Sinhalese boatman right when he declares—with a contemptuous sniff: “that only ye’ sounds coming from ye’s shells” (Sinhalese always preface the letter “S” by “ye” for some odd reason). He never heard of mermaids, and obviously scorns the idea of singing fish. But what does it matter?—nothing seems to matter to those who feel the enchantment of an Eastern night.

How quite it is out there on the lagoon. There is only the gentle splash of the water as it kisses the shore, or cry of some night bird. The Natives are out fishing, a few of them moving about, with torches that flicker here and there, like will-o’-the-wisps dancing by the sea, and stars shine brilliantly in a cloudless canopy of blue; the palms looking like sleepy giants as they nod under the touch of a light breeze.

In the early morning the water looks so inviting that it makes one impatient to get into its coolness. If visitors have forgotten suitable garments, they may be glad to know that pyjamas and sun topees will meet the situation. They have been worn at Batticalo by those bathing, and nobody has shown the least surprise—but that is another story. Sun topees, by the way, must not be forgotten, for the sun blazes down fiercely at times, and a headache is the least of the evils it may produce.

After a swim it is a joy to rest under the shady trees, and watch the fishing boats cruising along the coast, while a Sinhalese podian climbs the nearest coco-nut palm, to bring down nuts filled with grateful liquid. Before getting comfortably settled, however, it is wise to look about carefully, in case some snake may be wriggling unpleasantly near.

Snakes are always a possible danger, though there are, fortunately, not a great many tic polangas and cobras (the most dangerous of the reptiles to be found in Ceylon) at all events in the more frequented parts of the Island. There are timid visitors who seem to imagine snakes are to be met everywhere—even in the streets of the towns. One G. O. H. caught sight of a pink ribbon (meant for tying up the mosquito curtains when they were not in use); it was dangling suspiciously over her bed, and she sat up shrieking, “A snake—oh! a snake,” until an indignant ayah appeared, to inform her scornfully: “Snakes not made of ribbons in this country, Missy.” All the same it does not do to forget that there are such creatures, or to omit reasonable care in avoiding them.

In some ways, Batticalo is quite up-to-date, and, amongst its inhabitants, it includes at least one literary aspirant. Once, when a small party of Europeans were spending a few days there, they were lazing in the verandah (feeling at peace with all the world, after a tiffin consisting of seer fish, dressed crab, prawn curry, and jaggery pudding), when a rather smudgy visiting card was brought to them by the Appu (head servant) on which was inscribed in bold letters “Joseph Daniel David.”

“That,” he hesitated, “Dorai on ye’ steps, I telling him better not coming in.” The Appu spoke in a rather disapproving tone. It is

curious what snobs all Native servants are; they quickly classify people, and it is by no means a question of clothing, or even tips. If they decide a man is not a "real" Dorai their manner to him will be perfectly polite, but notably colder. Evidently the Appu had doubts about this visitor; the name on the card was intriguing, however, and he was told to show in its owner.

Mr. Joseph Daniel David was a tall, thin Eurasian who wore peculiar garments. His flaming red tie might have meant that he favoured Communism, his long black coat that his profession was that of a cleric of sorts, while his wide, baggy, grey trousers suggested he had been, during one period of his career, at Oxford. With a flourish he removed a spotlessly white topee—an unnecessary addition to his toilet, considering how long and thick were his oily black locks—and made an elaborate bow.

"May I be pardoned this apparently seeming untimely intrusion," he began, in the mincing tone of voice his kind usually adopt, "but having been informed, in a roundabout fashion, that present company were here, I decided to make the bold attempt to call. Have I the honour to address—?" He bowed again to one of the company, who admitted being the person named.

"As I have decided to embark on a literary career and to write books also," continued Mr. Joseph Daniel David, "I have the express hope of enlisting esteemed advice, and valuable assistance."

The Europeans tried to look intelligent, but tiffin had made them sleepy, and they realized their visitor's call might be a lengthy one.

"Yes," murmured one of them, politely stifling a yawn, "and in what way?"

"My case may be briefly stated in this fashion, Lady." He began a long, rambling explanation which was difficult to follow, because he used words which must have been extracted from a dictionary for the occasion, and more for their length than lucidity. It was, however, gathered by the end of his speech that his chief ambition in life was to write. He had consulted a young English engineer who had advised him to form his style on that of Miss Ethel Dell—"one first class writer" as he said—only it had occurred to him that, before finally deciding which particular style to adopt, it might be well to give other authors a chance. He had recently heard there was a gentleman called Mr. Bernard Shaw, was he perhaps considered in England to be as good a writer as Miss Ethel Dell?

