

History.

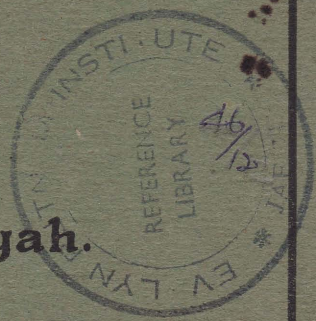
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# Ceylon Celebrities.

## LECTURE.

BY

Isaac Tambyah.



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## CEYLON CELEBRITIES.

LECTURE BY MR. ISAAC TAMBYAH (ADVOCATE.)

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February 15th, 1912.)*

A highly interesting and instructive lecture was delivered on Saturday afternoon at the Pettah Library Hall, by Mr. Isaac Tambyah, Advocate, on "Ceylon Celebrities." The Hon. Mr. J. R. Grenier, Puisne Justice presided. There was a goodly gathering of members of the Cinnamon Gardens Literary Association under the auspices of which the lecture was delivered, besides others.

The Hon. Mr. J. R. GRENIER said:—Gentlemen, I must apologise for being late. I think it was not my fault so much as the Railway people who had the gates closed for 10 or 15 minutes. I am glad to be present to-day to listen to the lecture by Mr. Tambyah who is known no doubt to many of you familiarly. The subject that he has chosen for his lecture is one which appeals very strongly to everyone of you. The choice is "Ceylon Celebrities." We always like to hear references to the past, the young or the aged, and in this particular instance I have no doubt that Mr. Isaac Tambyah will be able to give us a very lively and graphical description of people who have left their mark in this land, who have distinguished themselves in literature, in law, the medical profession and almost in every walk of life and it is with very great pleasure that we will be able to live a few minutes again with those who have lived so many years ago. (Applause.)

### **The Lecture.**

MR. ISAAC TAMBYAH:—Gentlemen, in Ceylon every one is more or less a celebrity according to the extent to which he can elicit newspaper attention. In these days of cheap journalism it is possible for a man to attract public attention. It often happens that the provincial correspondent is the maker of the celebrity upon no principle. I do protest against cheapness and this method of making celebrities. The celebrity is again not the person who

has the good fortune to find 'himself where he has no business to be. Fortunate mediocrity is very often a celebrity. It is one of the great perils to posterity. It will be one of the great perils if we don't differentiate between celebrities and celebrities, between the real and the stuff that is not genuine. A celebrity is a person who has impressed himself upon the history of his time, not necessarily by reason of the fact that he has amassed a considerable amount of wealth. In that case many men will be entitled to be called celebrities, and the worthier few will be left out. A celebrity is a person who does not always live though he might try to live in large type in cheap periodicals. Penny journals will relegate worthier men to the obscurity of 8 point or brevier type. A celebrity is one who though dead yet speaketh, whose influence has been not only for his time but for every age. He has made himself felt in his day and years after and whose words and deeds lived after him. A man being dead yet speaks. His chronicled doings worthily find a place in history. A man who is an example to many and an incentive to a large number. The outside scope of my remarks dealing with the living are left out for obvious reasons. It is a considerably difficult task to single out the living. There are several persons living who are making history. When the time comes they will be among the *role* of celebrities. I selected a few, just the typical instances, illustrative of certain outstanding characteristics, of the leading lives. I have not gone through a large number of persons of the past, for reasons of time. I have no right to tax your limits of endurance. I have to begin with somebody. In the theological order we find.

### **Dr. Quint Ondaatjie, 1758—1818.**

a person with a European fame. Professor G. W. Vreede of Utrecht says of him "In whatever light we consider Ondaatjie—as a student at our Universities—as the friend of Bellamy—or as a valiant Burgher, and patriotic reformer, whose zeal and energy aroused his contemporaries and exercised an unmistakable influence on the condition of the Netherlands in general, and of Utrecht in particular, his name will never be blotted out from the memory of the inhabitants of this country. It was in the East that he was born, and there too, after a distinguished career in the West, he found his last resting place. He stands unparalleled as the only Asiatic who figures in European History. He was the first Asiatic to take part in European politics. He had vigorous energy, enthusiasm, zeal and ardour. He was a Ceylonese born in Jaffna, the son of a minister who translated a great portion of the Bible into Tamil. The balance of the translation was taken up by de Melho, another member of the community to which Dr. Ondaatjie belonged. He went in 1778 to the Netherlands. At that time in Europe a great political struggle was going on and the people called for reform and insisted upon reformation, a new state of things, dissatisfied with the past, and they also wanted

