OUR FOOD SUPPLY

BY

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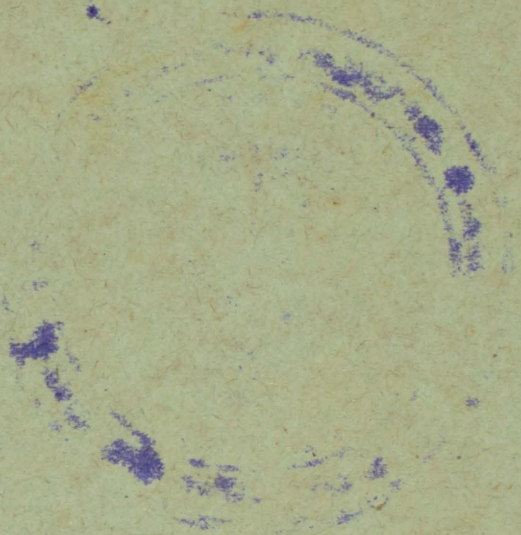

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By K. Balasingham.

A tiny stream flowing down a ravine fills the country around with deafening roar, but the haulage of the ocean by the moon is noiseless. We fail to notice the magnitude of the greatest forces working silently about us.

The fact that Government occasionally "recruits in Europe" brings upon it a torrent of angry criticism, but the millions we pay foreign countries for our food provokes very little comment.

The expenditure of Government on personal emoluments of all its officers is about 12 million rupees. Of this, about nine millions are drawn by Ceylonese of all grades—from the peon to the Judge of the Supreme Court. Of the remaining three millions, about two millions are spent in this country by the European officials for their maintenance. It is only about one million that is probably available for remittance to Europe. But in 1911 (the latest year for which a blue book has been published) we spent about 73 millions on the purchase of foreign foods of all kinds.

I am not discussing here our claims to high office, but I am only making the passionless estimate of an economist; I am dragging the figures into the light to bring to prominent notice the fact that, while some of us grow so indignant over the loss of one million rupees, we pay no thought to the preventible loss of about 73 millions spent on the purchase of foreign foods.

If there is one subject more than another which calls for earnest inquiry at this stage of our national evolution, it is our food supply. We are mainly an agricultural race, and in the nature of

things we should be able to supply all or most of our articles of food. Ceylon has a variety of climates, a sufficient, and in many places, an abundant rain fall, many streams and rivers, undulating plains which the energy of man has covered from the remotest times with a net work of irrigation tanks and channels, an extensive sea coast teeming with edible fishes, and a population which intellectually and physically is equal to any in the world. Despite all these advantages, which nature has so profusely showered upon us, we are very greatly dependent on foreign countries for our food. Of the 73 millions we paid foreign countries for food and drink we sent over to India about 64 millions. The actual sum we spent for foreign food is much more, but I shall accept the moderate valuation of the Customs Authorities. We import from Europe wines, spirits, biscuits, confectionery, etc. There may be some excuse for these imports. But why do we not produce our rice, curry stuffs, gingelly., peas, etc? Almost all these articles come to us from India. The conditions for agriculture are in no wise more favourable in India than in Ceylon. The failure of the monsoon rains there for a single season is enough to bring famine and misery over tracts ten times as large as Ceylon. The soil of India, except in certain alluvial regions, is by no means rich,—exhausted as it is by centuries of cultivation.

Rice.

Our main food is rice. There are some historians who think that in ancient times, Ceylon was the "granary of the East," that we had large surplus of rice for export. Whether this was so or not, it is clear that we had always produced enough food for our consumption. During early British Rule.—in 1811—the total import of rice amounted to 199,275 bags or about 500,000 bushels. The population of Ceylon including the Kandyan districts, then under the Kandyan Kings, was about 800,000 according to Davy.

The import of rice was therefore 5/8th bushel per head of population. In 1911, we imported 12 million bushels for a population of 4 millions—that is 3 bushels per head. While the population has increased 5 times during the 100 years, the quantity of rice imported has increased 24 times.