The two names in conjunction were unexpected—one of the party hastily enveloped himself in a newspaper, which shook suspiciously. The visitor glanced at it: "I am come only to solicit kind information," he said with some dignity.

"Of course, and we will be delighted to help. If you will come into the next room, I'll write a list of our best-known writers for you."

With a reproachful look at the newspaper, one of the party rose and led the way, followed by Mr. Joseph Daniel David, after he had made another low bow.

He waited patiently while the list, a rather long one, was made out, and then looked at it critically: "You have plenty writers in England, men and women also," he remarked. "This Mr. Shakespeare now, he lived a long time ago. I think he is a little

too old fashioned h'm? And Mr. Robert Louise Stevenson also, but my friend Pereira says he was a poet. I also am a poet, perhaps you might say, a minor one," he added modestly.

"That is very interesting—what sort of poetry do you write? Won't you repeat some of it to me?"

"My latest effort is a poor thing—a mere trifle, yet I will say it." He struck an attitude and began:

" Oh ! come to my arms oh ! come,
I've loved you since last aut-umn,
And straight from my heart's bot-tom,
Oh ! come to my arms then—come."

"Thank you so much. It's—it's most original," stammered the listener in a shaky voice. "Is that all? It's so—so short."

"Yes, Lady, but I can of course make longer poems. I wish to keep my best efforts for my book, however. When it appears I will send you a copy—with poems complete."

So far his magnum opus has never appeared, but if some day a wonderful book is printed, bearing the name Joseph Daniel David, it is well to know that the may be found at Batticalo.

Punchi Nona (1910)

The monsoon was over, and once more the sun shone on a garden ablaze with roses. A soft breeze wafted the sweet scent of violets and heliotropes into the open verandah where Hilda Graham sat, ostensibly sewing buttons on her husband's coat—really lost in admiration of the wonderful panorama which, a source of never-failing pleasure, stretched as far as eye could reach in front of her bungalow in the hill country of Ceylon.

From the valley below came the faint echo of native voices calling to the lazy buffaloes as they ploughed through the rich brown mud of the paddy fields. Gleaming like silver in the picturesque Sinhalese huts half hidden under tall coconut palms or graceful bamboos. In the distance could be seen dark masses of jungle, and beyond the "everlasting hills," their outlines blurred in soft rosy haze.

"Lady, please, I have come". A sudden movement at her side made Hilda turn somewhat startled – to behold a small Sinhalese girl, who moved forward and made a profound salaam. "I Punchi Nona, I have heard lady wants one ayah to look after her clothes, so I have come to stay," she announced calmly. Standing there under a tangled wealth of purple passion flowers she made a pretty picture. Her slim figure draped in vivid scarlet, her small and singularly intelligent face framed in a mass of glossy black hair, she looked into Hilda's astonished face, as she spoke, with large, very bright, brown eyes.

"But where do you come from and who are you?" demanded Hilda. "I come from the village below. My father one very bad

man, he beating me too much so I have come to stay here. I plenty good girl, never telling lies, not stealing, sewing everything nicely," then as Hilda did not seem sufficiently impressed, "I not one Christian, I one heathen," she added.

"That is scarcely a recommendation," Hilda said laughing "Have you been an ayah before?"

"Yes, I went to one mission lady, who has gone to England she plenty good, teaching me to sing hymns. Lady please listen." Before Hilda could stop her she struck up "Hark! The herald angels sing" in a shrill falsetto. "That will do." Hilda rose hastily - "We shall go to master's office and see if he approves of you as an ayah," she laughed.

"Lady who that girl?" anxiously inquired the Appu, who was engaged in dusting, and paused to look disapprovingly at the unusual visitor. "I come here to be ayah, going to stay long time," explained Punchi Nona promptly. "That not one proper ayah lady, she only one common village girl" - the appu spoke in a tone of disgust.

Punchi Nona turned on him like a flash. "And you only common low caste black man," she said scornfully, regardless of Hilda's shocked "Oh hush.!"

In his office Dick Graham was deep in tea accounts and looked up with a worried expression. "What is it dear? I am frightfully busy. Good gracious! Where did that imp come from?"

Punchi Nona salaamed. "I come here to be lady's ayah; master knows my father, he called Fernando."

"I remember, he spoke of sending his daughter to see you." Dick lowered his voice, "he is a clever rascal, better not have anything to do with the girl."

"Yes, he one clever rascal," agreed Punchi Nona unexpectedly, "but I not one rascal, I plenty good. Master, please try; If I bad then you can send away," she looked at Hilda appealingly as she spoke.

"Shall I try her Dick? I really do want an ayah to help with the mending just now, and they are so hard to get up here."

"As you like, only I warn you she will probably lie and steal."

