

RE-OPENING  
OF  
A NORTH-CEYLON PORT  
GEOGRAPHICAL, NAUTICAL AND  
OTHER FACTS

ESSENTIAL OF PICK OUT THE  
MOST SUITABLE PORT



The gallant little ship that braved the perils of the Atlantic, "amazed" the Boston Dailies and the valiant Americans and won their high praise for "Ceylin" and "Jaffna" - vide Section V

With 14 Illustrations and an ADDENDUM on the survey made by H.M.S. "Stork"

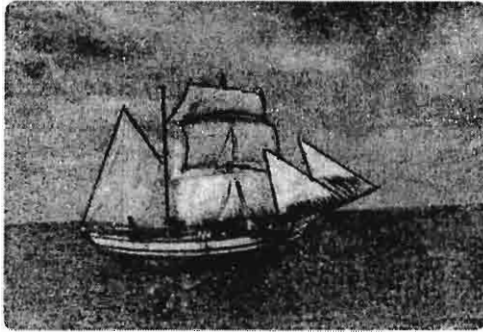


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*Cost Price per copy: 60 Cents.*



23.9.2009

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(Centennial College)

Chandrasekar (Chandru)  
Nagulasigamani  
(University of Waterloo)

Published on the Remembrance of  
Fourth Year  
Death Anniversary

N. Nagulasigamany  
Valvai Historical Document  
Conservation Center  
Canada  
[www.vvthistory.com](http://www.vvthistory.com)

First Edition 1951  
Second Edition 2009

# FOREWORD

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**T**HE Question, which of the five northern Ports should be re-opened first, needs careful and conscientious study. It is not possible for the people at large, who are not familiar with the subject, to collect all the facts relevant to the study of the question in all its aspects.

The temptation for the citizens of the different Ports to advocate the re-opening of their respective Ports in preference to the other Ports is naturally very great. We are also interested in the re-opening of our Port but we have thought it best to place the Facts in support of our claim before the tribunal of Public Opinion and leave that Tribunal to decide on the different claims solely on merits. To assist the Tribunal to arrive at a just decision, we have cited documentary evidence in support of our submission, wherever necessary.

It is our conviction that the interests of our Port do not clash with those of the people of the North as a whole - in fact, as we have shown in Section II, the re-opening of our Port would result in the greatest good of the greatest number.

It is our conviction that all Nautical Experts would confirm that the safety of the ships riding at anchor is assured best at our Port (Section III); our master ship-builders who had built ships of "considerable tonnage" a century ago (as Sir Emerson Tennent had testified in 1848) to last a "hundred years" (as the round-the-world tourist Mr. W. A. Robinson had told an American Daily so recently as 1938) (Section IV) are available at our Port to effect all repairs.

A thousand expert sailors, who are "amongst the finest Matelots in the world" and some of whom had braved the perils of the Atlantic in a tiny ship built by our ship builders and won fame and name for "Jaffna" and "Ceylon" and made them household words in the Boston area of the U. S. A. during their four months' stay there (Section V) are available only at this Port to help the ships in times of emergencies.

Truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. What we have said above may appear unbelievable; therefore, at great cost, we have quoted in *extenso* the glowing tributes paid by the brave Americans to the daring, agility and fine character of our sailors whom they hailed "gasping in admiration" (according to an American Daily). We have illustrated these accounts with a few photographs taken on the unique voyage and while our sailors were in America; we have many more such photographs but consideration of cost has prevented us from publishing them.

We are quite confident that all our readers who read these well-documented account will glow with immense pride of their countrymen who had created that all-time record of daring for Ceylon.

The sad story of these brave men when they returned to their homeland is related in the concluding portion of section V and in Section VI; the sadder story of some of our expert sailors being driven to smuggling, in spite of their religious and cultural heritage, to keep body and soul together is given in Section VII.

The easiest and the surest way of ending smuggling for good and saving the huge sums of money of the taxpayers now spent by Government in patrolling is convincingly pointed out in Section VIII.

We are quite confident that all fairminded readers who read through the first eight Sections carefully will agree with the conclusion in the last Section. (IX).

Our earnest - and our only - prayer is that the question at issue be considered and decided solely on merits.—*Fiat Justitia.*

VALVAI SEVA SANGAM.

Valvettiturai,  
February 20, 1951.

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## The Key to the Illustrations

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### Frontispiece. (Page 4)

1. Map of the Jaffna Peninsula and the Islands. KAYTS is in the extreme West and the goods imported there have to be transported by ferry-boats and over a two-miles-long causeway which is liable to floods. KANKESANTURAI and POINT PEDRO jut out into the sea and are fully exposed to the winds. VALVETTITURAI is in a dent in the land and it is the only Port which is almost equidistant from Elephant Pass in the East and Kayts in the West.

The Voyage to the U. S. A. (see Section V.)

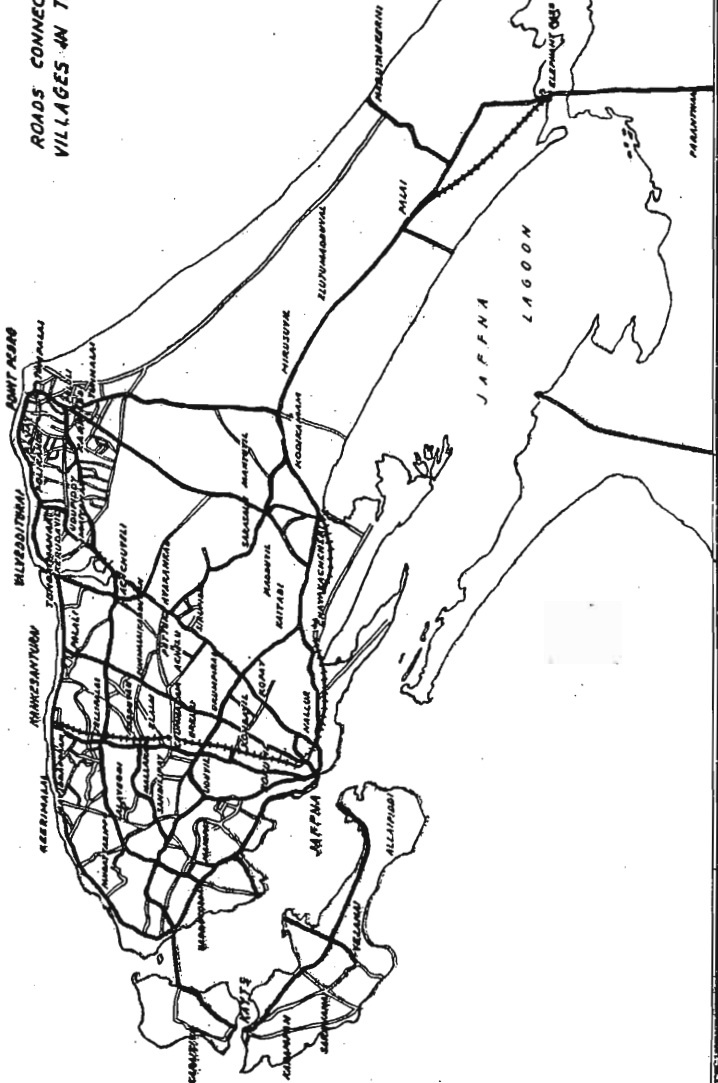
2. (Front Cover) The Schooner "Annapoorani Ammal" built by Mr. Sundara Mesthiriari (Master Shipbuilder) of Valvettiturai in

1930 and converted into "Brigantine Florence C. Robinson" before it made its historic voyage to the U. S. A. in 1936-38.

3. The above ship at Ismalia in the Suez Canal on its voyage to the U. S. A.
4. The civilization's reconnoiters returning after exploring the ancient wonders of Egypt, with the pyramid in the background. The versatile joker of the party is posing as one of the camel owners.
5. The Eastern Point of the Port of Gloucester in the U. S. A; the final destination of the ship.
6. Four of the Ceylonese, who had braved the perils of the seas, with some of the Americans who lionized them for their daring, "agility" and "fine character".
7. ....do.....with another set of American admirers.
8. The Ceylonese sailors had taught this young American the art of sitting cross-legged.
9. The sailors' genial "foster-Parents", Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, had placed this residential mansion at their disposal during their four months' stay in the U. S. A.
10. Mr. William Albert Robinson, "famed author, explorer and sea-rover", who was like a "father" to the Ceylonese sailors.
11. Mrs. Florence C. Robinson, their genial "foster-mother".
12. The skyscraper Hotel, "St. Moritz-on-the-Park", where Mr. Robinson had arranged lodgings for the Ceylonese sailors during their stay in New York.
13. The Ceylonese sailors are holding their oriental conference in this occidental Park at Ipswich, U. S. A.
14. Snapped unawares while he was in his customary meditation-  
vide paragraph 31. These intrepid sailors were true to their heritage even while they were in the New World.

N.B.—These Ceylonese sailors had also the moral courage to wear their national dress throughout their stay in the U. S. A. and the valiant Americans respected them all the more for it. East or West, the brave honours the brave - costume, colour, creed and clime are of no consequence; only courage and character count.

NORTH CEYLON PORTS,  
AND THE  
ROADS CONNECTING THEM WITH THE  
VILLAGES IN THE JAFFNA PENINSULA.