We produced in 1911, roughly speaking, 6 million bushels of rice. In the same year, we cultivated only 736,000 acres with grains of all kinds. According to Government returns there remained uncultivated during the year 833,000 acres, although "fit for cultivation." There were also in the same year 1,161,000 acres of land "capable of being rendered fit for cultivation with grains". The 2,730,000 acres of land fit for grain cultivation would have yielded at the moderate estimate of 10 bushels to an acre 27 million bushels of rice. This would have given us a surplus of nine million bushels for export worth about 34 million rupees. But in 1911 we paid 47 million rupees for the purchase of foreign rice (even according to the moderate valuation of the Customs authorities; Rs. 3/75 a bushel.)

KURRAKKAN.

In this connection, it may be mentioned that the proposal to encourage the cultivation and consumption of *kurrakkan* is deserving of more support than it has received. As food for the working classes it has the double advantage of being cheaper and more nutritious than rice. It is capable of being grown more extensively than rice as it requires less water. It has become fashionable to despise kurrakkan because it is cheap. A diet of half rice and half kurrakkan would result in a saving to a labourer of about R 1/- a month which would enable him to purchase larger quantities of vegetable, fish and salt. At present, the la-

bourer, the planting cooly in particular, has very little variety in his food.

Peas, Grains and Seeds.

We imported in 1911 besides rice, the following grains and seeds:—

			Rs.
Beans	...	...	277,877
Gram	...	...	859,342
Oats	...	...	160,304
Peas	...	...	656,806
Gingelly	...	...	310,841
Total		...	2,265,170

To this we may add gingelly poonac which we imported for Rs. 1,838,623.

All these imports which we imported from India at the cost of 4 million rupees may be produced locally.

Curry Stuffs.

We imported in 1911 curry stuffs for three million rupees.

		Rs.
Chillies	...	1,016,619
Coriander Seed	...	298,322
Cummin Seed	...	297,457
Fennel Seed	...	47,002
Garlic	...	143,780
Mathe Seed	...	48,476
Tamarind	...	121,006
Turmeric	...	131,370
Onions	...	774,409
Mustard	...	42,585
Dry Ginger	...	64,424
Pepper	...	32,199
Pepper (long)	...	20,950
Total	...	3,038,800

Most of these can be easily grown in Ceylon; some of these can be grown in the kitchen garden. Cultivated on a large scale with hired labour some of these products give about 15 per cent profit.

Tamarind.

Tamarind grows without any cultivation everywhere except in the hilly districts. It furnishes excellent shade and its timber is used for many purposes. There are tamarind trees which yield fruit to the value of about R 35 an year. It is difficult to understand why a tree which grows so easily in most parts of the Island and which is so productive is not planted in larger numbers to meet our demands. It is still more difficult to understand why Government should not imitate India and plant by the road-side tamarind trees instead of spending annually large sums of money on planting worthless tress like the flamboyant which is only noted for its floral display, but which has no value either for timber or for fruit and which yields very little shade during several months in the year.

The flamboyant appears to have been imported from Madagascar some time before 1841, and the Inga Saman (another favourite shade tree) was imported in 1851 from South America. The money which the Government and Municipalities spend on growing these trees in nurseries and transplanting them could be put to better use. These trees are preferred owing to the rapidity of their growth. But the tamarind is also a fairly fast growing tree; it gives better shade than and lasts five or six times as long as the flamboyant or the ingasaman. The poll tax could now be easily repealed without serious los to the revenue if Government had imitated India in this matter some years ago. A good part at least of the cost of road construction could be met by the planting of timber and fruit trees along the roads. The fruit trees can be leased by auction every year, as is done in India. In Jaffna during the beneficient

administration of Mr. Dyke and Sir Wm. Twynam valuable timber trees like the mahogany were planted by the road sides. Many of these trees which were recently cut down and sold fetched about R 300 each.

Government will find it much more economial to plant trees by the road side by contract than for itself to undertake it. A payment of one rupee for each tree planted by the road side and brought above reach of cattle, might be sufficient remuneration to a neighbouring landowner who undertakes the planting.

Chillies.

The chilly plant thrives best in a loose humus soil; but it grows fairly well all over Ceylon except at elevations over 3,000 feet. The yield per acre is about 1,400 lbs. of dried chillies. Our total imports worth over one million rupees can be grown in about 6,500 acres. A chilly plant has been estimated to give 200 to 250 fruits. If every inhabitant planted on the average 4 plants in his garden we would have about 250 x 4 x 4,000,000 = 4,000,000,000 fruits—enough to cover the imports. Coriander, mustard, garlic and ginger thrive in ordinary soils and give a large return.