"She can't possibly be worse than the old wretch I had before; at least Punchi Nona looks keen and she might be taught."

"Please yourself dear; now I must finish these beastly accounts." Dick turned to his desk again and Hilda took the hint.

"Come along Punchi Nona," she said, "you can have something to eat in the kitchen, and after you may go to the village and fetch your clothes." She led the way, followed by the girl, whose eyes were sparkling with excitement, and then returned to her sewing.

But apparently Dick Graham's buttons were not to be sewn on that morning. Hilda had only been seated a few minutes when Appu appeared.

"Lady, please come, that ayah have beat the podian," he said in a horror struck voice.

"What?" Hilda rose hastily and followed him to the kitchen, where she found Punchi Nona squatting cross legged on the floor, shoving curry rapidly into her mouth with her fingers; in the corner lounged the Podian, traces of tears on his stupid face.

"She have beaten my head with one coconut spoon," he blubbed.

"Lady, he one baby," Punchi Nona spoke contemptuously; "he telling I no use for ayah, so I have broken that spoon on his head and he have gone. Ah yoh! Ah yoh! Same like I killing him"

Hilda struggled with an inclination to laugh. "You are very naughty indeed to do such a thing" she said severely "unless you can behave better than that you will never do as my ayah."

"I plenty sorry, I making lady cross" the culprit spoke penitently, "but I not very sorry, I hitting that podian, he great baby," she added.

The woe-be-gone expression on the podian's face was too much for Hilda's gravity, and she beat a hasty retreat to the verandah. A little later she saw Punchi Nona pass. The girl paused to watch a lizard in a bed of pansies, picked up a bunch of scarlet geraniums the garden coolly had dropped, and stuck them coquettishly in her hair, then with a sudden little dance of pure joie de vivre disappeared through the tea bushes en route to the village.

The advent of Punchi Nona to a quiet and peaceful bungalow was not an unmixed blessing, though Hilda found it somewhat exciting. The girl turned up the following day, with a small disreputable tin box, which apparently contained all her

belongings. She set to work at once to repair some of Hilda's garments, and did it extremely well.

"I have found a perfect treasure" said Hilda triumphantly to Dick. He smiled. "You wait" he said oracularly. Later on, as she was returning from a ride, Hilda heard unusual sounds from the kitchen and hurried there to find her ayah dancing, with great abandon, what looked like highland fling and devil dance! Perched on her oily black locks at a rakish angle was a wreath of yellow roses, obviously stolen from her mistress' artificial flower box. A group of coolies had collected round the door and were watching the performance with delight, on the floor squatted the podian his mouth wide open, while the cook pausing in the act of mixing a cake was beating time on the table with his spoon.

"Punchi Nona, how dare you?" Hilda's righteous indignation had an electrical effect. The coolies vanished as if by magic, the podian snatched up a duster and fled, the cook put his cake hurriedly into the oven regardless of the fact that it was only partially mixed. Punchi Nona stood half ashamed half defiant, "I not doing anything bad." she said "I have finished all my sewing, then I playing."

"You are a very bad girl, what do you mean by coming here at all, and how dare you steal the roses from my box?"

"I not stealing, I meaning to put them back."

"If anything like this happens again you go at once. Do you understand?" "Yes lady." Punchi Nona sighed deeply. "I not doing it again."

For the next few days the ayah was a model of virtue; on the third Hilda discovered an embroidered cushion entirely stripped of its gold braid. No one had seen it. Punchi Nona being loudest in protest of innocence. In the evening Podian brought one of a pair of bronze slippers - every single bead had been picked off the toe! Then Hilda got exasperated.

"Dick you simply must find out who did it" she commanded. "I'm afraid it was Punchi Nona, but what on earth did she want my gold thread and beads for?" "If the one who stole the things does not confess I shall fine the lot of you" Dick warned the domestics. Punchi Nona promptly came forward. "Master, I taking. I making one pretty betel bag," she produced it with pride, evidently forgetting her guilt, in her childish delight of showing it off.

"What you want is a jolly good thrashing," Dick said half laughing. "Lady had better pack you out of the bungalow." Punchi Nona flung herself at Hilda's feet weeping copiously. "Please lady," she sobbed, "I too sorry. I never, never taking anything again." Hilda who had been telling herself that the girl must be sent away relented.

"I shall give you one more chance " she said. "Now go." The ayah got up with alacrity, dried her eyes on her purple cloth and departed.

Next morning Hilda came to Dick with an anxious face. "I am so distressed" she said, "my turquoise ring has disappeared, none of the servants have seen it and I feel almost certain I left it in a small box on my dressing table."