## Re-opening of a North-Ceylon Port

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- I. Let us take the Ceylon Premier at his word and refrain from imputing motives to him.
- 

### Two Axioms

**T**HE primary object in re-opening one or more of the North-Ceylon Ports for commercial and passenger traffic is - and should be - to benefit the people of the North. It is inevitable that the townsmen of the Port which is re-opened would re-gain the benefit which they had enjoyed till their Port was closed; but their particular benefits cannot reasonably be urged as the sole criterion for deciding which of the northern Ports should be re-opened first. If and when parochial interests conflict with the interests of the people of the North as a whole, those parochial interests should be dismissed from consideration. This is an Axiom.

2. The decision should be based solely on merits - the main considerations in this case should be (1) the greatest good of the greatest number, and (2) Nautical requirements, viz (a) the safety of the ships riding at anchor at the Port selected, (b) the facilities for building and repairing the ships, (c) the availability of experienced and expert sailors who could go to the rescue of the ships and their crew in times of emergencies, etc. This is another Axiom.

### The happy news broadcast by the Premier

3. When, in 1949, the Member for Kankesanturai raised in the Parliament the question of re-opening one of the North-Ceylon Ports, the Government gave a non-committal reply which, naturally, chilled our hearts. When the Premier paid us his long-delayed visit in October last and we told him - the head of the Government - what our wants were, he was good enough to revive our faded hopes. According to the report of his speech published in the "Ceylon Observer", the Premier had stated at Point Pedro that—

“the Government has decided to open a Northern Port but the people of the Peninsula made claims and counter-claims on behalf of their respective areas. The delay was thus due to the want of unanimity among the people and the multiplicity of conflicting representations”.

This reply - the correctness of which has not been denied - is positive and unequivocal; it is obvious that the Government had, after giving the reply in 1949, finally decided to open one of the northern Ports

and that the delay in re-opening one of the ports is solely due to the multiplicity of conflicting representations. The responsibility for naming the Port to be re-opened now rests entirely on the good people of the North.

*In these circumstances, it is the Duty of the people of the North to manfully shoulder the sacred responsibility entrusted to them, study the claims and the counter-claims made on behalf of the respective Ports, weigh them impartially, decide with judicial detachment on the Port, the re-opening of which would result in the greatest good to the greatest number, and ask the Government to re-open that Port.*

4. We sincerely regret that, instead of being grateful to the Premier, the citizens of one of the Ports - who had previously tried in vain to win over the Premier to their side - had allowed their parochial interests to cloud their vision; they had chosen the (official) New Year Day to hold a Public Meeting and to fulminate against the Premier that he had cunningly thrown out an apple of discord, etc. The report of the proceedings of that meeting published in the "Veerakesari" of 6th and 19th January and in the "Inthusathanam" of 9th idem made painful reading; it showed that speaker after speaker had waxed eloquent at that meeting in levelling these charges against the Premier.

We earnestly appeal to them and to others who too may entertain similar suspicions to cast off all their suspicions, take the Premier at his word, and submit their respective cases with supporting facts but bereft of imputations.

5. **The future prosperity of the people of the North is at stake. The prices of essential commodities are soaring up daily and the re-opening of at least one of the northern Ports will keep down these prices, especially in the North. We should, therefore, keep the discussion of the question on a high plane and help in arriving at a very early decision.**

6. We are issuing this booklet to facilitate dispassionate discussion and an early equitable decision. It is our conviction that the FACTS given below would convince all fairminded readers that the question of deciding on the Port which should be re-opened first is quite a simple one, **provided, of course, that the question is discussed and decided solely on merits.**

II. The greatest good of the greatest number of the people of the North should result from the re-opening of the Port. (see *Axiom No. 1 above*).

7. The Map of the Peninsula and the Islands (printed on page 4) would speak for itself. The Port of **Kayts**, for re-opening which herculean efforts are being made, is on the **extreme west**.

The goods landed and to be exported at that Port have to be transported over a **narrow two-mile-long bottleneck of a causeway** which is liable to floods and exposed to the North-East and South-West monsoon rains and winds; those goods have also to be ferried across 500 yards of water or taken in lighters for about 12 miles to the Port of Jaffna.

The claim is made that Kayts can be used during both Monsoons. Once the small ships come into the inner harbour they are no doubt pretty safe but not always, as we shall show in the next Section. But the question is, can ships enter that harbour straightaway? **We shall give the answer in the words of the "Bay of Bengal Pilot" issued by the British Admiralty:**

"Kayts.....Steam vessels anchor in depths of 4 fathoms (7 m 3) sand, with the northern point of Eluvaitivu bearing 135\*, distant about one mile. (i. e. about 4 miles from Kayts) Small native vessels lie in the outer anchorage, in depths of from 2 to 3 fathoms (3 m 7 to 5 m 5) at 1½ to 3 miles north-westward of Fort Hammonheil, (which itself is over one mile from Kayts) and discharge part of their cargo before entering the port....."

We shall leave the readers to answer the questions (1) What will happen to the ships that lie at anchor in the open sea at such distance from the Port if a storm bursts? (2) What will happen to the lighters and their load? (3) Who will bear the loss which will be distributed on the goods saved and sold? (4) Can a place which could not be approached even by "small native vessels" with their cargo properly be called a Sea Port?

Even if the Kayts Port is open for both the Monsoons, the lighters transporting the goods to Jaffna and the lorries over the long causeway and their loads are fully exposed to both the Monsoons. How will the majority of the people of the North be benefitted, in these circumstances, by the re-opening of this port?

The distribution of the cost of goods lost whilst in transit by lighters to Jaffna, the cost of loading into and unloading from the lighters, etc., would make the cost of goods landed at Kayts costlier than that of goods got down from Colombo by rail.

The advocates for re-opening Kayts have evidently realised these transport difficulties and had suggested connecting Karainagar with Maruthanamadam by rail. These are days when railway transport system is under heavy fire. The Udupussellava Line, which was constructed at a cost of about Rs. 125,000/- a mile, had been uprooted; so also the Yatiantota and even Puttalam Lines, the latter carried heavy consignments of salt which are now carried by lorries. The building of a railway bridge, two miles-long, would cost millions of rupees. Self-interests have, unfortunately, blinded our friends to these obvious facts. It is not pleasant to point these out, but we should not flinch from our duty.

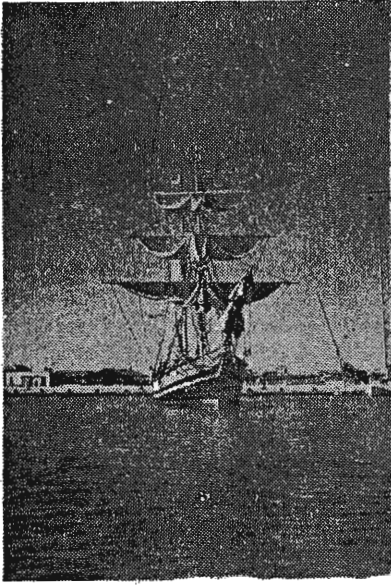
8. The Port of Jaffna is obviously unsuitable; the ships have to anchor miles away from this Port and the goods to and from the ships have to be carried by lighters running heavy risks.

9. Unlike Kayts which has only a solitary, long causeway connecting its adjacent island with the Jaffna Peninsula, the other three northern Ports (Kankasanturai, Valvettiturai and Pt. Pedro) have roads radiating in three different directions, thereby giving these Ports definite advantage over Kayts. Kankasanturai has railway communication also, but this is NOT such a great advantage as is generally taken for granted.

The goods imported at, and exported from, a northern Port are for consumption within, or produced in, the North. It is now an accepted fact that, for short distance haulage, the road transport is definitely superior to railway transport. We shall illustrate our submission by an example.

**Example.** We shall take the cases of the traders in the Jaffna Town itself who might import their goods through Kankasanturai Port if it is re-opened. If one of them transport his goods by rail, he should have his goods loaded into a wagon, bide his time till he could take delivery of his goods at the Jaffna Goods Shed, pay the freight which includes handling charges both at Kankasanturai and Jaffna, load the goods into a lorry and take them to his store. When the goods arrive at his store, he will find that his rivals in trade who had transported their goods direct to their stores by road had sold them out at huge profit when the demand for the imported goods was great and that, consequently, the prices had slumped.

The argument that the Cement Factory at Kankasanturai gives that Port an advantage is **equally untenable**. This cement is not sufficient even for the Island's requirements and it is not going to be exported to other countries. The cement required for places outside the Peninsula will be transported by the Government railway and not by private sailing vessels or steamers. As we have already

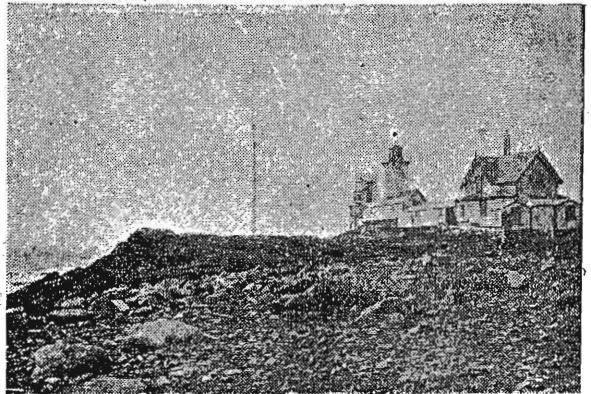


No. 3 - See "Key" on page 3

invite the readers' attention to the fact that **Kankesanturai** is further away from the eastern end of the Peninsula and **Point Pedro** from the Western end.