Pepper.

The pepper vine is already grown largely in Ceylon; and all that we require for home consumption can be very easily produced here. It is usually grown among other plants and is therefore capable of being produced very economically.

Cattle, Milk Butter.

We imported in 1911 cattle, milk, butter etc. for R 1,400,000. The following are the details:—

	Rs.
Cattle mainly for food ... (In 1912 for R 469.000)	322,000
Beef (salted, tinned or frozen) ...	72,000
Milk (preserved) ...	558.000
Ghee and butter ...	450.000
Total ...	R1,402,000
Goats, sheep and mutton...	R 650,900
Total ...	R2,052,000

This loss of over 2 million Rupees is an entirely preventible loss. About 2/3rd of these imports are from India; there is no reason why we should not produce what India can produce.

In 1911 we had 1,465,000 cattle (including buffaloes) and 90,000 sheep and 195,000 goats. The animals we have are of a very inferior breed. There is ample scope for improving the breed and increasing the number.

Our local milk supply is utterly deficient. Of the 1,400,000 cattle it may be estimated that 800,000 are cows of all ages and that on the average 200,000 are in milk throughout the year. A large percentage of even these cows (in the interior and on the estates) are not milked at all. Many others yield very small quantities. It may be safe to estimate that the average yield is 2 bottles a day per cow. The daily yield is therefore 400.000 bottles or about 1/10th bottle per head of population, which is a ridiculously inadequate supply.

It must be surprising to most Ceylonese to know that milk is cheaper in England than in Ceylon. According to the Board of Trade returns for 88 towns in England (including London) the cost of milk in October 1912 was 3½ to 4d a quart (3½x6 =21 cts. a quart.) A quart is equal to 1½

bottles. The price of a bottle in England is therefore about 14 cts. The average price of milk in the towns of Ceylon in about 22 cts a bottle. It might also be noted that our milk is poorer in quality and besides it is to a large extent adulterated. We might take a lesson from little Switzerland which has only 16,000 sq. miles or about 3/5ths our area and $\frac{3}{4}$th of our population. It has a little more than 6 millions acres; of these nearly 3 millions are entirely unproductive partly because they are rocky, partly because they are above the region of tillage; hardly two millions are under forest, and only a little more than 1$\frac{1}{2}$ are arable. Thus only about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the soil is available for agriculture. The soil is not naturally very fertile, but by the industry of the people has been made to produce fair crops. The pastures of the Alps afford food for the herds and flocks during summer. "In the spring the cows leave the stables where they have spent the long winter, and headed by a "leader"—a cow crowned with flowers and decked with sweet sounding bells, make for the Alps. As the snow melts away they go higher and higher. They stay in the lower pastures during May; a little higher in June highest of all in July, and in the next three months return through the same stages. Every patch of pasture is used and if cattle cannot reach it, sheep and goats are driven up..... The Swiss peasant is singularly careful about his grass and hay. He climbs up into nooks where even the goat cannot make his way, cuts the grass there and throws it down the precipice."

In 1911 we had 511,000 acres of pasture land. There were besides over one million acres under coconut cultivation. A coconut estate can be used to some extent as pasture ground and many estates are capable of being easily converted into dairy farms. Some estates are already used for such purposes. Besides the yield of the dairies, the estates themselves are made more productive, by keeping a large stock of cattle on them. For the

large sized English cows it is estimated that 1½ acres of land are necessary when cows are kept entirely at pasture. For our puny animals one acre or ¾ths might be considered quite ample. Care should be taken to keep the cattle confined to small areas daily. Each block should be rested after a day's grazing till the grass grows again. Even a thirty acre block would be insufficient for five head of cattle if they were allowed to roam over the whole block every day.