Dr. Quint Ondaatjie, a member of the Commission of Reformation who made on that occasion a monster demonstration. Being chosen spokesman—an arduous office which his talents, eloquence and moral courage peculiarly fitted him to fulfil—he addressed the Lords thus:—“Noble and worthy Lords! the language of Utrecht’s Burghers in the hearing of your Noble Great Worships is not less plain and sincere, than their conduct in the view of all the world is calm and courageous, at a time when every moment seems lost that is not consecrated to the recovery of our lost rights, of our civic freedom, of which even the image is far to seek. While we have been blind enough to content ourselves with its faint shadow. We consider that this is not the place to plead excuses for our blindness. We takè sufficient shame to ourselves; over the history of our contemned and persecuted liberty a veil is drawn, a deep sigh tells the tale, and the presentiment of a joyful future almost brags oblivion of past misfortune. We should offend Your Noble Great Worships if we endeavoured to show what are the relative rights, what the relative duties of the people and their representatives. Your deeds are fully known, they can bear the light, they can stand the test of uprightness of truth, of faith and of patriotism and if this is not enough behold Noble and Worthy Lords, the moment is come to declare before the eyes of the world, before God and the people, the true principles which have mutually inspired us, to devote ourselves, with abandonment of all private interests, to the general welfare, the supreme law which we venerate in social life, and to sacrifice every thing for our civic liberty.” In 1785 the same year this speech occasioned his being summoned upon a citation for alleged treason. Notwithstanding all that the States were on his side. The result was that, in such a state of things war was brought about between factions and in 1787 a period of great trouble Dr. Ondaatjie took his degree of Doctor of Laws. He took up the side of the Citizens and fought for the right of the people. He was appointed to the Civil Service of the Netherlands and sent to Batavia. He died on his way to Batavia. He was longing for action. In everything he felt he had a duty to perform yet he was not able to fulfill it all. He had to respond to the call of death. His fiery restlessness and so much glory ended in so much sadness. It reminded one that “the paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

The next name that comes is

### **The Late Mr. Simon Casichetty,**

1807-1860. In one of the letters of Archbishop Bonjean it was said that “the world of letters has lost a brilliant scholar in the late Simon Casichetty.” He belonged to the Chetty Community as Dr. Ondaatjie. It is a matter of speculation and the suggestion has been made that the Chetty Community—the Colombo Christian Chetty Community, can trace their origin to the historical Hittites of Biblical times. Whatever may be the truth of this

theory it is clear that the community has furnished examples worthy of imitation. Philip de Melho just mentioned took up the translation of the Bible where Dr. Quint Ondaatjie's father left it and translated it from the original Hebrew, to acquire a knowledge of which was not so easy as at present. He also translated the New Testament into Tamil. Mr. H. F. Muthukrishna is another whose name will be associated with the *Theasavalamai* decisions. I do not feel that I could do justice by incidental reference. Mr. C. Brito the next was an Advocate, an eminent scholar a person well versed in English, Tamil and Latin.