"Punchi Nona again!" groaned Dick as he rang and summoned the domestics. To his searching enquiries there was only one reply - nobody had seen the ring, Punchi Nona being specially emphatic in her denial.

"Only confess and I shall forgive you" pleaded Hilda.

Big tears welled in the girl's brown eyes. "I sorry," she began slowly. "I only taking that ring in play, then I going bath, and it have fallen off my finger into the water and got lost.

"The quicker you clear out of this bungalow the better" Dick said angrily. "A nice yarn that, Hilda! I bet she has that ring concealed somewhere." "I not got it " flashed Punchi Nona. "I telling true," then turning appealingly to Hilda, "lady, please believe." "I think she is speaking the truth, Dick, but of course she must go." "I doing anything lady liking because she very good, she believing me" this with a scornful glance at Dick.

Later in the day a dejected ayah departed, and only a few hours after Hilda found her ring! Suddenly she remembered she had worn it when tidying up a certain drawer; it must have slipped from her finger being large, and there she found it under some garments.

"How do you explain Punchi Nona's story of her bath?" asked Hilda.

"Easily, she saw you suspected her, but would forgive her if she owned up, so being an ingenious imp invented the yarn. Thank heaven we have seen the last of Punchi Nona." But Dick was mistaken.

One dark and stormy night some months later he was reading unusually late, when a sharp tap at the windows startled him. "Who is there?" He demanded as he opened the door. From the gloom there emerged the figure of a girl clad in a scarlet cloth which was reduced to a mere wisp by the drenching rain. "Great Scott! it's Punchi Nona. What on earth do you want?"

"Master," the girl spoke in evident agitation "tomorrow you are going to pay coolies, you going to fetch their pay from Vadellu?" "Yes, yes, go on." "Then, master please not riding back by jungle path; please coming cart road. Tonight I lying down to sleep. Then I hearing my father and two Sinhalese men talking. They telling they very angry because master sent them from his estate for drinking, and that tomorrow they will wait in the jungle and will shoot master and get all coolies pay."

Dick swore softly. "The scoundrels, and you walked through the rain and dark to warn me. By Jove you are a brick."

"Now , I go at once, for if my father misses and thinks I told, assuredly he would kill me. Salaam, master."

"Wait a minute." Dick took a couple of twenty-rupee notes from his desk and handed them to the girl. To his amazement she flung them angrily on the ground.

"I not doing it for money, only for lady, because she good to me" she called over her shoulder as she vanished in the darkness.

When Hilda heard the story she insisted on sending for Punchi Nona to thank her, and ended by asking her to come back as ayah.

"Can't doing that" said Punchi Nona with twinkling eyes. "I going to marry master's clerk very soon." "Excellent." Dick laughed as he tucked his arm through his wife's .

"Come on dear, get out Cargills' list and we'll choose a ripping wedding present for Punchi Nona."

Mary E. Gunasekera

With No Evil Intent (1932)

Mr. Albert Zilando, until recently Manager of the Elpikande Imperial Motor Garage, is one of those curate's eggy people, whose wives try to reform them. The type is familiar; kind, generous, too generous; the cheeriest of companions, but not very steady; irresponsible; an inveterate gambler.

Mrs. Albert, and a very nice little body she is, all things considered, has been trying for twelve years to reform her husband, and if she has grown a trifle sharp-tongued and shrewish, well, it must be remembered that she has had quite a lot to put up with, for Albert has never been a man to stick to a job for long, and there have been more downs than ups in the Zilando fortunes.

The August Race week has always been a critical time with them. Albert has never had any luck at all, but he always insists upon going to the Races, and usually comes back not only penniless, but considerably in debt to such of his friends as can be persuaded to lend him a few rupees.

After the races, Mrs. Zilando, and the six little Zilandos become experts in the art of "doing without." Last year all that remained of her already depleted stock of jewellery had to be sacrificed. This year - but the unfortunate events connected with Albert's trip to the races, this year, require something more than cursory reference.

As already intimated, Albert was, until these latter days, Manager of the "Imperial Motor Garage," in the village of Elpikande, the centre of a large planting district, some ten miles from the sea coast. There is nothing particularly Imperial in the appearance of the garage, an untidy looking Establishment, where weary Chevrolet and Ford cars may be hired. Two buses, those Cinderellas of motordom, belong to the garage, and ply between Elpikande and twenty-mile distant Galle. There is also a fair amount of business done in the sale of second hand cars. Planters, badly hit by the depression, have been selling their cars very cheaply and the "Imperial Garage" has, in many cases, made quite a nice profit by buying these cars, and reselling them in Colombo.