There are moreover 5½ million acres of land fit for cultivation, still remaining uncultivated. These may be converted into pasture grounds or utilised for the cultivation of fodder plants, at least for the present, till they are turned to better use in the process of time. If a small country like Switzerland could produce in spite of many adverse circumstances so much milk and butter for export there is no reason why a tropical country like Ceylon favoured as it is with a luxuriant vegetation, and an abundant rainfall should not produce enough milk and butter and beef and mutton for at least its home consumption. In no country are milk cows fed exclusively on pastures. In European countries they are fed with great care in the dairy farms with linseed or other cake, meal of beans, Indian corn, and other grains in addition to pasturage when pasturage is available. Roots and tubers, and fodder are stored up for use in the winter months. There is no reason why we should not be able to do the same here. All cattle foods can be grown in Ceylon in abundance; and with facilities for transport by rail even the driest regions can be supplied with grass, fodder and roots from the wet districts. It is possible to grow roots and fodder even in the driest districts in the rainy months. These may be stored for use in the dry months.

Ham and Bacon.

We imported in 1911:—

		Rs.
Ham	...	131,500
Pork	...	5,000
Bacon	...	100,000
Total	...	236,500

Pigs are easily reared in Ceylon. All that is required is a little more attention.

Sugar.

We imported in 1911 sugar mainly from Java and China for over four million rupees. We even imported jaggery for R 127,744 from India. Our palm trees are so rich in sugar and it is but right that we should produce all the sugar we want. We do not even produce enough jaggery for home consumption. It must be noted that one hundred years ago (in 1811) we exported jaggery to the value of 19,230 rix dollars. (The purchasing power of a dollar then was over four times the value of a rupee to-day.) There is no trace of any import of jaggery during the early part of the 19th century.

Fruit sugar (jaggery belongs to this class) has a higher food value than cane sugar. It is very much to be desired that there should be a great stimulus given to the production of local sugar even in the crude form of jaggery. But plam sugar is capable of being refined like ordinary cane or beet sugar. Here again it will be interesting to note that the average retail price of sugar (white moist) in England during 1912 was according to the report issued by the Board of Trade as the result of an inquiry into the cost of living. 1¾ to 2d per pound, or 10 to 12 cents a pound. The average cost of sugar in Ceylon is about 16 cents a pound.

Poultry.

We imported in 1911 almost exclusively from India game and poultry for R. 125,000 and eggs for R 28,000. We also imported frozen poultry from other countries for R 30,000. Poultry rearing is by far the most profitable home industry; but it is not usually a good industry on a large scale "It is an industry adapted to the small holder, to the rearer for home consumption, or as an adjunct to the work of a large farm, but as an industry of its own it is never likely to be worked to advantage. There is no difficulty whatever in hatching any number of chickens, but when the young birds are crowded together and are living on tainted soil they invariably become diseased and die with extreme rapidity, The conditions of a crowded poultry run necessarily resemble those of an army encamped without due sanitary precautions, which cannot be adopted in the case of birds. The inevitable result is that they perish of diseases of a typhoid character, which are quite beyond the power of one to control or alleviate."

The annual income derived from the sale of eggs and poultry in France is said to be about £ 14,000,000 of which eight million pounds go for eggs (the figures are for 1894.) There are no poultry farms in France, the eggs and chickens being produced by the peasant proprietors. There is absolutely no reason why fowls should not be reared in every home where there is a small plot of ground available for that purpose—at least by meat eaters. It is an industry only suited for the home and entirely unsuited for big poultry farms.

Fish.

We imported fish for about 4½ million Rupees in 1911. The details are as follows:—

Fish cured and salted from India...	Rs.	2,172,662
Maldive Fish ...	"	2,166,946
Tinned Fish from Europe ...	"	135,177
Frozen Fish ...	"	17,266

There is an abundant supply of fish in our seas. The only thing that is wanted is more enterprise. "The sea is more productive of food than the land. It is probable that six times as much food can be drawn out of the sea in a single night as can be taken out of the same extent of land surface in a year". A few steam trawlers under proper management can supply all the fish wanted for home consumption. An old unseaworthy steamer which was found unfit for the coasting trade was used some 15 years ago for this purpose, but the owner sold the steamer as soon as he was able to find a purchaser outside Ceylon. In this connection it may be interesting to note what has been done in other Colonies. At the Cape of Good Hope, for instance, a properly equipped steam trawler, the *Pieter Faure*, was imported in 1897 with a view to opening up the fishing industry of the Colony. The work was of a most satisfactory nature; the trials proved that large quantities of fish were easily procurable by trawling. Private enterprise has followed the prospecting work of Government and the trawling industry is now firmly established. What has been so successfully achieved at the Cape might be accomplished here. It was stated some little time ago that a Ceylon Syndicate was to be formed for this purpose. Let us hope that it will soon become an accomplished fact and that it will begin work in the near future. There is ample scope for individual enterprise in this direction as the cost of a trawler is not prohibitive.