Simon Casichetty was a man who had not his education in any great College not the advantage that Dr. Ondaatjie had. He was educated in Kalpentyn in one of the village schools. In 1822 it was his good fortune to become Tamil tutor to a literary Lieut. one Mr. Smith and from him he learnt English and laid the foundation for whatever knowledge he subsequently possessed. From that time he was a self-made man. It is good to know that between the years 1807 and 1820 there were no facilities for travelling and transport between Colombo and Kalpentyn and education was not in an advanced state then. Simon Casichetty was Interpreter and Chief Maniagar of Kalpentyn. Though he was a member of the Church of England, he got married to a lady of the Wesleyan community. It gave him the opportunity of being acquainted with men like Revs. Spencer, Hardy, Frear, all literary men. From 1830, he was the author of a large number of works, written on the "Castes of Ceylon," "Ethnology of the Moors" "History of the Mukkuvas," and the "Gazetteer" which is now out of date. He has written the Lives of the Poets or the "Tamil Plutarch" in 1850. He contributed to the "Colombo Journal" an article advocating a very liberal and generous employment of natives of the country to the higher departments of Government. He wrote:—"Assuming then that it is essentially necessary to advance the natives to offices of trust, to ensure the object which Government has in view of raising them from their debased state by holding forth the prospect of reward, I would humbly venture to propose that such offices, as are now held by the Dutch descendants shall be equally attainable by such natives of respectability, who possess the requisite knowledge for the due discharge of their duties. This system if gradually adopted would I feel assured, prove equally advantageous to Government because the native from the simplicity of living will be satisfied with a salary adequate to his expenditure, and it would besides supersede the necessity of interpreters—I say it will be beneficial to be governed, because when the natives find that a door has been opened for promotion, they will not be deficient in zeal to pursue the road to useful knowledge; there will be emulation among our youth, and thus candidates will not be found wanting, and the bond of attachment towards the Government will be strengthened."

The words of this article—*Mutatis Mutandi* may apply to modern times with the changes made to present day obligations. In 1836, he was nominated Member of the Legislative Council and it is clear from the records which I have had access to, that there were no public meetings or memorials in those days. The Governor appointed members to the Council. In 1843 to his great sorrow he lost his wife. That brought on a great change in his life. He felt the solitariness in spirit very much and was wanting in comfort. While attending Council Meetings in Colombo, he had occasion to drop in at St. Lucia's Cathedral. He heard the *Angelus* bell and while yet a Protestant he felt a great peace coming over him. In his soul the *Angelus* pealed its peace at eventide. After that he left Protestantism and he said to himself "I will give up the Errors." His soul was filled with peace—"peace which passeth all understanding."

I come now to the life of

### **Mr. Lorenz, 1829—1870.**

He contributed very largely to the history of his time, as Richard Morgan used to say, he was the man whom his country might well be proud of. His versatile genius, his brilliant accomplishments, his public and private virtues commanded the respect and admiration of all. He was born at Matara. In 1847, when barely eighteen he had the good fortune to be introduced to Dr. Elliott of the "Observer" and through him to Revs. McVicar, Gogerly, Hardy and Palmer. At the same time while pursuing as was his natural bent a literary career, he took to the study of Law. We find that at his eighteenth year he was so hard at work that it was thought his health would break down. In 1849 notwithstanding prophecies to the contrary, he passed out as Proctor of the Supreme Court, the youngest proctor during his time. In 1850 his literary tendencies brought out the magazine "Young Ceylon" a magazine which during its brief but brilliant career had quite a large number of literary contributors. In 1852 he went to England and was called to the Bar. He spent three years in Europe. He visited Amsterdam and there he saw the original manuscripts of Vander Keesel six volumes. In 1855 the only translation of it was made by him, which though criticised recently at the Cape is still the only translation to be found. On his return from England he was offered the District Judgeship of Chilaw, which he accepted, but he was not long there as he got heartily sick of official trammels and sought for freedom. The result was that in 1859 he purchased the rights of the "Ceylon Examiner" which he conducted. In 1864 he was made a Member of the Legislative Council. I have occasion to refer to Mr. James de Alwis who during this interesting period in the Legislative Council with Messrs. Lorenz and George Wall were responsible for the Ceylon League, a very liberal movement in Ceylon then which might probably be called revolutionary in these days. What impression one forms about Mr. Lorenz is the

fact that he had contributed largely to the mirth of the people. He was a close student of Chas. Dickens. He has been at all times preaching and practising the duty of cheerfulness. Like Carlyle he would say "one hearty laugh and then for ever be damned." Lorenz had great faith in being jolly and contributing to make people cheerful. His intense joyousness was a joyousness, that subordinated everything else. Very many stories are told of him in this connection. I would refer to two instances from records to which I had access. He was pleading before Sir Carpenter Rowe, the canvas ceiling was slowly coming down. He was arguing an appeal, everybody's attention was rivetted on his speech. Suddenly the ceiling came down. He closed his appeal and added *Fiat justitia ruat ceiling!* (Laughter). Another instance is that of a case in which the defendant and plaintiff were brothers named Arkade. Justice Temple before whom they were arraigned wished to know who the parties were. Lorenz promptly replied they were "*arcades ambo!*" (Laughter). He was a writer of verse. I refer to what he wrote of a personal nature, a clever poem addressed to Mrs. Charsley, his doctor's wife:—