10. The remaining Port of **Valvettiturai** is the only Port which is equidistant from Elephant Pass on the East and Kayts on the West. It is also almost midway between Kankesanturai and Point Pedro and can serve as a "compromise" between those two rivals.

When the Jaffna Lagoon Scheme is completed, Valvettiturai would prove the most advantageous Port to the industrious people who flock to that new hinterland to produce a variety of crops. The other advantages of this Port are given in the succeeding Section.



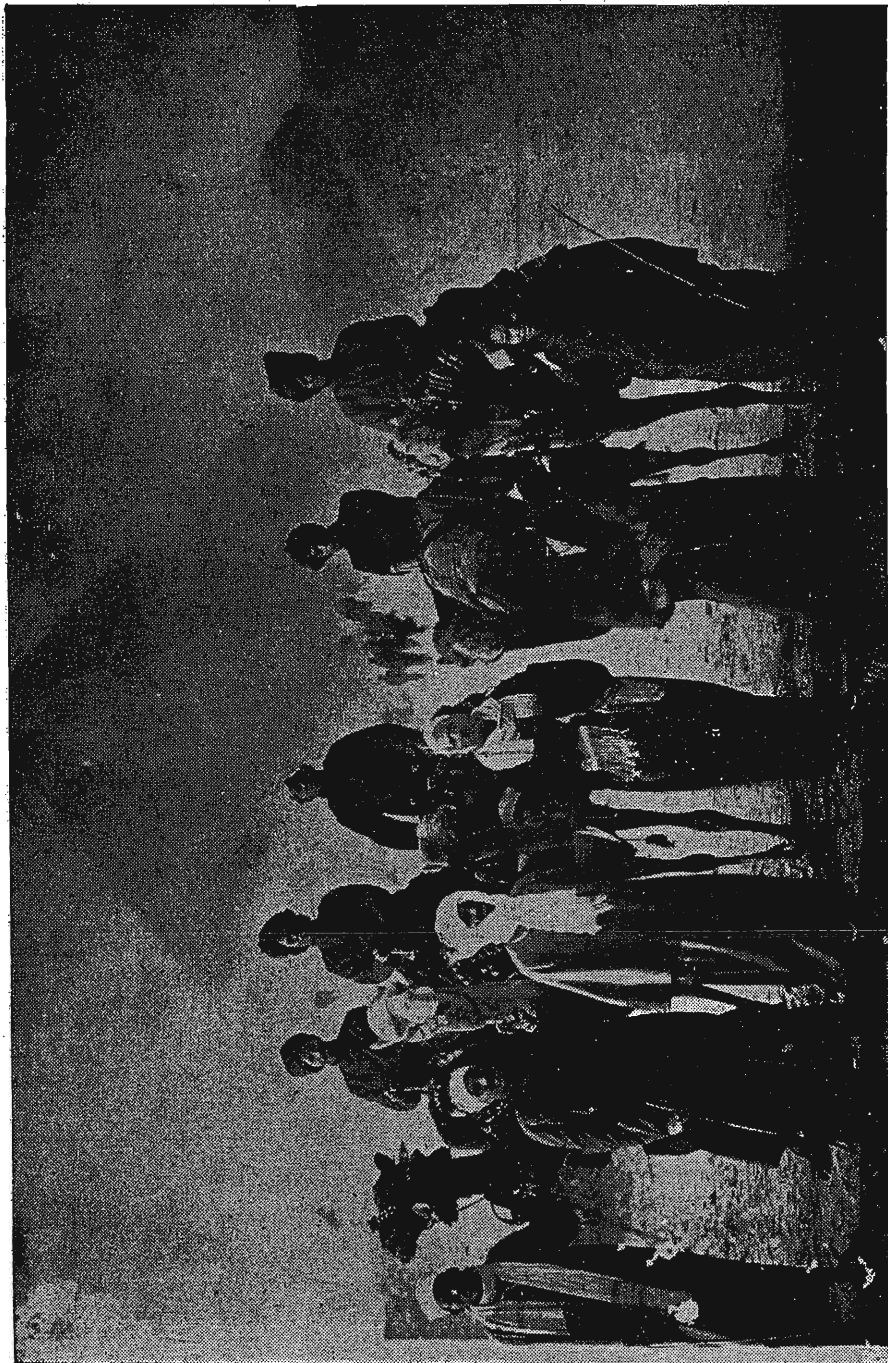
(No. 4 overleaf) No. 5 - See "Key" on page 3

stated, the large quantity of salt produced at Palavi (and Hambantota) is **now** taken by road; the cement required by the people of the North could be similarly transported by road.

Therefore, although at first sight, the railway and the Cement Factory might appear to give Kankesanturai definite advantages, a little close study of the question would show that they do **NOT** tip the scale in favour of re-opening that Port.

On the other hand, there are several definite disadvantages which we shall point out in the next Section. Here, we

invite the readers' attention to the fact that **Kankesanturai** is further away from the eastern end of the Peninsula and **Point Pedro** from the Western end.



III. Let Nautical Experts report on the suitability of these Ports from the points of view of anchorage, safety of the ships, etc.



11. Another vitally important factor that should be seriously taken into account is the safety of the ships which would anchor at the chosen Port. This is a highly technical question and only Nautical Experts can advise on it with authority. To facilitate thorough enquiry and correct decision, we give the following facts

No. 6 - See "Key" on page 3

which we are prepared to substantiate before any Tribunal of Experts

(a) Kayts

- (1) In paragraph 8 above, we have quoted from the "Bay of Bengal Pilot" Published by the British Admiralty and shown that even "small native vessels" cannot enter this Port without discharging part of their cargo into lighters in the open sea 4 or 5 miles away from the Port. Here, we shall quote what the **Hon'ble the Minister for Transport and Works** had, on the advice given him by the Government Experts, told the Parliament.

".....At present, ships with six feet of draught can come in, but anything above six feet draught has to stop four miles out....."

- (2) The sea - bed at the Kayts harbour is solid rock and the anchor cannot sink into it, with the result that when there is a gale the ship would go adrift and get damaged.

The passage near the harbour should be wide enough for two vessels to cross each other and for one vessel to turn round, i. e., at least 500 feet wide. The depth should be at least five fathoms. Therefore, the solid rock-sea-bed should be blasted to make a passage 4 miles long, 500 feet wide and 30

feet deep; we need not state that the cost of this operation would run into many crores of rupees. This is what the **Hon'ble the Minister for Transport and Works** had stated in Parliament on breaking rocks under water:-



No. 7 - See "Key" on page 3

".....The Hon. Member (for Galle) thinks that breaking rocks in the sea is a simple matter. It has to be done by divers working under water... In front of the (Kayts) harbour there is a huge belt of rock. If that is blasted the harbour can be kept open during both seasons. But to blast the rock is difficult because it is not one rock; it is a group of rocks..."

(3) The strong currents which flow in and around the Kayts harbour would necessitate frequent dredging - and consequent recurrent expenditure.

(4) The South-West wind occasionally turns into West wind - the "Kaichchan" which the mariners dread because it cannot be

predicted - and the Kayts Port is the most exposed to that wind. The older generation now living will testify to the fact that this West wind had driven a number of ships at this Port into the inner harbour and that capricious wind had suddenly changed into South-West and driven those ships on to the causeway, damaging both the ships and the causeway.

(5) There should be plenty of pure drinking water at a Port but Kayts has no water for many months in an year even for its permanent residents numbering only 2700 souls. The notorious scarcity of water at Kayts is due to the fact that the rocky seabed under 8 feet of sea level extends to the land also.

(6) It is being seriously urged that because the Portuguese and the Dutch had a Fort here, the place should be selected as the best Port. A Fort need not necessarily be a Port. The rock near the entrance to the harbour was a Fort because for miles around it, the sea is shallow (only  $1\frac{1}{2}$  fathoms according to nautical charts) and is studded with islands offering



shelter to enemies landing stealthily at this shallow-water Port; therefore, the old Fort only proves that this Port is only suitable for very small boats transporting pigs, elephants, etc. which alone are admitted to have been the cargo dealt with at this Port in ancient times.

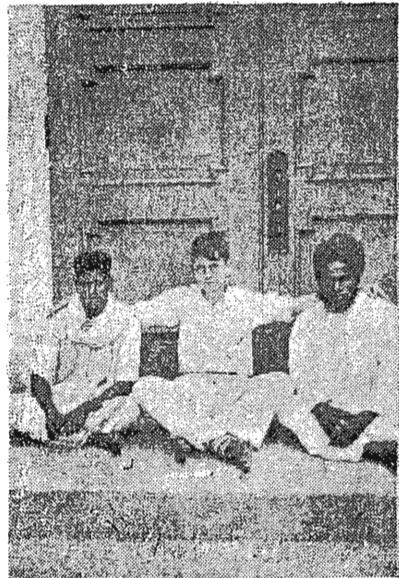
**The conditions since then had completely changed and the boats transporting the animals have entirely disappeared and much larger ships with varieties of goods, including big machinery which cannot be transported by lighters between ships and the land, should be dealt with at the only Port which is to be re-opened.**

(b) Kankesanturai

- (1) The sea-bed at this Port also is rocky, although not to the same extent as at the Kayts harbour. But it is sufficiently rocky not to afford proper hold for anchoring, with the result that **the ships which were anchored at this Port had been frequently thrown on to the shore and damaged.**

When H. M. Cy. S. Wijaya was at Kankesanturai recently, it anchored about 3 miles away from the shore, obviously for fear of the rocks and the reef. Merchant ships cannot anchor so far away and land goods economically.