Over these transactions, Albert Zilando presided, and at the beginning of August, a favourable bargain left him with some Rs.400 in hand. The Rs.400/= belonged to the "Imperial Motor Garage" and not to Albert, but he was in charge of it. He was counting over the money, before locking it in the safe, in the dusty little office, adjoining the garage, when his friend, Mr. Gregory Peries strolled in.

"Coming to the Races, tomorrow?" enquired Mr. Peries, lighting a very pungent Jaffna cigar. No, Albert didn't mean to go to the Races this year. Mug's game, racing.

"What nonsense, man! I tell you, I've got some tips this year, sure winners. A friend of mine knows one of the jockeys, and he has told him in confidence."

"No money to spend on Races." Albert declared, virtuously.

"No money?" Mr. Gregory Peries, laughed derisively, "why, man, that's a nice little wad you've got there!"

"Not mine! Just sold a car. But I only get a small commission, and even that I shan't get, because I owe a small sum to the company as it is."

"How much have you got?" "There's four hundred here, but it's company money, not mine."

"Four hundred! Well if you went to the Races with that tomorrow, I'll guarantee you'll bring back not less than a couple of thousand. Absolute certainty. Then you pay back the four hundred, and there is one thousand six hundred for yourself. Useful little sum in these days!"

Mr. Peries yawned, and stretched himself, spat out of the window, strolled round the office, humming a tune.

"Well, come on over to the Rest House and have a drink," he suggested, presently, after Albert had locked the money in the safe, and put away the papers which littered the desk.

At the Rest House, the elite of Elpikande are wont to foregather of an evening - the Police Inspector, the Excise Officer, an Apothecary or two, and assistants from some of the neighbouring estates. The talk was all of the Races. Owners of

horses were referred to by nicknames and initials, and an amount of inner knowledge, hardly warranted by the facts, was hinted at.

"F. L. E. himself told me that Tweedle Dum is the horse to back."

"Go on man; what does F. L. E. know? I was talking to C. G.'s trainer, at the Brisk the other day. He says, put your money on Pepper Pot. He can't lose!" and so on.

Albert Zilando was as a war-horse scenting the battle. After his fifth drink, he had decided to go to the Races next day, after the seventh, to borrow the Rs.400/= so conveniently reposing in the safe at the Garage, and by the time he made his hilarious way home, everything was arranged.

There was a little unpleasantness with Mrs. Albert, who was awaiting him with a very tightly buttoned up face. The six little Zilandos were roused from their slumbers by the animated discussions which ensued.

"Aiyo, Albert, you surely aren't thinking of going to the Races? And Girlie, and Maisie, and Winston, and all of them not attending school this month and more, because their fees are not paid! How can you be so selfish? You never think of me and the children," and a great deal more in the same strain.

Albert with considerable emphasis, asserted that he and he alone, should decide his dispositions, and that he had ever been of the opinion that a man should be master in his own house.

It was late before silence reigned in the little bungalow at the back of the Imperial Garage. But in spite of a short night's rest, Albert had to get up early next morning, for he had promised to

pick up his friend, Mr. Gregory Peries, and drive him to town, ten miles distant, whence they would take the train to Colombo.

Albert went across to the Garage, and gave his assistant charge for the day, then to office where he unlocked the safe, and took the bundle of notes, counting them over, before placing them in his pocket book. Four hundred rupees well.....of course, one hadn't any right to take it! But.....well, he was only borrowing it, just for one day. It should be replaced without fail, before night. Of course it should be replaced.

Back to the bungalow for a hasty breakfast, and a shave if time permitted. Mrs. Albert, in a singularly unbecoming Mother-Hubbard robe of dark purple chintz, was trailing about. Her conversation was directed not to, but at, her husband.

"No, Winston," she rebuked, her son, "No, you can't have jam with hoppers. Aiyoy, how to have jam with hoppers, when Pappa goes to the Races, and spends all the money. Races, indeed! And my house slippers only fit for the dirt-box."

Albert did not delay over the meal. Then throwing off his coat, he dashed to the frowsy bathroom for a shave, for indeed his morning toilet had been of the hastiest.

He drove the most rickety of the cars, because the others had been engaged for a wedding. It was nearly a mere apology for a car, and as it went clanking up the road to Mr. Gregory Peries' modest home, Albert wondered if they would get to Hikkangoda, in time for the 9.15 train.

Mr. Peries, quite spruced up and Colomboish in a natty Palm-Beach suit, wondered too, and was insistent that Albert should drive faster.

About half way to Hikkangoda, the engine suddenly stopped for no ostensible reason, except senile decay. In vain Albert investigated, and manipulated. (Mr. Peries did not want to get dirty. So restricted his efforts to advice and snappy suggestions). It was a lonely part of the road, and there was not a house in sight, but presently a villager in a bright blue sarong, appeared from nowhere in particular, and joined the little party.