Dear Madam, the pill box I send you per bearer  
Contains a small present for you;  
Intended as eardrops to hang to you ear, or  
To set off your hair's raven hue.

Your husband, he cured me when ill of bronchitis,  
And declined to accept any fee;  
For being a fellow of learned Societies,  
He was a good fellow to me.

Says the Doctor, "If ever I fall among thieves,  
And be tried for my life at the dock,  
I'm sure you will defend me without any fees,  
And save my poor neck from the block."

I agreed—but my rule at the bar was at stake;  
No rule you may say is absurder;  
But I never did a very bad case undertake,  
And always fought shy of a murder,  
When a murderer expected a witness attacked,  
Or the Judge or the jury harangued;  
I've always returned his money intact,  
And desired him to go and be hanged.

Now I know that your husband though of Doctors  
the Chief,  
Is not given to murdering his fellows;  
And I'll never have the chance of declining the brief,  
Or sending him off to the gallows.



So say I to the pearls, "As there's never a chance,  
Of the Doctor being tried for his life ;  
Instead of the Doctor go you and he hanged,  
On the ears of the Doctor's wife.

### Sir Richard Morgan, 1820—1876.

MR. DORNHOST said, "So long as Ceylon enjoys law and good Government, so long will Sir Richard Morgan's name occupy a prominent place in her annals, for so staunchly and unselfishly has his whole life been devoted to the improvement of the laws of his country that he may well be styled Ceylon's law giver."

In the early days of his life in the Academy during Rev. J. Marsh's time he was a follower of method even to the extent of keeping a diary. His diary is valuable up to this day. The leading characteristic of Sir Richard was his literary accomplishments as a writer. He began writing on Ceylon a comprehensive history of the kind of people, of all sorts and conditions giving statistics, &c. He then wrote the "History of Ruth" in 1836. In that he said of Ruth "she was but a woman, one of a sex in whom the virtue of constancy is not very common." In 1837 his journalistic tendencies manifested themselves. He began writing from an early age. He organised the formation of a periodical, and raised funds for starting a paper called "the Weekly Serendib" It did not proceed further than the prospectus stage. Perhaps Sir Richard Morgan put by some money for the purpose. He launched the "Ceylon Herald." He regretted the venture. He found the newspaper was likely to be used for other purposes than it was intended to be. He endeavoured to introduce a calm, moderate and gentlemanly tone of discussion in it. He wrote that "Barring a little vanity to show myself off, I may say that those were my motives, yet it is nevertheless a step which I must regret. The temptation is so strong at times to indulge in personalities, to display a momentary sally of wit at the expense of personal feelings, to retaliate when insulted, that to conduct a newspaper requires a man of the most uncompromising principle, of the nicest sense of propriety and honour and of the firmest determination.....I have made many enemies, I have injured the feelings of many and in return I have also been publicly exposed and abused."

In 1848 there was what has since been called the "Great Rebellion." On that occasion there was very great amount of feeling, in Kandy against the Editor of the "Ceylon Observer." Then the "Friends of Ceylon" met in Colombo presided over by Morgan, and a resolution was passed that the people of Colombo, rather the people of Ceylon, are of opinion that the attempt to suppress the "Ceylon Observer" was one of the most cowardly of actions. They warmly carried the resolution to present the case before Government. In 1855 he was made a Barrister *honoris*