- (2) The cost of dredging the sea for 3 or 4 miles and bulding a "L" break-water as suggested by some interested parties would be prohibitive. A reference to the map would show that this Port juts out into the sea and is exposed to the West, North-West, North, North-East and East winds. The result is that this Port cannot be used for more than 6 months in an year. The Hon'ble the Minister for Transport and works stated in Parliament "Kankesanturai has the disadvantage of being open for only six months in the year and it is difficult to make it as a



commercial harbour, unless we have a breakwater as in Colombo. In any case, it can be kept open only for six months. It is worse than Galle Harbour in that respect."

(c) Point Pedro.

- (1) The sea-bed at this Port is mainly sandy and partly rocky, and therefore, not suitable for safe anchorage; consequently, there had been frequent shipwrecks at this Port also.
- (2) A reference to the map would show that this Port juts out prominently into the sea and it is fully exposed to the winds.

(d) Valvettiturai.

- (1) The Sea-bed at this Port is of deep mud and is ideal for safe anchorage. As the crew who man most of the ships belonging to North-Ceylon owners and even some of the ships owned by people in South India, are residents of this Port, more ships had anchored at this Port than at any other Port in the Island barring Colombo and Trincomalee. (When His Excellency Sir Henry Blake visited the different parts of Jaffna in 1905, there were more than 80 ships at this Port flying scores of flags each for the festive occasion; no other Port had more than a couple of ships on that occasion. His Excellency had made special mention of this fact in his reply to the address presented to him by the people at that time).

Nevertheless, because of the ideal sea-bed for anchorage, there was not even one shipwreck at this Port - a unique record.

The "Bay of Bengal Pilot" published by the British Admiralty which speaks of shoals, rocks and reefs at the other Ports says the following in regard to this port:

".....There are breaks in the reef at Palmyra point and Valvettiturai, affording good boat entrances. Small vessels are built at Valvettiturai and there is a considerable village and a native market here".

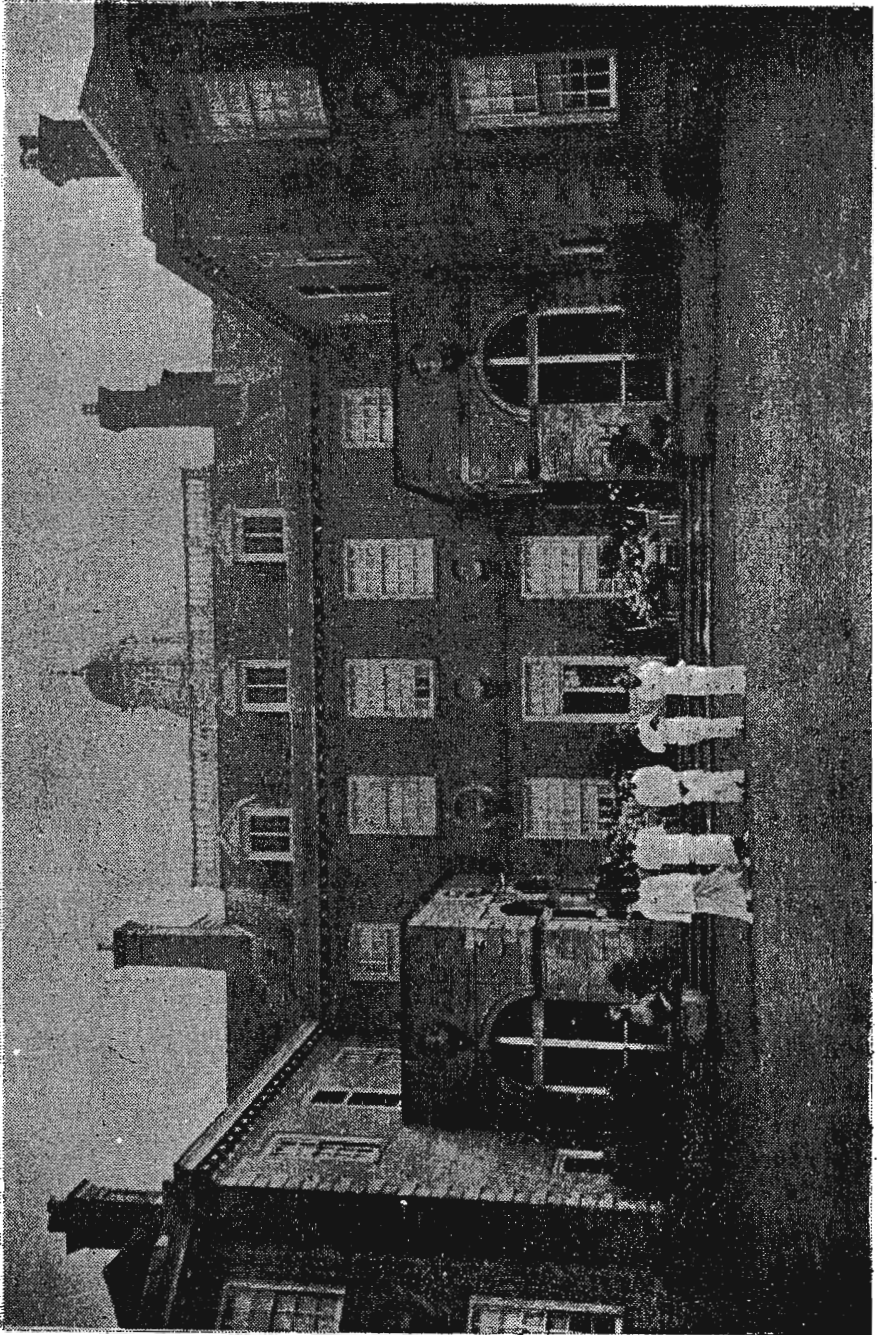
- (2) A reference to the map would show that this harbour is in a dent in the land - in welcome contrast to the other two Ports on either side of it which jut into the sea.
- (3) There are 5,000 permanent residents at this Port, the majority of the male adults are "amongst the finest matelots in the world" (as Peter Batten had praised them in the columns of

the Times of Ceylon), five of whom had - vide Section V created the all-time record for Ceylonese and Indian sailors of which all Ceylonese should be proud.

These expert sailors at this Port are not available at any other Port to go to the help of the ships and their crew in times of emergencies.

- (4) Big steamers had anchored within a third of a mile at this Port and unloaded heavy machinery at the time the Sugar Refinery at Policandy (see the Map) was constructed.
- (5) For ten months in every year, ships had been anchoring at this Port - this is possible for the reasons given in sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) above.
- (6) This is the only Port which has ship-yards for centuries; details are given in the succeeding Section.
- (7) There is plenty of pure drinking water at this Port.
- (2) Tondaimanar canal, which is only two miles from this Port, can be made into a safe harbour - the third safest in the Island - at very little cost if the sand-bank at the mouth is cut and the canal is dredged a few feet deep for about a third of a mile. The small expenditure incurred in converting it into a harbour would be a gilt-edged investment in times of war which, unfortunately, continues to be the world's nightmare. If Tondaimannar canal is converted into a harbour, the ship at Valvettiturai Port can rush to it at the first sign of a gale and remain there in perfect safety; in which case, this Port can be used for the additional two months also, i. e. the whole year round.
- (9) No blasting of rocks nor constructing of "L" breakwater incurring colossal expenditure is required to re-open the Port of Valvettiturai.

(Photo No. 9 overleaf. See "Key" on page 3)



#### IV. The only port at which Ship-yards, Expert Shipbuilders, Salvage-Experts, etc. are available.

12. Accidents do occur in spite of all precautions taken. Therefore, Ports should be provided with all facilities to deal with damages to ships, boats, launches, etc. The only Northern Port which has ship-yard is Valvettiturai - and the number is not one, but two.

13. Every village and every town has its own tradition - some true, some fabulous - and Valvettiturai is not an exception to the rule. The people here claim to have evidence to support their traditions, but we shall confine ourselves to easily-verifiable facts.

14. About 80 years ago, Brig "Atlantic King", said to be 12,000 tons, built in England and owned by an English Firm, foundered near Trincomallee. The English owners tried their best to re-float it but failed in all their attempts. One of the ship-owners of Valvettiturai, Sri T. Vengadasalam of beloved memory, offered to purchase the ship in the foundered condition; the English firm gladly accepted the offer and sold the ship to him. He had it re-floated, repaired it and made his money; with it, supplemented with donations, he built the local Sivan Temple. He died only 58 years ago and his feat is described in one of the verses composed in his honour and sung at the time of the Anthieshty ceremony.



No. 10 - See "Key" on page 3

15. Recently in 1916, the steamer "S. S. St. John" ran aground near Kankasanturai. The cost of getting down a tug from Colombo with necessary men and equipments was prohibitive; Mr. Vadivel Mesthiriar (Master shipbuilder) of Valvettiturai offered to re-float it at a lesser cost and this was accepted. The Mesthiriar did his job ingeniously, to the admiration of the

Nautical Engineers, and made a huge profit on the contract with which he built the Vishnu Temple, "Nagulagiri Narayana-swamy" Temple, on the land adjoining the place at which the steamer had foundered.