The obvious thing was to push the car to the side of the road, and this Albert and Blue Sarong accomplished, Mr. Peries' help being quite negligible. Presently, the welcome sound of an approaching bus was heard, and Albert and his friend rejoiced, for judging by the alarming speed that it was travelling at, there was a prospect of catching that train after all.

As they boarded the bus, Albert remembered that he had not rewarded the villager for his help, but noticed that the modest fellow had gone, and was walking rapidly down the road.

"I'll get someone to come back, from Hikkangoda, and have the car towed back to the Garage", Albert remarked. "It's hardly worth towing back", replied Mr. Peiries, delicately flipping some dust from his shoes with his pocket handkerchief.

"Fares please," came the raucous voice of the conductor and Albert dived into his pocket

for some change, but finding none, sought for his pocket book...Sought in vain! The pocket book was missing. Of course... that rascal in the blue sarong! He had robbed him, while they were fiddling about with the car. Rs.400/= in that pocket book! Rs.400/=, of ... borrowed money.

Albert frantically stopped the bus. "But how do you know that it was stolen?" enquired the conductor unsympathetically. Perhaps you left it at home, or in your car."

Mr. Peries also appeared unconcerned. "Sorry I can't come back with you old chap," he called out, as the bus creaked on again, "but I really daren't miss this train, you know. Come on by the 12.30... you'll be in time for the last two races." Cheerio! Hope you'll find your pocket book."

But Albert was not listening. He was speeding down the sun baked white ribbon of road. He must find the man in the blue sarong. He must, he must get his pocket book. It began to dawn upon him, as he ran, that he had been mad to take the money. There is an ugly word for "borrowing" money without the owner's permission. Ah, but he had no bad intent, no - what was it they called it? No "Mens rea", yes, that was it, no "Mens rea." He'd been on the jury once, and he remembered now. As he ran, his footsteps seemed to be thumping out the words. "No Mens rea. No Mens rea."

Out of breath, at last he reached a tiny wayside hut. A bare bodied man was sprawling on a filthy cot on the mud-floored verandah.

"A man in a blue sarong? Yes, to be sure, that must be Cornelis, the carter on St. Benedict's Estate, over there" - he jerked his thumb in the direction of a rubber plantation across the paddy fields.

"Yes, Cornelis had gone past a few minutes ago. Master was looking for him? Then if Master liked, he would show him the

way. There was a short cut through Brumpy Singho's Cinnamon land that saved nearly a mile, as Master seemed in a hurry."

A weary trudge it was, over paddy field, cinnamon, and jungle with the sun scorching even more ruthlessly. Albert's guide was conversationally inclined. He had no opinion whatever of the blue saronged one.

"Oh, yes, bad man that Cornelis," he said several times, "very bad; always getting trouble."

At length, he indicated a very small mud and wattle habitation, almost hidden among the jak trees, in a dingle. A woman was washing some chatties in front of the cottage. "Yes," she replied, looking up in alarm, "Yes, this was Cornelis' house."

Without further ceremony, Albert pushed into the hut, and there discovered the blue saronged man, defiant and stubborn. For some time, he denied all knowledge of the pocket book, but when Albert, who was twice his size, seized him to search him, he suddenly changed his tactics and dropping on his knees, implored forgiveness. He had found the pocket book on the road, he swore which may, or may not, have been true. Albert was convinced that he had actually stolen it from his pocket.

The pocket book was produced from some secret hiding place, and Albert tore it open, to find, twenty five rupees, only.

"Where's the rest of the money, you swine?" he shouted, fetching the man a thundering slap, which sent him reeling to the mud floor. The tiny room was crowded, by this time, with the man's family, and the women and children were crying.

"Aiyo, master, Aiyo, upon my soul, upon my eyes that is all the money! Have I had time to spend it? I come straight home after finding it. Aiyo, master, master will forgive my mistake in taking the pocket book. I assure master there was only the twenty five rupees."

"You rascal! You have stolen three hundred and seventy five rupees! I'll take you to the Police Station! I'll give you in charge, unless you return the money!" Albert in his rage kicked the cowering wretch savagely, and he fell, striking his head against the door post.

The woman screamed, the man lay very still, and a trickle of blood came from a nasty gash on the side of his head. The man who had guided Albert to the hut had already fled in search of help. Albert pushed aside the howling children, and rushed out of the hut, out into the burning sunshine, which almost blinded him after the darkness inside. On he ran, through the tangled cinnamon bushes over jungly hillside, and through neglected rubber plantations, till he reached a road which he recognized as leading to Elpikande.