*causa*, like another very distinguished countryman the Hon. Mr. P. Ramanathan. In 1861 he was made Attorney-General. In those days the Attorney-General was allowed to practise and on his appointment there was firing of guns. In 1863 the discussion as to the policy of appointing natives of Ceylon to the high office of Attorney-General was started and by pressing on the claims of Ceylonese the result achieved was that Sir Richard Morgan was confirmed in his post. In Council he appeared for the Government, being Attorney-General against the Ceylon League, the moving spirit of which was Lorenz who in Council tried to introduce what may be called "morality by legislation." He tried to prevent drunkenness by the introduction of an Ordinance affecting the sale of intoxicants. Sir William Gregory, the Governor who warmly supported said on that occasion "There was a time when a drunken Kandyan would have been disgraced in the eyes of his fellows—there was a time." He spoke of distinction of caste, which was occasioned by the fact that some jurors declined to sit with others empanelled to sit. It would be considered a folly in the twentieth century and we could smile at the narrow prejudices of 1864. The prejudices were so strong that Sir Richard Morgan referring to the matter said: "If mischief has been shown to have risen from this system of classification, the time is then come for the Council to interfere, The Council now for the first time makes a law upon the subject. When trial by jury came into operation, I allow *then* was the proper time; because, Sir, it strikes me that the toleration of caste is perfectly incompatible with the enjoyment of free institutions; it is opposed to the fundamental principle of the British constitution which declared that all men are equal and as long as in practice we disregard this principle, so long are we totally unfit for the privilege of trial by jury, aye, of any free institution." In 1874 he was appointed Chief Justice and was the first Burgher Knight. Mr. Ferdinands said of him "We esteem him no less his private virtues as for his public acts." Sir Richard Morgan was not only a learned man he was also religious. He was really religious in the strict sense. It is possible that following the law as a profession, Sir Richard Morgan lived a religious life with the life secular. He was also public spirited. He took part in all the great movements of the day. He has bequeathed to Ceylonese a great example.

### **Mr. James de Alwis, 1823—1878.**

was pre-eminently a man of letters. Having been up to his 13th year under many masters he joined the Academy in 1837 during the regime of Governor Mackenzie, who was a great and warm friend. He joined the "Ceylon Herald" but unfortunately Mackenzie Ross, who was proof-reader and advertisement clerk receiving 30 shillings and for occasional articles another 30 shillings, was responsible for a libel action brought by the

Governor in 1839. The libel was spoken of as "rancour and venom which brought Man down to the serpent tribe." The circumstances under which Mr. Jas. de Alwis came to be a man of letters is related by him thus:—"On being introduced to the judge, I took my seat next to my friend Mr. Abeyesinghe, Interpreter; and, on being bidden so to do, I rose on my legs to convey to a party what the Judge had to say. I could scarcely utter three words before I felt my inability to proceed, Mr. (now Sir) Dias prompted me; but the help thus proffered only added to my wild confusion. My tongue was tied, my head was in a whirl and I sat down amidst the laughter of that class of men who generally take a pleasure in the failings of their fellow-creatures. To account for my failure; in the first place, I had not been accustomed to appear in public.....in the second place, I was utterly ignorant of legal terms.....in the next place, I was not sufficiently acquainted with Sinhalese. My failure was one for my good, for I soon became sensible of my deficiencies, and at once resolved to abandon all ideas, at least for a time of becoming an interpreter, and devote my earnest attention to the study of the Sinhalese language." The resolution after the failure resulted in making him the greatest Sinhalese scholar of his time. The study of the vernaculars must be encouraged in these days also, instead of taking delight in inserting obscure French phrases, After his failure as Interpreter he studied under Mr. Chas Beling, Proctor to whom he apprenticed himself. In 1884 although he had obtained the certificate he was condemned as too young for a proctor. They were days when there was no Council of Legal Education. In 1845 he appeared before the Board of Examiners and it is recorded that one Mr. Giffening, an old, narrow-minded but clever Roman Dutch lawyer asked him "Why man, do Sinhalese try to become lawyers, when their proper place is to cultivate paddy fields?" He was as determined to become a lawyer and desired to quote *Quintus Sincinnatus ab aratro rocatas ad dictaturam venit*, but he suppressed his words and merely said "Sir, I have no paddy fields." The year 1845 was one of great prosperity in the profession. In 1861 he became member of the Legislative Council. In an entry in his biographical records, we read:—"As business brought in large sums of money, I was most anxious to entertain friends at dinner which I did rather frequently. My friends were chiefly Burghers, with a sprinkling of the Sinhalese, and for the simple reason I was not overpleased with the conduct of my Clans-men who often made unkind remarks. I remember, among my friends, James and George Stewart, Richard Morgan, J. Drieberg, William Morgan, William Stork, Archibald Andree, F. de Saram, J. Maartensz, P. J. L. Vanderstraaten."