The above Temple and the Sivan Temple referred to in the preceding paragraph are standing witnesses to the genius and the traditional piety of the people of Valvettiturai.

16. Mr. Vadivel Mesthiriar is not the solitary genius among men of his profession. For centuries, there has been a succession of these master shipbuilders - several of them in every generation. The Ceylon Customs Records would show that all the ships above 50 tons built in Ceylon and registered at the Jaffna Port had been built by the Mesthiriars of Valvettiturai.

17. Not only that, The Indian Customs Records would show that a good number of ships registered at the Ports of Coconada, Masulipatam, Rangoon, and Calcutta had also been built by our Mesthiriars. We believe in Facts. NOT in Fiction. That the shipbuilding industry at Valvettiturai is **at least** 200 years old is borne out by the testimony of Sir Emerson Tenent quoted below:-

"In the evening we drove along the shore to Valvettiture, a village about three miles from Point Pedro, **containing a much larger population, and one equally industrious and enterprising.** There was a vessel of considerable tonnage on the stocks, the Tamil shipbuilders of this little place being amongst the most successful in Ceylon..."

Sir, Emerson visited Valvettiturai in March, 1848. When the art of shipbuilding had been perfected 100 year ago and vessels of "considerable tonnage" were built as a matter of routine and the shipbuilders were reckoned amongst "the most successful in Ceylon", the shipbuilding industry must have been started at least 100 years earlier.

**Is there any other Port in Ceylon which can cite such unimpeachable evidence in support of a similar claim ?**

18. Our shipbuilders were - and are - able to build not only ships of "considerable tonnage" but ships which could last a 100 years. The Schooner "Annapoorani Ammal" (re-named "Brigantine Florence C. Robinson") which made the historic voyage to the U. S. A. in 1936 and which is referred to in the succeeding Section, was built by Mr. Sundara Mesthiriar of Valvettiturai. Here, we quote the portion of the Report which appeared in the American

Daily "**The Boston Globe**" referring to the build of the ship as the credit for the build of the ship is due to the Ship builders and not to the brave sailors who took it across the Atlantic. The passage in that Report runs as follows :-

### "OLD SALTS AMAZED

"Until the vessel hauled out into the stream, a steady line of old Gloucester salts stood in wonder, gazing at the lines and exclaiming at her ironwood planking - teak and a Native CEYLONESE wood known as Margosa.

"She is built to last 100 years, if not longer" said Robinson. with a touch of pride".

19. Unfortunately, after the closure of the Port of Valvettiturai and the capture of the sailing - vessels - transport by the Steamers, the Indo-Ceylon Railway, etc., this unique industry of shipbuilding in Ceylon is dying and it can be revived only by re-opening the port of Valvettiturai. The last ship built at Velvettiturai was on the stocks when the **Danish Experts** got down by the Hon'ble Minister of Industries, etc., visited Valvettiturai and those Experts were amazed that Ceylon was capable of building such ships, although the ship on the stocks at that time was not one of "considerable tonnage".

20. As we had stated earlier, this unique industry in Ceylon is one of which All-Ceylon - not merely Velvettiturai nor the people of the Peninsula alone - should be proud and do everything to foster it. This can be done only by re-opening the Port of Valvettiturai; the Island's interest and its good name demand it.

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V. A thousand sailors, who are "amongst the finest matelots in the world", are available only at Valvettiturai to rush to the rescue of ships and their crew in times of distress.

21. Ships can be bought; or they can be built by master-shipbuilders, but the right type of personnel who could man them efficiently, especially in times of emergencies, can neither be bought nor made to order.



22. The "sailors" in steamers can be trained in a few years. But the genuine pearls, the sailors of sailing ships - who have to run up to the top of the tall masts to furl the sails when their ship is tossed up like a toy on the crest of mountainous waves one moment and down the next moment to the hollow of the sea when those waves had gone forward, with gales and waves making the ship dance to and fro and sideways - cannot be trained in a generation. The

No. 11 - See "Key" on Page 3

steel nerves required for such jobs should be inherited. We may be pardoned if we anticipate here what the American Daily, "The Boston Globe" had reported when our men took their Brigantine to the U. S. A. :-

"This famous Port, which has seen many a colorful arrival in its day, turned out, **Skippers, dorymen, tourists, for a sight that had not been seen in a hundred years, if then.** Coast Guard look-outs flashed the word to town, even as the vessel stood in the offing, her **Hindus climbing the yards with a bare-footed agility that left the old-timers gasping in admiration.**"

**We believe that, when the American skippers and the other old-timers had hailed our men "gasping in admiration" our countrymen will not stint giving their due.**

23. Many of our readers must have read with consternation the dangers which passengers to England had related in the Press that they had encountered while journeying in huge steamers - floating castles - when going through the Bay of Biscay, hugging the



land. But our sailors had every year braved the equally dangerous Bay of Bengal crossing it when they brought our paddy from Burma till the steamers ousted their ships, after the Great World War No. 1, from their transport monopoly. What more, they had braved even the dangers of the Atlantic in their tiny wooden sailing ship. We shall first give the outline of that great, unique adventure to serve as a back-ground to the Report of an American Journalist published in an American Daily.

**Brief Outline of the trip made by a sailing vessel built by a Velvettiturai MESTRIAR and manned by Velvettiturai sailors.**

24. Early in 1936, Mr. William Albert Robinson of America, "tamed author, explorer, and sea rover" - to quote the words of the "Boston Globe" - bought the schooner "Annapoorany Ammal" built six years earlier by Mr. Sundara Mestriar and captained by Mr. K. Thambipillai and his five mates who, true to the spirit of adventure inherited by our sailors, agreed to take the ship to America.

25. As an additional precaution, Mr. Robinson had a Diesel engine fitted to the ship by Messrs. Walker and Sons but this engine was little used in the trip and later it had failed to function. Mr. Robinson renamed the ship "Brigantine Florence C. Robinson" after his wife and went in it up to Aden where he expected his wife to meet him. Here he received a cablegram that his wife was ill and flew to America and the ship had to remain at the Port till he returned with his wife a few months later. While in America, he had arranged with Captain Donald A. Mc Cuish to meet the ship at Crete and pilot it through the treacherous Mediterranean and the Atlantic. When the ship reached Crete, Captain Mc Cuish had arrived there and Mr. and Mrs. Robinson went to America by Air, after instructing Mr. Tambipillai to be guided by the advice of Captain Mc Cuish during the passage to America as he and his mates were strangers to those seas.

26. Captain Mc Cuish was a fine seaman and a very fine gentleman with 42 years' service in Steamers; he was, to quote the "Boston Globe" "one of Gloucester's saltiest and best-known skippers". But, he had no experience of sailing ships and was too nervous for our sailors who raced their ship with full sails when the wind was favourable which, very often appeared dangerous to the Captain. Although Mr. Thmabipillai continued to be the master of the ship till it reached America, he had to be guided by the advice of his Pilot and one of his racing mates found no adventure in such a journey and left the ship when it reached Gibraltar. Here, at the request of the American Consul, the ship took in an American youth, Alex Doster, "who (in the words of the "Boston Globe") had been roaming about Europe and the Near - East for two years", as a workaway".

27, After several-hair breadth escapes from "near collision" & one of the worst seas in the 42 years' experience of Captain Mc Cush which we give below in "Boston Globe's" own words, the ship reached Gloucester and received a welcome which even kings seldom receive - **"a score of boats raced out in greeting" them.**

28, Our sailors were the first unofficial ambassadors to America from Ceylon and, in all probability, the last and were lionized in America during their stay there and returned to Ceylon in a Steamer via Singapore. They brought with them a large number of photographs taken by their numerous American friends and admirers and presented to them and also cuttings from the American Dailies "The Boston Post" and "The Boston Globe". Twelve years had passed since their return and the cuttings from the "Boston Post" and some valuable photographs have passed into hands which are not traceable now. We publish below extracts from the "Boston Globe", and a few of the many photographs which are still available and leave them to tell the tales in their own way. We may mention that the "Boston Globe" had featured its article on its front page and continued it on its 20th page with a photograph of the ship under a three-column head line "Reviving the Old Days at Gloucester". The heading published on the front page in bold types and a few extracts from the article are given below.

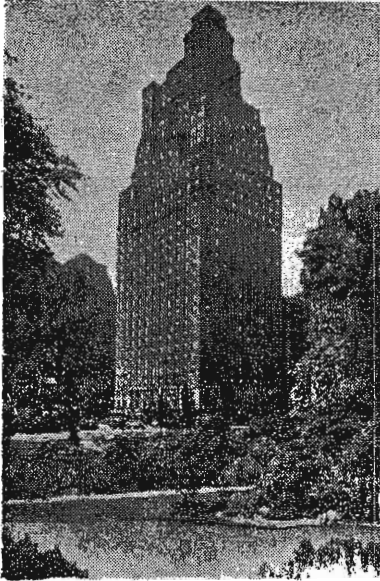
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## The Boston Globe August 2, 1938

Voyage Ended by Brigantine.

Rare Spectacle Provided by arrival from Ceylon.