From the point of view of food supplies pisciculture is rapidly becoming an important industry in the world. In the United States a very large business is done in this direction. At the Cape the trout acclimatisation work is still being carried on by Government with a most gratifying measure of success and several rivers have now been opened for public fishing. The same thing may be attempted in Ceylon. New varieties of salt water fishes might be introduced into our lagoons

and fresh water fishes into our rivers and tanks and lakes.

At Mannar and Mullaitivu a fish curing industry already exists carried on by Negombo fishermen. It is capable of great expansion.

Wine and Spirits.

We imported in 1911 wines and spirits for nearly 2½ million rupees (according to the Customs valuation). This is another preventible loss, not for the reason that we can manufacture them, but for the very good reason that we ought to get on without them. It is sincerely hoped that the agitation for the prohibition of the drink traffic will be crowned with success in the near future. The use of liquor is a debasing thing which is prohibited alike by the code of religion and morality in all Oriental countries.

Among other imports for food we may mention

	Rs.
Biscuits	526 000
Cheese	94 000
Confectionery	365,000
Potatoes	665,000
Tobacco in all forms	653,000

We are even importing from India spices to this "spicy isle". We imported Cardamoms for R 24,500. One would have thought it was carrying coals to New Castle.

A little more attention to the curing and cultivation of tobacco will give us enough variety for home consumption and a large surplus for export.

Potatoes are successfully grown Up-country.

It may be asked whether it is not more prudent to produce what we can most conveniently grow, and import cheap food from outside. If tea, rubber, coconuts, cocoa, vanilla and cardamoms give us better returns than the cultivation

of the necessaries of life why should we not import the latter and grow what is more profitable ?

In the first place we are not in a position to import cheap food. Many articles of food are cheaper in Western countries than here. It must be noted that in Western countries a labourer is paid 3 or 4 times the wages of a Ceylon labourer. Yet the white labourer is able to buy nourishing food cheaper than the Ceylon labourer. We import our milk, butter, cheese, fish (tinned), jam, biscuits, meat (frozen and tinned) bacon from European countries or Australia—countries, be it noted, where the labourer earns a good deal more than in Ceylon. The result is that these articles which form the daily food of the Western labourer is outside the reach of our labourers. It is no wonder that the physique of the nation is degenerating.

In the next place it is sheer madness for any country which can produce its own food to depend on foreign countries for food supplies. But it is more so for an island like Ceylon, for in the event of a blockade of our coast by a foreign power our food supplies might be entirely cut off for months together. But even granting that war is a remote contingency—(though it is an ever present evil, judging by the manner in which European nations are arming themselves)—we cannot ignore the economic and commercial wars that other countries are continually waging. It is not four years since the tobacco industry in North Ceylon was threatened with extinction by the impossible tariff, which India imposed on the tobacco we exported to that country. The duty rose at one bound from Rs. 90 to Rs. 900. Sir Henry McCallum had to go on his knees to the Viceroy to get some relief for our tobacco growers, andfinally a compromise was arrived at by which it was agreed that Ceylon should not export to India more than 5,745 candies per annum. What has happened to our tobacco industry might hap-

pen to our other industries,—for we hold no monopoly in the production of tea or rubber and cocoanuts. A protective and preferential tariff imposed by foreign countries to encourage agriculture in their tropical Colonies will be a serious blow to our export trade.

Moreover, tea, rubber and coconut industries need not suffer in the least by reason of any encouragement given to the cultivation of food products. Most of the industries I have described do not require a large labour force. Poultry-farming to be successful must only be a home industry. Trawling would require less men than the present system of fishing. Dairy farming is also to a large extent a home industry and even for doing business on a large scale a large labour force is not wanted.