As member of the Legislative Council he figured in the Session of 1864 which was opened by Major-General O'Brien, in the absence of the Governor and was one of great political and legis-

lative interest. It was a time when the Council had, among the unofficials, the veteran champion of our national liberties and hero of paddy tax fame, Mr. George Wall. There was a hot debate touching the reply to the address. Mr. Wall, we are told, opened the debate with a long speech of more than two hours duration. To the reply he proposed to add three paragraphs. The first was:—"That considering the important measures taken by the Council at the last Session, and the deep interest and anxious concern felt by all the members in regard to the military expenditure they feel slighted by the entire silence of the Government upon the subject in the address." Mr. Eaton seconded the motion, which was however lost. Mr. Alwis writes.—"Wall had the presence of mind, encouraged as he was by Lorenz to put me to move the insertion of the following paragraph":—"That the Council acknowledging with thankfulness the prosperity of the Island consider it attributable entirely to the high values the staple articles of its produce have for several years maintained in the markets of the world and to private effort, and not to any encouragement of industrial enterprise by Government." Mr. Capper having seconded the motion in a short speech, a debate took place including Lorenz, Eaton, and Wall on one side; Morgan, Gibson, and the Surveyor-General on the other. The result was again as before. The third paragraph was then read out by Mr. Wall:—"That this Council desire to record their dissatisfaction and discontent that revenues have been exacted for several years, so far beyond the requirements of the public purposes: and they further complain that whilst the revenue have been so abundant, the efficiency of nearly every public department has been seriously impaired by the parsimonious policy of Government" This was seconded by Mr. Alwis in a long speech. The Government Agent Western Province, Mr. (afterwards) Sir Chas. Peter Layard supported the unofficial side. Being put to the vote the motion was carried. Then there is the period of the "Ceylon League." He was in Council a second time in 1873 when the question of military estimates, once rejected by the all but unanimous consent of the Council, was, by order of the Secretary of State, re-introduced with instructions to see it passed. The distinguished Ceylonese scholar reputed over both hemispheres died in the year 1878. There is one passage in his diary which shows the liberal views he held in all matters especially on the question of pride of birth, pedigree and ancestry. "There are four generations with which the most devout believers in the doctrine of the transmission of family qualities are content amongst Europeans. Asiatics insist upon an unbroken chain of seven generations of family descent. The social question, involved in the above custom, has a very baneful effect on Society. To it may be traced the exclusive social privileges arrogantly claimed by a few families, whose numbers may be counted on one's fingers. To the unreflecting mind this social distinction presents a formidable bar-

rier, against the elevation of the masses in the social scale—the greatest and highest duty of every free State, and the happiest and noblest privilege of every philanthropist and patriot. If as Englishmen do in England or Kandyans in the uplands, the higher classes of our countrymen of the maritime provinces of Ceylon will reflect on the immense injury which they do themselves, by their exclusiveness and by circumscribing the limits of their already narrow society, they will not long fail to extend the hand of fellowship to men who occupy the position which, a generation or two before, they themselves held.” We are reminded that fruits not roots should be the standard. The Scotch bard Burns has the following :—

The rank is but the guinea's stamp,  
The man's good for a that ;  
The Prince can make a belted knight,  
A Marquis, Duke and a' that ;  
The pith of sense and pride of worth,  
Are higher things than all that.