By NAT. A. BARROWS,



No. 12 - See "Key" on page 3)

**GLOUCESTER** Aug. 1. Like a chapter straight from one of the Malay sea stories of Joseph Conrad, a picturesque crew of square-rigger sailors came reaching into the port before a quartering breeze today aboard the 89-foot brigantine *Floranee C. Robinson* - last windship of her kind, in all probability, that will ever cross the Western Ocean under canvas alone.

Bringing a tale of storms, doldrums, thirst, short rations and near collision, the trim little brigantine's company of seven - a grizzled old Gloucesterman, five turbaned, bes-kirted Ceylonese Hindus and a youthful bearded American adventurer - tied up alongside a waterfront dock at noon, **50 days out of Gibraltar via Bermuda.**

(Here follows the passage quoted in paragraph 22 which please See)

### BOATS GREET ARRIVAL.

As she worked past Ten-Pound Island and stood up for the inner harbour, a score of boats raced out in greeting.

... ..

She has been two years reaching here from CEYLON, where she was built eight years ago on the lines of a British brig of war of the 1840 period. Robinson himself took her leisurely through the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea as far as Crete.

Six Ceylonese from the seafaring town of Valvettiturai, in Northern Ceylon, came out with her and only one has returned home.

In March, Captain Donald A. McCuish of 5 Lookout St., one of Gloucester's Saltiest and best-known skippers; went over to Crete to bring her across the Atlantic.

### **Bad Storm near Crete.**

"I've had 42 years at sea, man and boy, but that storm we hit in the Mediterranean, just after we cleared honest workmanship and good hardwood, or We'd not be here to tell the tale. There we were, running under bare poles, with the seas breaking Canda (in Crete) was one of the worst I've ever pulled through". Capt. Dan said today as he took his leisure on the poop deck, amid a salvo of greetings from shore and harbour.

"She's a tidy little vessel, built of white over the bow and the day inky black like night".

"We were driven 250 miles off our course".

With him at that time were the six Ceylonese - "and a fine lot of men, too if you treated them right and respected their religious beliefs".

### **Becalmed at Gibraltar.**

Doster told of the difficulty in getting away from Gibraltar. "We couldn't get a spot of wind" he related "and there we were becalmed. The vessel's "kicker" was out of order and we had to depend entirely on our sails".

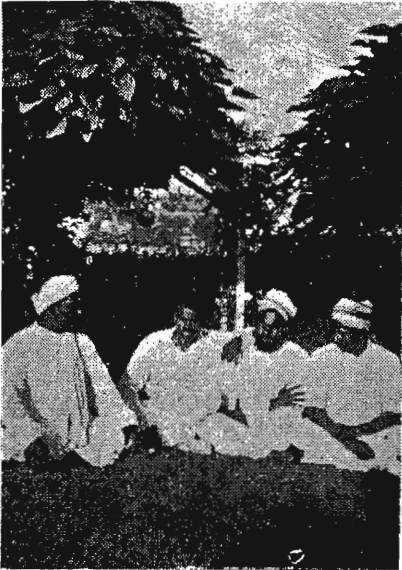
"The skipper of a big American freighter agreed to give us a tow but our seamen saw our crew and saw we were flying the Stars and Stripes they shouted down vile remarks about a union crew. We got the tow alright, but we had not cleared the harbour when the hawser broke suddenly close to the freighter's after-deck. It is my opinion that the hawser was cut.

"We were four days drifting about the harbour before we could get a slant of wind to carry us out."

Out in the Atlantic, Capt. Dan tried to stay with the trade winds and; for a while, made a good passage, although the brigantine never reached the 18 - knot speed Robinson found one day in the Red Sea when he was coming out from Ceylon.

The wind failed them in mid-ocean and for days on end they idled about.

## Coleridge Paraphrased.



No: 13 - See "Key" on Page 3

" We were a painted brigantine on a painted ocean" said one of the Ceylonese, Sabaratnam, who with two others in the native crew speaks English fluently.

The water became too rusty for drinking. The food became low

Capt. Dan headed for Bermuda, carrying every inch of sail to catch the whispers of wind. After 41 days, the Florence C. Robinson - which the owner named for his wife, and sailing companion - reached Hamilton, amid a reception that Capt. Dan will never forget.

They got underway for Gloucester nine days ago and picked up a wind that did much to make up for the black days in the doldrums. Making up for Nantucket Light, with a soupy fog clinging low, the brigantine had a narrow escape from being cut down by a transatlantic liner.

Capt. Dan blew stentorian blasts on his mouth foghorn and the crew, in the yards, shouted vigorously. They could see the towering masts and even the sides of the big liner and there was little they could do in the absence of wind.

She cleared the brigantine by yards and went her way without a sign of recognition.

The Ceylonese, first of their race to touch Gloucester in many years, glanced casually at the shore. They were more interested in making the brigantine ship-shape - and in seeing their old friend and skipper, Robinson.

When he appeared, they greeted him with the exultant excitement of children, shouting greetings long before he was aboard. Robinson took them ashore to see a lobster pound and they stared in fascination. But they were eager to get back aboard their vessel.

(Here follows the passage quoted in paragraph <sup>18</sup> which please see)



When he (Mr. Robinson) bought her two years ago, she was named "**Annappoorany Ammal**", after a Hindu Temple at Benares. **This name is still indented on her side.** She was originally schooner-rigged, but Mr. Robinson, whose epic trip round the world alone in the Ketch Swaap stamps him as an authority, had her changed over to the Brigantine - along the lines of the old British brigs of war."

### Trust begets Trust.

29. It will be seen from the above extracts that the American Captain - one of Gloucester's "saltiest and best-known" - had, after five months' intimate companionship with the Valvettiturai sailors during which they passed through one of the worst seas and storms he had encountered in his 42 years' seamanship and had a hair-breadth escape from being cut down by a Transatlantic Liner, found these sailors from Valvettiturai were men of steel nerves and expert seamanship. At the end of the voyage, when he was interviewed by the "Boston Globe" he blurted out what was uppermost in his thoughts:

**"a fine lot of men, IF you treated them right and respected their religious beliefs"**

The old seaman, with the true insight of his tribe, had found the Valvettiturai men's strength and weakness - respect their religion and their birthright and you cannot find more loyal companions even while Death stares them straight in the face.

### Mr. Robinson's letter to the American Consulate in Ceylon.

30. The Valvettiturai seamen did not importune even their father-like employer - see "Boston Globe's" report of their greeting him "with the exultant excitement of children, shouting greetings long before he was aboard" and Robinson taking them ashore to see a lobster pound - for a testimonial. Long after they had left America, Mr. Robinson had written a letter to the American Consulate in Ceylon and this found its way to the columns of the "Times of Ceylon". Thereupon, the Honorary Secretary of the Valvettiturai Unemployment Relief Association wrote to the

American Consulate for more details and received a reply dated June 9, 1939. We give below an extract from that letter:

"...A copy of the pertinent paragraphs from Mr. Robinson's letter appeared in the **Times of Ceylon** on March 26, 1939 and for your information are quoted below:

"At one time I had six men from Jaffna, and during the whole trip they were the only crew I had... they helped me with the rigging, carpentry, painting, and sail-making. I remember that everyone in Ceylon said that I was mad to take such a crew. I never regretted it. They were ALL fine characters, and my wife feels the same about them".

"Fine character" is the heritage of these sailors and no one need be "mad" to trust them. The columnist, "Man About Town", had obtained a copy of Mr. Robinson's letter from the American Consul and published it in the "**Times of Ceylon**" of 26-3-39, adding the following comments of his own :-

"That certainly is a very fine tribute to Jaffna, and is a perfect answer to those who are always urging that Jaffna people are hard to get on with".



31. Our men were received with kindness and accorded hearty welcome wherever they went. Mr. Robinson took them to New York and found them lodgings in a skyscraper Hotel, "St. Moritz-on-the-Park". The Americans visited the ship at all hours of the day till late in the night and, consequently, found our men at meditation sometimes. Without their knowledge, one American had taken a photograph when one of the sailors was in his usual meditation; later, he gave them a copy of the photograph, with his apologies, which appears on the previous page.

The **Asana** meditation captivated the Americans and our men had to give in to their importunities and demonstrate a few Asanas. When, sometime later, the Boston Americans organised the "Gloucester Rock Fort Carnival" in aid of charities, they entreated the Jaffna sailors to provide a few items and the sailor-yogis had to yield to those entreaties as many of the organisers had. By that time, become their friends. Needless to say, these **asana** items were widely advertised as only Americans could do and thousands flocked even from distant places to witness those items which were quite novel to them. We are proud to record that our representatives had refused to receive even a cent as remuneration - to the agreeable surprise of their American friends.

32. We are needless to say - immensely proud of our unofficial ambassadors who had nobly represented us in the Boston area of the U. S. A. and had made "Valvettiturai", "Jaffna" and "Ceylon" popular and admired during their four months' stay there.