As regards paddy cultivation and the cultivation of curry stuffs, it is not more men that is wanted (though men will be available with the opening of the Indo-Ceylon Railway) but a more modern system of agriculture on the one hand and more energy and determination on the part of the agriculturists especially down south. It is as sad to see the Northern agriculturists "wasting days and weeks over a small patch of ground that would take but a few hours under-modern conditions" as to see the Southern agriculturists sit with folded arms trusting to the exuberance of nature, without making any effort to obtain a rich harvest. Paddy cultivation with expensive white labour has been proved to be a paying concern in the United States and in Italy. The "Ceylon Observer" pointed out in its issue of the 15th January that the United States which at one time depended entirely on India for its rice supplies and even now takes some of the finer qualities from there has hopes of an yield of just over half a million tons for the next season. Italy reckons on 492,126 tons. It cannot be said that an industry which is found to be profitable in white countries is profitless in Ceylon. The tea

and rubber industries are almost entirely in the hands of Indian labourers. There is a sufficient population in Ceylon to spare for rice cultivation; and in any case the average output of each farm labouer is capable of being increased three fold. Men should be trained to improved methods of cultivation; but what is more necessary is that by a compulsary system of education of the masses each individual should be made to feel that it is his patriotic duty to contribute his utmost to the national wealth by opening up the country for the production of the necessaries of life, so that our prosperity may not depend entirely, on the precarious fancy products which we now produce for export.

But above all, everything ought to be done, to quote the words of Mr. Asquith in his Swindon speech "to attract and retain our rural population to the land". They should be encouraged to become peasant proprietors. The present tendency of the peasant to sell his small farms to land speculators ought to be checked by every reasonable means. The greatest land grabbers are the Ceylonese capitalists from the maritime provinces; where Europeans buy up farms it is usually through the agency of Ceylonese middlemen who buy the lands from the villagers for a song and sell at a great profit to the European syndicates. The words of Sir West Ridgeway to the planters of Ceylon should be writ large at every mile-post in the Island and especially in the North-Western Province. Said he:—"I beg of you—may I implore you—never to buy the homestead of the villager. You may buy such outlying lands as are not necessary for his subsistence, but leave to him his cottage and his field. It could not be in your interests, any more than it is in the interests of the people themselves to transform respectable cultivating people living at your doors into vagrants and beggars". True words and minted from the heart; for in the words of Goldsmith

"—A bold peasantry, their country's pride
When once destroyed, can never be supplied."

Is it possible for us to produce all our food? Yes —if we set about it in earnest. "We've got the lands, we've got the men, and got the money too."

The Government has spent unstintingly—over 17 millions including cost of maintenance from 1867 downwards on irrigation works with the object of encouraging the cultivation of cereals and other like products; and it is prepared to spend a good deal more if only people would appreciate the benefits conferred on them in a more practical manner. The construction of the Northern Railway through a thick jungle was undertaken to a large extent with the object of opening that region for agriculture. The readiness with which Government accepted the Hon. Mr. Kanagasabai's motion for making an estimate of the probable cost of utilising the Mahawaliganga for the irregation of the North Central Province and the Wanni is striking proof, if proof indeed were wanted, of the continuing desire of Government to do everything in its power towards encouraging the cultivation of food products.

The opening of the Mannar Railway and the construction of the Giant's Tank near Mannar within about eight hours' journey from some of the cooly districts of India and the extreme probability of having cheap Indian labour for paddy cultivation in North Ceylon make the outlook distinctly bright; and the forest region north of Kurunegala is likely to become the granary of Ceylon. Sir Henry Blake, who founded the Agricultural Society took an enthusiatic interest in agriculture and exhorted the people in season and out of season to do likewise, so much so, that hewas misunderstood and it was openly said by some of those who opposed the "Ashmore Salaries Scheme" that he was trying to drive us back to the land for 'recruiting in Europe' for fat offices in Ceylon.In the true perspective of history his name

will loom large for his far sighted statesmanship in the matter of agriculture.

Much has been done by Government to bring about the desired end and I refer to the subject only because I want much more to be done both by the people and by the Government to accelerate the advent of that day when Ceylon shall be almost independent of India and of the world in the matter of food. A strong and well balanced public opinion is necessary to act as a driving power to even a genuinely sympathetic Government. It would strengthen the hands of those officers who are yearning to do more; it would rouse the sluggish to action. The Government has done so much for agriculture of its own initiative without any popular clamour or agitation, and sometimes even in spite of an opposition —feeble though it was—from a section who were dissatisfied with the comparatively unproductive nature of the expenditure.