### Sir Muttu Cumaraswamy, 1820—1879.

The Editor of the “Observer” in 1879 said. “We loose in Sir Muttu Cumaraswamy indisputably the foremost man of the thirty milions or more of the Dravidian race.” He was the first Tamil to be knighted ; the first Tamil whose literary attainments culture called for European recognition. He was the first Ceylonese non-Christian to be called to the Bar in England. He was the first Ceylonese for political aspirations on an imperial scale. He aspired to enter the English Parliament. In 1860 he was made Member of the Legislative Council. He made a careful study of statistics and marshalled facts, and amassed much information. He was known for his mastery of language, clearness of diction and frank fearlessness of expression. Sir Muttu Cumaraswamy was a model for future legislators. In 1862 he went on a trip to Europe for three years. He was called to the Bar. He had occasion to do the translation of a Tamil poem dedicated to Queen Victoria. In 1865 the League troubles arose and all the members had resigned. There was no Tamil member. Mr. J. H. Eaton acted as Member in Council to represent the Tamils. Mr. Cumaraswamy was asked whether he would resume his seat, he accepted for expediency's sake and resumed the seat. Mr. Lorenz wrote :—

Samy, Coomasamy,  
He is a friend of Palmerston,  
Samy, Coomasamy  
He don't care what *harm is done*.

In the Council he opposed the Kandyan Marriage Ordinance 1870 without success, the Gansabhawa Ordinance which gave

people a sort of semi self Government, and the Queen's Advocate's private practice. In regard to short sessions of the Legislative Council he gave utterance to the sentiments, which deserve quotation :—

“ Our duty is thus twofold. We meet here not simply to make laws. We have an additional work imposed upon us of watching the general welfare of the country. To fulfil both these duties a session of three months duration is quite inadequate. The work of five or six months could not well be done in two or three, and those who curtailed the time possibly had for their object the suppression of all discussion under the XVI Section. But this would be to strike at the root of the constitution, and we should all jealousy watch that none of our privileges are forfeited. There was once amidst us a statesman—Governor who took a liberal view of things. His opinion on this matter ought to have some weight.”

He gives the dates when Sir Henry Ward opened and closed the Council during his administration and quotes the following :—  
“ There is no more important institution in the Island than this Council. Whatever be the estimation in which it is held by the official or unofficial community here, I know that it is held in high esteem by English statesmen, who, look to it as the centre of much good. Mr. Bright has referred to it in eulogistic terms. And on the extension of English Liberalism, as involved in the establishment of Colonial Councils, even Lecky the historian, has many a thrilling period. It will be a disgrace therefore that in a British dependency, any misunderstanding should prevent the development of liberal institutions, of which Englishmen are so proud that they have conferred them on us; and of which the natives of this country should be equally proud, in that they find in them the sentiments of self-government.”

His greatest speech was upon the debate on the dis-establishment of the Church of England in Ceylon. He said he was a Christian at heart though Hindu born. He married an English lady in order perhaps to justify his ambition to enter Parliament. He had a wider conception of politics. He translated the *Dhattu Vansa*, the *Suttā Nipatha* referred to as authorities, which are found in the old Edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica.

I have next to refer to

### **Sir Samuel Grenier 1840—1892.**

He was educated at Jaffna. St. John's and St. Peter's claim the distinction of having educated him. He was intended for the Ministry, the Wesleyan Ministry, but gave up the idea on some question of the status of a native minister occupying under the regulations of the Wesleyan Mission. He articulated himself to Lorenz and took up law. In 1862 he applied for the Secretaryship of the District Court of Jaffna, on the death of his father, but was

not successful. His literary tendency was observed in his earliest years. In 1863 he joined the "Ceylon Examiner." Dr. Vanderstraaten in 1892 said:—"It was from the ranks of journalistic literature that he carved his way to the proud eminence he succeeded in attaining in the profession, to which he belonged *primus inter pures*. And if in later life, he had to subordinate his love of literature to the imperious demands on his time by the exigencies of public and professional duties, he never lost his interest in Literature." The words of Dr. Vanderstraaten are of importance to our literary Ceylonese. In 1864 he became an Advocate of the Supreme Court. In 1865 he was appointed Secretary of the Colombo Municipal Council. In 1893 his career at the Bar really began. His contemporaries were Messrs Dias and Ferdinands, who gave him a great deal of encouragement. In 1881 he was appointed to the Supreme Court Bench, three years later he was called to the Bar in England, Inner Temple. In 1886 he was nominated a member of the Legislative Council in place of the Hon. Mr. Jas. VanLangenberg (Senior). In 1888 he was Attorney-General and four years later in 1892 he was knighted. I must draw attention to the character of Sir Samuel Grenier, his determination of building something on a basis of small beginnings. This reminds one of Sir Muttusamy Ayer of Madras.