### **How Ceylon had received back these brave sailors.**

33. After their memorable sojourn in the New World - during which time they were lionized for their daring, for their seamanship, for their agility and, above all, for their fine character - they returned to Ceylon in a steamer via Singapore. Here, in their homeland, they were not able to secure employment,

34. As a last resort, two of them went back to Colombo and joined the Ceylon Royal Navy Volunteer Regiment as ordinary seamen, although both of them held the Masters' Certificates issued by the Ceylon Master Attendant. They had no difficulty in winning the esteem of the Officers of the Regiment but those lower down, who had not the daring to plough the high seas in sailing vessels and had earlier migrated to Colombo and formed family-bandyism, realised that the advent of these genuine "sailors" would soon expose the hollowness of their claims. Activities behind the screen and anonymous petitions by the score succeeded in their object. Our men, who held the Masters' Certificates, had their applications for permanent posts under Government turned down in spite of the high testimonials given to them by the Officers of the Regiment;



men with mere Mates' Certificates - which too had been obtained without complying with the requirements of Government Rules, as will be seen from the next Section - were preferred to these "Masters".

## VI. Rules re Masters' and Mates' Certificates issued by the Ceylon Master Attendant.

35. The above Rules are published in the Government Gazette of 16th March, 1934, and are still in force; we quote below the relevant portion:

"4. A candidate for a Mate's Certificate...must have served 5 years at sea in the performance of deck duties in a seagoing vessel of burthen of not less than fifty tons..."

6. A candidate for a Master's Certificate...must have served for one year as a Mate in a seagoing vessel of a burthen of not less than fifty tons..."

It will be seen that according to these Government Rules, only a sailor who had served in a SEAGOING vessel for FIVE YEARS AT SEA in the case of an applicant for a Mate's Certificate, and SIX YEARS AT SEA in the case of an applicant for a Master's Certificate, is eligible to sit for the Examinations.

Colombo Harbour is NOT a SEA and vessels going about that Harbour only, are NOT "SEAGOING" vessels.

36. Some of the "Masters" and "Mates" who are now in the service of Government had served under Valvettiturai "Masters" for ONLY ABOUT ONE YEAR in their ships during trips between Ceylon and South Indian Ports—avoiding the risky trips to distant Burma across the perilous Bay of Bengal—obtained Certificates from our "Masters" for the "One year's service at sea in sailing vessels" and, solely on the strength of those certificates, had managed to obtain Mates' Certificates and, later, Masters' Certificates—without any further service at "sea" in "sailing" vessels, It is some of these pseudo-Mates and Masters who had prevented our fully qualified "Masters" from obtaining employment in the Colombo Harbour.

37. A Tribunal or Commission is not necessary to verify the correctness of these statements of ours. If the "Mates" and "Masters" in Government Service in the Colombo Harbour are asked to furnish details of their employment before obtaining their Mariners' Certificates and swear affidavits to the correctness of those details, the truth could be easily found out. We pray that the Government Rules insisting on "five years' service at sea in seagoing vessels" in the cases of Mates and "six years' service at sea in seagoing vessels" in the cases of Masters be strictly enforced.

## VII. How the smuggling originated at Valvettiturai.

### The relevancy of this Section to the Question at issue.

38. It would be an ostrich-policy to shut our eyes to the whispering campaign that Valvettiturai is a "smugglers' Paradise" and that, therefore, Valvettiturai Port should not be re-opened. We shall state here how the accursed smuggling had raised its ugly head in spite of our ancient religious and cultural heritage and, in the next Section, we shall show to the satisfaction of all fairminded readers that the re-opening of the Port—thereby providing honest employment to the sailors, ship builders, Port labourers, traders, etc., who had lost their employment through no fault of theirs—is the surest way of ending smuggling for good,

### Smuggling is alien to the Religious and Cultural Heritage of the people.

39. We have shown in paragraphs 14 and 15 how the ship-owner and the master ship-builder, who had made huge profits by re-floating the England-built and English-manned "Atlantic King" and the S. S. "St. John", had instinctively spent those profits on building Temples. Sri. T. Kulandaivel pillai, the former's brother and one of the pioneer Bank Shroffs in Colombo, built the Kathiresan Temple at Chekku Street some 80 years ago and that Temple is today known as "Yalpanaththar Kathiresan Kovil".

40. There are more Temples, including a R. C. Church, at Valvettiturai than in any other locality of the same size in Ceylon. The orderliness at these Temples even today is almost unique—the women devotees always stand on one side and the men on the other even on fetival days when thousands foregather for worship; with the result that there was never a case of theft nor any other untoward happening at these Temples at any time. Paragraph 31 would show that, even when our sailors go to distant lands braving the perils of the seas, they are humble before God and offer Him their traditional worship in their traditional way.

41. **Commerce leads civilization.** The constant visits made by the local sailors, traders and pilgrims to the other lands, as a result of the exceptionally special facilities which they had enjoyed for centuries, enabled them to acquire knowledge in a very marked degree. Till recently, there were many very learned and cultured men in every generation, who were authorities on religious philosophy and their national language. There were ashta avathanies (who

could concentrate on eight different subjects simultaneously) etc., who had learnt those arts on their frequent and prolonged visits to the other countries.

The renowned Tamil and Sanskrit Scholar and Poet, Srimath S. Sivapragasa Pandithar of Neervely, has borne spontaneous testimony to the ancient Religio-Cultural heritage of Valvettiturai in the "Kalivenba" he had written in 1892 from which we quote the first few lines :-

“செந்தமிழின் மங்கை சிறந்துகுடி கொண்டுமகிழ்  
வந்தவியாழ்ப் பாணம் வடபுடையில்—முந்துசிவ  
புண்ணியமே யாசாரம் பூண்டு வழிவழியே  
மண்ணில் விளங்கும் வளர்சைவ—நண்ணுகின்ற  
வல்வை நகர்.....”

### Valvettiturai rolled in wealth before the advent of the steamers

42. Till the advent of the steamers, sailing vessels held the monopoly in coastwise transport and in the transport of goods and passengers between Ceylon and India and Burma; consequently, the owners of sailing vessels made huge profits. It is a historical fact that the largest number of expert sailors, ship builders and ship-owners in Ceylon were (and are) at Valvettiturai and enjoyed the major portion of the fruits of that monopoly. After the advent of the steamers, their descendants were not able to repair the storeyed buildings which they had built and two of those buildings were standing in ruins at the beginning of this century, when they were demolished and cottages built in their places.

( We are not referring to these in pride but only to emphasise the contrast between the past and the recent and the present when, excepting the few employed and some of the smugglers, the majority of the people are starving in spite of appearances. It is the duty of a Seva Sangam to tell the facts even at the risk of being misunderstood ).

Gradually, the advent of the round-the-Island steamers service, the Railway, the Indo-Ceylon Railway connection, etc., reduced the sailing-vessels-transport monopolists and, consequently, the earnings of the Masters, the Mates, the shipbuilders etc. Still, the monopoly of the profitable transport of paddy from Burma to Ceylon and South Indian Ports remained with sailing vessels - more than 90% of which were manned by Valvettiturai sailors. But the sudden release of the steamers at the end of the Great World War I enabled the steamers to poach on this preserve too.

When they received this last blow, the Masters and the Mates of Valvettiturai had no alternative but to run to Colombo Harbour in search of employment but the mariners, who had gone there earlier and had, with one or two years' service at sea, managed to circumvent the Government Rules and secure Mates' and Masters' Certificates and Government employment, realised that the advent of these genuine sailors would expose their pseudo-claims, formed themselves into a family ring and prevented our men from securing employment. They were then like drowning men and some of them succumbed to the temptation of smuggling - to ward off the wolf from their doors.

### **VIII. The easiest, the surest and the cheapest way to end smuggling for good.**

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#### **Our Grief**

43 The readers can easily picture to themselves how we, with our Religious and Cultural Heritage summarised in paragraphs 39-41 above, would have felt and feel about the miserable fall which this place had sustained through the fault of a few whose number had gradually increased when more and more sailors were thrown out of employment.

( Some of our sailors were Pilots at the Port of Madras and Masters of Steam launches, etc., at Chittagong and Calcutta. Gradually, these avenues of employment were also closed to these Ceylonese sailors ).

But we were - and are - quite helpless. Our words of advice to EMPTY STOMACHS were like water poured on duck's back; we had - and we have - no alternative means of livelihood to suggest to these unfortunate people,

44 We do Not hold a brief for smugglers when we appeal to the people and the Government not to brand them as undeserving of honest employment. Blackmarketing is the order of the day; when floods and other visitations occur, the most essential necessities of life are hoarded and sold at staggering prices; bribery and corruption flourish in all parts of the Island. We submit that it would not be fair to penalise an ancient Port for the sins of a few who had been driven to smuggling under circumstances described in the preceding Section.

#### **Our Submission**

45 We respectfully submit that when a thousand able-bodied expert sailors in a small place are all suddenly thrown out of employment for no fault of theirs, it is the duty of Government to pro-

vide them with the means of living. Only if and when the unemployed turn perverse after they had been provided with employment, then and then only should they be condemned and denied further employment.

### **Punitive action alone had not succeeded anywhere in ending crime.**

46. The Government is now spending huge sums of money annually on launches and in maintaining an army of Policemen, Customs officers, etc. for patrolling the northern coast. They may be temporarily successful in reducing smuggling but can never end it for good. When men, who for generations had faced dangers of the seas and gales in their tiny vessels and had carried their lives in their hands, are driven by hunger to find means of keeping themselves, their wives and their children above starvation, the risk of their being found out and punished cannot deter all of them from resorting again and again to a living to which they had, most unfortunately, become used for nearly a quarter of a century.