The vast and useful work of Government in this direction is not as well known as it should be. Our school boys know more of the terms on which settlers are encouraged in Canada by the liberal offer of land in that distant continent, than our educated men know of the terms on which Government offers land under the tanks in Ceylon. How few of even the educated Ceylonese are aware of the existence of the proclamation of Government dated 6th March, 1909, which was published in the "Gazette" of 12th March, 1909. How many of the few who are aware of the existence of the proclamation are conversant with its terms. Should it not be known throughout Ceylon that Government "being anxious to promote the cultivation of land in the Wanni is prepared to consider applications for acquiring on lease and by purchase on exceptionally favourable terms, land in the Wanni," and that "liberal conditions are offered mainly with the object of attracting settlers to the Wanni and therefore are not offered to residents of the Wanni who already

possess sufficient land for the support of themselves and their families".

In matters of law, the guiding theory of Governments is that a proclamation, which has, been duly notified in the "Gazette," is known to every subject and even to foreigners. On this principle many innocent people are convicted every day all the world over for the breaches of laws of the existence of which they were never cognizant. Whatever be the justification for the presumption that laws proclaimed in the "Gazette" are known to every one, it is not wise to presume that a commercial notification in a single issue of the "Gazette" would be known to the population at large. Were it a sufficient notice—well, here is a tip to the manufacturers of Dr. William's Pink Pills.

Whereas we were taught at school in geographies and readers the terms on which lands are offered at Canada for settlers,—whereas we have read in many English newspapers and magazines, advertisements and special articles published from time to time at the expense of the Colonial Governments pointing out the very liberal offer of land and other concessions to settlers, we have to ascertain with difficulty the terms on which settlers would be welcome to the Wanni. Would that the administration of Ceylan were handed over to Sir Thomas Lipton for three years. He would have attracted to the Wanni, by a vigorous advertising campaign, a population of a million people by the end of his term of office and we would be exporting a surplus balance of some 5 million bushels of rice to Europe annually. What Lipton would have lost by a cheap offer of land and inviting concessions he would have gained by an increased revenue.

"The exceptionally favourable terms" referred to in the notice consists in the sale being of a hire purchase character;—the purchaser being allowed to pay the value by giving the Govern-

ment 1/5th the produce of the paddy at a Government valuation till the full purchase price is paid off. It is only the poor who can be induced to become settlers in the Wanni. Under the present system a would-be settler would have to make a long journey all the way to the Wanni, at his expense. If he happens to be a resident of Batticaloa or Hambantota he would have to travel something like 300 miles. Arriving at his destination he would have to spot out his land, say a block of 3 or 4 acres which is all that a poor family might be expected to cultivate, and then make an application to the Government Agent at his Kachcheri some 40 miles away. The application would have to be drafted by a petition-drawer who would charge his fees, and probably the land was pointed out by the irrigation headman for a small consideration. He would have then to wait for months till the short-handed Survey Department surveys the land. In the end he might find that some other person had bought the land at the auction. These terms might possibly be tempting enough for a rich speculator who would, if he does not part with it for a higher price, continue to be an absentee landlord. But they can never be attractive enough to the would-be peasant proprietors. What is wanted is a land sale office at the tanks. The available lands should be surveyed and divided into small blocks as in Canada where whole settlements are mapped out and the lots numbered before a single settler is on the land. An intending purchaser should be allowed to make his choice of the blocks and then sign a from at the land sale office located by the tank, agreeing to pay the price. The price should be fixed by Government beforehand. There should be no delay between selection of the block and allotment. The price should be recovered by instalments—produce being accepted in lieu of money. (These terms need not be offered to capitalists who can afford to make the application at the Kachcheri and buy the lands at

the auction. The favourable terms should also be reserved to Ceylon-born peasants and not to foreigners who might possibly come over with the opening of the Indo-Ceylon Railway.)