It was past noonday now, and he was sick and faint. To get home, to hide himself; that was all that mattered. How still the man had lain. How those women screeched! Ugh! He could hear them still.

At last he reached his bungalow. The children stopped their noisy play to stare at this haggard eyed. "Pap-pa", who took no notice of them. Mrs. Albert, who was, at heart, an affectionate wife, in spite of her sharp tongue, saw that something was very wrong indeed.

"What is it, Albert?" she asked, "Is it the money? Now don't you be frightened, my dear. It's alright. It's alright, because - because - well, you see, my dear, I - I knew that was the money you got for that car, and I knew if you took it to the races, it would be gone."

So I took it out of your pocket book, when you put your coat down, that time when you went to shave."

"Albert...why are you looking so strange? I tell you the money's safe in the almirah here. Are you angry? I did it for your sake and the children's. I left twenty five rupees in the pocket book. Quite enough for you to waste especially as it wasn't yours", she added with her usual sharpness.

"Twenty five rupees only then the man in the hut had been telling the truth, after all ..."

There was the sound of a car stopping at the gate. The children ran in excitedly. "Pap-pa, Pap-pa! Soon come! Plenty of police gentlemen have come, and they are asking for you!"

COLLECTED ARCHIVES

Year	Author	Title	Journal
1860	Wilkinson, Lora St Lo Elizabeth in Charlotte Cory	<i>Imperial Quadrille</i>	Haper Collins, 2002
1884 (Museum)	Goonetileke, Jessie Alice	<i>The Tiger and the Blood Sucker (Sinhala Folklore)</i>	The Orientalist Vol. 1 May (pp 117-119)
	Goonetileke, S. Jane	<i>Story of the Twenty-five Idiots</i>	The Orientalist Vol. 1 June
	Goonetileke, S. Jane	<i>The Woman and the twenty-five robbers</i>	The Orientalist Vol.-1 June (pp 39-40)
1885-6	Corea, Agnes E. R.	<i>Appoi</i>	The Orientalist Vol.-2 May
1892	Cumming, Constance F. Gordon	<i>Two Happy Years in Ceylon, Vols. I & II</i>	William Blackwood & Sons
1905	Steuart, Mary E.	<i>Everyday life on a Ceylon Cocoa Estate</i>	Printed by London Henry J. Drane Salisbury House,
1908	Corner, Caroline	<i>Ceylon: The Paradise of Adam</i>	London John Lane, the Bodley Head New York: John Lane Co.
1910	Rettie, Clare	<i>Punchi Nona</i>	Ballantyne 7 Co. Ltd.
1910	De Livera, Princess	<i>Further Impressions</i>	Private Publication
1916	Van Dort, Lilian	<i>The Derelict</i>	Post and Telegraph Magazine X'mas No(p.10)
1918	Wijeykoon, Nancy M.	<i>Our Motherland (Poem)</i>	Young Lanka - July Vol. 1 No. 1
1919	Crofton, Irene	<i>Ouvah - 'Forest Echoes' (Poem)</i>	Memories of the East (Sweet Ceylon) London
1919	Vera(Pen Name)	<i>The Tell-tale Bracelet</i>	The Ceylon Independent X'mas Number (p.5)
1920	Karunaratne, Enid	<i>Old Maria</i>	Plate's Ceylon Annual (Prize short story) Bishops College pp8-9

Year	Author	Title	Journal
1921	Nock, Mary E.L.	<i>A Song of the Patnas (Poem)</i>	The Ceylon Observer X mas (p.66)
	Janz, Mureiel	<i>A Tale of Beragama</i>	The Post & Telegraph Magazine X mas No (50/E14)
	Dulling, H.H.Mrs.	<i>The Temple of the Thousand ages</i>	The Ceylon Observer X mas No. (p.22)
1922	Nalinasuriya, Nalini	<i>Destiny(Poem)</i>	The Saree (Ref 50/c13)
1922	Swinthasekera, Manila	<i>A Memory(Poem)</i>	The Saree (Ref. 50/c13) Dec.
1923	Swinthasekera, Manila	<i>Fear (Poem)</i>	The Saree(Ref.50/c13) April
1925	Woolf, Bella Sidney	<i>Circulating furniture</i>	The Ceylon Observer X mas No. (p 13)
	Nock, Mary E.L.	<i>Absent Days (Poem)</i>	The Ceylon Observer X mas No.
1926	Gunasekera, Monica Patricia	<i>Faithful Unto Death (Ghost story)</i>	The Ceylon Observer X mas No.
1927	Dulling, H.H. Mrs.	<i>Demonology in Ceylon</i>	The Ceylon Observer X mas No. pp 31-44
1928	Mendis, Rosalind	<i>The Tragedy of a Mystery</i>	Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd: London
	Hawkin, Kathleen	<i>The Shadow from the Balcony</i>	Times of Ceylon Christma No.
1929	de Silva, Sheila	<i>Jacolis Understands Now</i>	The Ceylon Observer X Mas No.
	Gunasekere, Mary E.	<i>Pr efers Nymphs</i>	Ceylon Observer X mas No.
n.d.	Rettie, Clare	<i>Things Seen in Ceylon</i>	Seeley, Service & Company Ltd.
1931	Gunasekera, Mary E.	<i>Are Kabaragoyas Unlucky?</i>	Ceylon Observer Annual (p. 27)
	Lillie (Pen Name)	<i>Maiya s News</i>	Ceylon Observer Annual (p.85)