### **How the present huge expenditure on patrolling, etc., could be saved to the Government Exchequer.**

47. The re-opening of the ancient Port of Valvettiturai will provide honest employment to the sailors, boatmen, Port labourers, traders, etc., and the dying shipbuilding industry would be revived which also will give employment to hundreds; while the sailors and the shipbuilders are residents of Valvettiturai, a good number of the labourers, the carpenters, the blacksmiths, etc., are residents of villages within a radius of ten miles who also had been adversely affected by the closing of the Port. The re-opening of no other Port would provide employment to these men who had lost their employment through the closing of the Port of Valvettiturai.

When employment is made available to the Valvettiturai sailors, etc., we shall be enabled to appeal with success to the few smugglers who may be tempted to continue in their nefarious activity to return to their ancient calling which brought wealth and distinction to their birthplace. IF - which, of course, we do not and should not anticipate - there is no response, we shall definitely have the overwhelming support of the people of the place in hunting out the stragglers. In other words, we shall be in an infinitely better position than all the Customs officers, the Police officers and the Excise officers combined, to end the smuggling for good.

48. What is required is an opportunity to offer suitable alternative means of earning an honest living for the unfortunates who had been thrown out of their traditional calling for no fault of theirs. If this

opportunity is given to us, we have no doubt that we can rescue this ancient Port from the bad name which it had unfortunately acquired in recent times; We Pray Give us this Opportunity.

## IX FINAL SUBMISSION

49. We are confident that a careful perusal of the facts submitted above would convince all fairminded readers that, **looked at from every point of view, viz.,**

- (1) The greatest good of the greatest number of the people of the North,
- (2) the safety of the ships riding at anchor at the selected Port,
- (3) the facilities for effecting repairs to the ships, etc., at the selected Port,
- (4) the facilities for building up the Ceylon indigenou merchant navy and reviving the unique shipbuilding industry in Ceylon which is dying for want of Government patronage,
- (5) the availability of a thousand sailors, who are "amongst the finest matelots in the world", who could rush to the help of ships and their crew in distress,
- (6) the solving of the Problem of unemployment of thousands of expert sailors, shipbuilders, carpenters, blacksmiths, etc., who had been thrown out of employment for no fault of theirs.
- (7) the ending for good of the accursed smuggling,
- (8) the saving of huge sums of the taxpayers' money now spent on patrolling, etc., and
- (9) the avoiding of futile expenditure of crores of rupees on blasting of rocks under water, in building a mile-long "L" breakwater, in constructing miles of causeways over mud, three feet of sea water, etc.,

**the re-opening of the ancient Port of Valvettiturai is imperative. We trust that Justice will be done and done expeditiously.**

## ADDENDUM

50 After the earlier pages had been printed, the Government stated on 28.2.51, in reply to Questions put in the Parliament by Mr. S. Sivapalan, M. P., that survey of the harbours in the Jaffna

Peninsula made by H. M. S. "Stork" in 1936 recommended an anchorage off Punkudutivu, "provided road communications could be opened up by means of causeways" and that the construction of an inner harbour at Tondaimanar was considered impracticable.

51. We regret that no detailed report of that 1936 survey is available to the public; we are, therefore, not in a position to comment in detail on that survey. However, the following facts can be safely stated.

(1) That survey had been made without giving an opportunity to the public interested in the question to place before the surveyors all the relevant facts;

(2) The Nautical Charts published by the British Admiralty five years later (on 17th October, 1941) with "large corrections" to the "New Editions" issued on 1st March 1940 show that

(a) there is an unbroken stretch of reef encircling Punkudutivu and Nainativu on the South - the only side where a Port could be opened as the depth of water on the other three sides is only half a fathom - with No "Boat entrance"

**Whereas-**

a "Boat entrance" in the reef near Valvettiturai is shown in these Nautical Charts and the Admiralty's "Bay of Bengal Pilot" has certified that it is the only "Good Boat Entrance" to a North-Ceylon Port (vide quotation in paragraph 11 (d) (1) on page 14)

(b) The depth of the sea south of the Punkudutivu reef, about a mile beyond, is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  fathoms, while by the side of the Valvettiturai reef it is 5 fathoms.

(c) Punkudutivu is fully exposed to the South-West Monsoon winds; Valvettiturai is NOT.

52. The finding regarding the Tondaimanar canal also appears to us to be **equally untenable**. The cutting of the Sand bank at the junction of the canal with the sea and the deepening of the Sand and Mud bed of the canal should not cost any considerable expenditure; as we had pointed out in paragraph 11 (d) (8) on page 15, this canal can be easily made the third safest harbour in Ceylon at very little cost.

53. We earnestly appeal to the Government to appoint early a Tribunal of Nautical Experts to record evidence and to make its report on the most suitable Northern Port for re-opening. The

prices of articles vital for living are soaring up daily and the re-opening of at least one Port has become a matter of life and death for the people of the North. There are no rubber nor tea estates in the North and the poor people here cannot continue to pay Colombo prices plus transport charges plus extra middlemen's profits for necessities of life.

54, We sincerely trust that our benign Government will take these facts into consideration and be pleased to appoint the Tribunal to select the best Port after recording the evidence of the advocates of the different Ports. "Justice delayed is Justice denied"; we pray for prompt Justice.

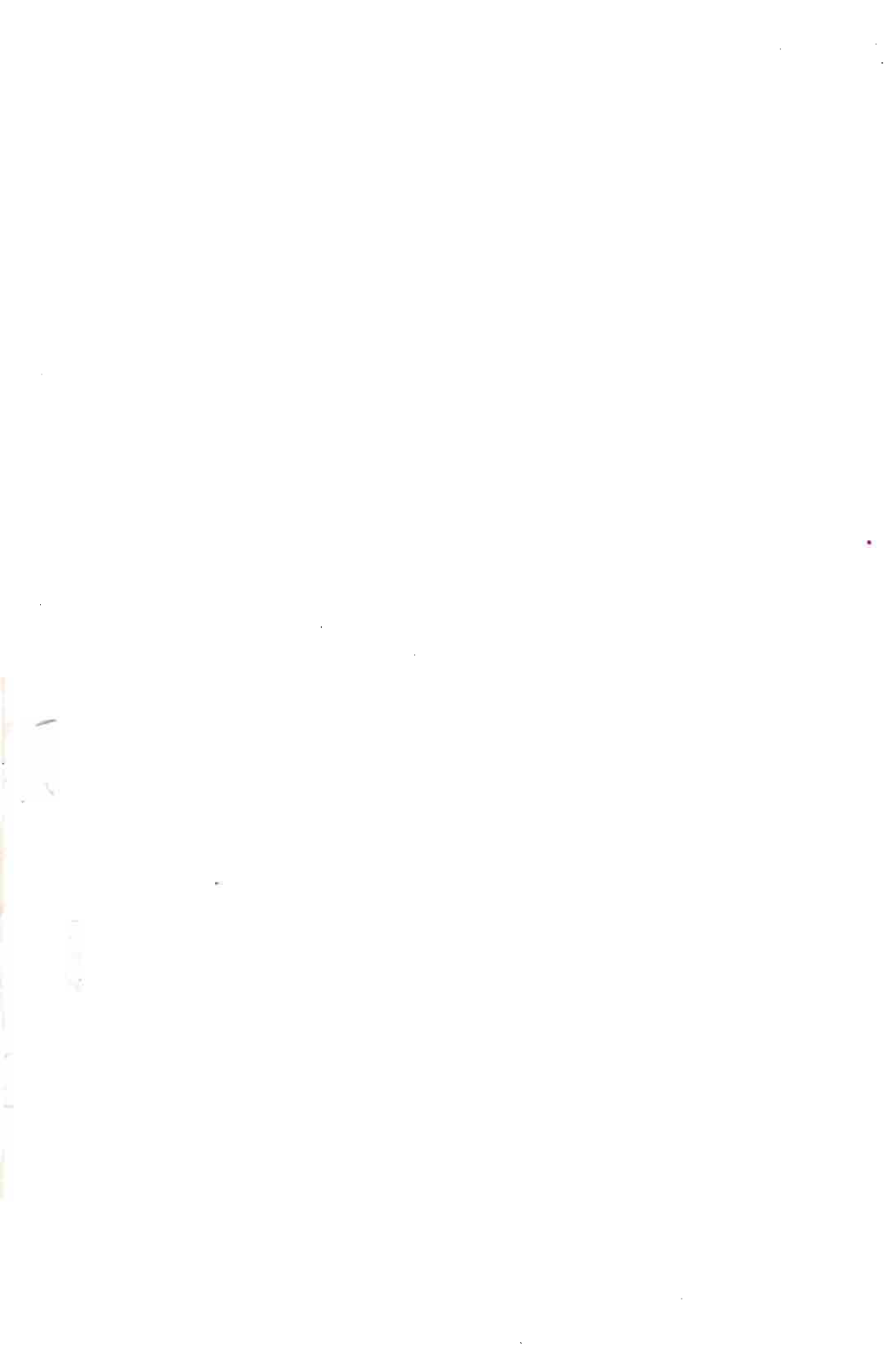


Unique Ceylonese Conference held  
in the U. S. A. (Ipswich) Park  
in 1938.

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Copies can be obtained from Mr. K. Muttucumarasamy B. A.,  
Hony Secretary, Valvai Seva Sangam, Valvettiturai; and also from  
the Seva Sangam's Hony Agent in Colombo, Mr. P. Muttulingaswamy  
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