Large and commodious Madams to accommodate some 25 families should be built near the tanks, by the Government; but not after the model of the Railway cooly lines:—lines with Calicut tiles, low roofs, no verandahs, exposed to the scorching rays of the sun and to wind and rain are worse than cadjan sheds. A large and commodious Madam built partly of mud and thatched would amply serve the purpose. If built on contract it would not cost more than one thousand rupees Settlers should be allowed to live in the Madam for one year free of rent till they are able to build their houses. The Madam can be utilised later on for Government purposes. The Government should keep a dispensary at the spot; as it would be a waste of money to keep an irrigation officer and a dispenser where the population is not large, it would be desirable that for some years the dispenser should be irrigation officer, postmaster, headman, all combined. The Government should pay on the spot without delay the cost of felling the valuable timber trees which it claims. The dispenser-*cum*-irrigation offices should be supplied with seeds of economic plantr for free distribution among the settlers. The Government should also advance seed paddy on the security of the land and produce. Tracts of the Agricultural and Sanitation Departments specially written for the instruction of the settlers should be distributed among, and explained to them. Government should provide sufficient means of communication for the purpose of transporting the produce of the farms to the markets. In the first instance, a weekly bullock coach service, should be subsidized by Government where the settlement is over 12 miles from the nearest Railway Station. A settler might be

induced to run the coach. Reduced train-fares, both for goods and persons, should be charged from the settlers. Later, a school might be opened —the school hours being so arranged as not to interfere with the field work.

If our tanks had been restored by a Sinhalese or Tamil King he would have undertaken the cultivation of lands at the state expense till the settlers get reconciled to the land and become agricultural tenants in perpetuity. Though the state would continue to remain the owner of the soil (as was the case in most Asiatic countries) the tenant would have a heritable and alienable right to the cultivation of the soil. The state would only continue to recover the rent due to it as landlord from the cultivator. Our grain tax (now repealed) was nothing more than the landlord's share of the produce for ground rent.

Our system of land tenure has changed considerably. British statemanship, which was under the domination of an extreme *laissez faire* school for the last 100 years, is apparently still opposed to the state entering upon any agricultural or commercial enterprise, even though it be for doing merely pioneer work. If the principles of our Government, dictated as they are by the Colonial Office, cannot permit it to do what our ancient kings did, what the Dutch Government did in Ceylon and in doing is Java to-day, it must adopt itself to altered circumstances and imitate the self-governing Colonies and make a determined endeavour to attract population to the tanks. Government should do everything in its power to make life in the new settlements healthy and happy. People cannot be induced to become martyrs in a cause like this. They would not walk with open eyes into a hot-bed of malaria to face certain though slow death. It is the paramount duty of Government to reduce these terrors as such as is humanly possible; sanitation, model houses, medical attendance, cheap train-

fares are all necessary for attracting a population. Settles should be so cared for as to make them look upon Government not as an engine of taxation, but as a fostering guardian.

The instruction of children in practical agriculture by means of school gardens is a step in the right direction. Its importance consists not so much in the intrinsic value of the knowledge imparted, but in raising agriculture to its pristine dignity in the eyes of children. Practical instruction in Agriculture is not enough. What is more important is to impress on children that we are losing our rightful place in the empire by this preventible annual drain of 60 to 70 million rupees, and that our proper place can only be gained by each child feeling his importance as a national unit and by acting on the principle of Jonathan Swift that "whoever could make two ears of corn or two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind and do more essential services to his country than the whole race of politicians put together." What we need are school books specially written to suit our local conditions and not books that tell us about the agricultural prospects in Canada; school books that will inspire children with an unquenchable love for our country and make them take a patriotic pride in the growing of economic plants in their homesteads and farms. The prevailing notion that civilization must necessarily show itself by the presence of chrysanthemums and roses, pot palms and ferns round houses should be dissipated at the school-room.

Our girls are taught so live in a paradise of thread and needle: the making of pretty cushions and fancy embroidery are the only occupations in which refined ladies are permitted to indulge in during the moments they can spare from their regular occupations—novel reading, gossiping and piano playing. This apotheosis of the needle is

productive of much harm. Some practical instruction to girls when at school, in the rearing of poultry and the keeping of dairies would make us independent of the world in the matter of eggs, meat, milk and butter. The present prices which compare unfavourably with even Europe would go down greatly. The first essential to a nation's greatness is an abundant supply of nourishing food at cheap prices. Chrysanthemums and cushions are not without their uses. The cult of the aesthetic is not to be despised. But if boys and girls cannot take an equal delight in the blossoming of a chilly plant in their garden or in the romping of calves and the roaming of chickens in their compounds, the earth is not theirs or the fulness thereof.

Let us conclude in the words of Carlyle:—"Produce, produce, were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a product, produce it in God's name."

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By K. Balasingham.

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