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	Gratiaen, Nelly Thorpe, Mary R.	<i>Sunset(Poem)</i> <i>Among the Mountain (poem)</i>	The Ceylon Causerie Ceylon Observer Annual (p.42)
1931	Hawkins, Kathleen	<i>The Green Spotted Deer</i>	The Times of Ceylon - X mas Number
	Gilles, Helen T.	<i>All the fun of the fair</i>	The Times of Ceylon - X mas Number
1932	Gunasekera, Mary E. Bobby, Lettice Cameron, Mary	<i>With No Evil Intent</i> <i>Balloons (Poem)</i> <i>A Day on the Totem</i>	Plate s Ceylon Annual (p.34) The Ceylon Observer p.46 The Times of Ceylon X mas Number
	Jones-Bateman, Dorothy	<i>The Ceylon Memory</i>	The Ceylon Observer Annual
1933	Hawkin, Kathleen	<i>The Slave Child</i>	The Times of Ceylon
1934	Abey Goonawardene Daisee	<i>Miles Mistake</i>	Young Ceylon Vol, 2 No. 12
1935	Weeks, Joy	<i>On Gardening</i>	The Times of Ceylon
1936	Maiks, Marie P.	An Eerie story of Ceylon s Monument of Fear, Women of Sigiriya	The Times of Ceylon X mas Number
1936	Fernando, Mabel	<i>The Road up Town</i>	The Times of Ceylon X mas Number
1937	Parkinson, Christian	<i>Fishermen (Poem)</i>	The Ceylon Observer
1937	Fernando, Mabel	<i>The Light of Kosgoda (weaved around the true story)</i>	The Times of Ceylon X mas Number
1938	Fernando, Mabel	<i>The Cup and the Lip</i>	The Ceylon Causerie December 1937 pp. 9-10,36, 44
	Fernando, Mabel	<i>The Curse of the Cobra</i>	
1939		<i>The Mistake</i>	The Ceylon Causerie May 1938 pp 17 -18
		<i>A Timely Move</i>	Plate s Ceylon Annual

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Year	Author	Title	Journal
1939	Stambo, Venetia	<i>Suvenetha (Poem)</i> <i>I Love You (Poem)</i>	Acquired by Museum Library 1939, Printer M.D.Gunasena & Co. Colombo.
1939	Kemp, Anitra Jonklaas, Christine	<i>Let Them Lie (Ghost Story)</i> <i>The Gypsy</i>	The Times of Ceylon X. Mas No. (p62)
	Rettie, Clare	<i>St Anne — Match-Maker</i>	The Times of Ceylon X. Mas No.
1940	Trimmer, Ina	<i>Under Saturn</i>	The Ceylon Causery July 1939 pp. 15 - 17to 40
1941	Trimmer, Ina	<i>Her Wedding Morning</i>	The Times of Ceylon
1947	Gunasekere, Mary E.	<i>Thirteen (Ghost Story)</i>	The Ceylon Observer Annual
	De Silva, Suvenetha	<i>Why Can t she also be</i>	The Times of Ceylon

Writing an Inheritance

Women's Writing in Sri Lanka 1860 - 1948

Edited by

Neloufer de Mel
Minoli Samarakkody

This anthology collects, for the first time, some of the earliest writing in English by women in Sri Lanka (Ceylon). From British and American women travelers such as Bella Woolf, Constance Gordon Cummings and Carolyn Corner who wrote of their impressions and experiences of colonial Ceylon, to the creative writing of Jessie, Alice and Jane Goonetilleke, Rosalind Mendis, Mabel Fernando and Ina Trimmer - early Sri Lankan women writers in English, the anthology pays tribute to a rich genealogy of English writing by women in Sri Lanka. A variety of themes and styles animate this work from the traveler's tale to folklore, ghost stories, historical fiction and social satire, all the while foregrounding a colonial society in transition. A critical introduction contextualizing this writing is included.

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