"Not left in God's contempt apart,  
With ghostly smooth life, dead at heart,  
Fame in earth's paddock as the prize,  
Thank God, no paradise is barred to entry.

Sir Samuel Grenier's life illustrates the possibilities of singleness of purpose. There was no duality of existence in him. Dr. Brito in 1892 said:—"Great men we have had, but if great in one way, they were wanting in other ways. We see portrayed in Sir Samuel Grenier's character true excellence: Neither in private nor in public did his character suffer in estimation." The Hon. Mr. P. Ramanathan, said:—"When certain professional qualities were found to thrive on a foundation of kindness, conciliation and integrity; it is no wonder that his claims to the esteem and even affection of the Sovereign and the people were held to be irresistible." Dr. Vandort in 1892 said of him that he was a gentleman in the true sense of the word—one of Natures true noblemen.

And thus he bore without abuse  
The grand old name of gentleman  
Defamed by every charlatan  
And soiled with ignoble use.

From Hultsdorf, the stormy citadel of the law, and from the din and rattle and carnage of the battle field of politics let us pass into the transcendent peace of the Church. That

## Archbishop Bonjean

was in no manner a Ceylonese is well-known, yet he was long identified with us, as to be one of us. He was born the same year as James de Alwis and died the same year as Sir Samuel Grenier. He was meant to be a lawyer by his father the Councilor of the High Court of Riom, who desired that his son Christopher should adopt the profession of which he himself was a distinguished member. "But he who was proposed unto higher ends was called from the probability of becoming his own people's lawgiver, to be not only the Moses, but the Aaron of a chosen nation, far away from his country and kindred..... The wisdom that blessed him with the best and beautifullest of the blessings of time—to minister to others, and not to be ministered unto—dimmed his eyes to the kingdoms of the World, and the glory of them ; and shewed him in his last days only, from the Pisgah of his Archiepiscopal labours, a view of the Canaan of Earth's passing greatness, as the earnest of the more abiding glories of a better Land." Thus from the Nazareth of the Northern Province out of which it is, I am told and assured in the South, no good or greatness comes, Bonjean came. The Boake controversy is well known in certain Latin words. If the reported results of the controversy is to be relied upon, Father Bonjean had certainly emerged victorious. In 1868 from Jaffna he wrote on the "Inopportunist Theory of Papal Infallibility," an invaluable contribution commended by 42 Archbishops and bishops as the most conclusive testimony in favour. Should through an unforeseen circumstance the memory of Archbishop Bonjean die out in Ceylon, it will still live for ever in the annals of the Occumenical Council of the Vatican. In the year 1877-78 during an epidemic of cholera Father Bonjean rendered great service going about doing good. His name is remembered with esteem and reverence by all classes and people. He was a great educationist. He contended for the Board of Education in 1864 and we to-day have that Board an accomplished fact. Speaking on the education of girls he writes : "She must not be a slave nor an idol either, she is to be educated not spoiled ; refinement becomes ; her excessive indulgence does not ; knowledge befits the helpmate of the man and the first teacher of the young family the pedantism of a blue stocking sits badly on her ; .....My great object would be to impress this matter on the girl that woman no less than man is born for toil and labour and not for mere enjoyment, that the glory of a true woman is in *sacrifice* and one of her brightest jewels is unselfishness." Education of the masses and their improvement was advocated by him. Archbishop Bonjean acted up to his motto ; the history of his life is a record of sacrifices. Ceylon may come to forget the name of Christopher Bonjean, the echoes of his voice may grow fainter, the fiery glow of his language may burn itself out in the course of the ages ; and the halo of thunder and earthquake that encircles his individuality may fade away from the recollection of posterity.



but neither time nor the infinite beyond can blot out the work and life of one who, content to be poured out as a libation, strive to live up to his own motto" *Impendam et Superimpendam*.

Gentlemen, I am conscious that I have not gone through biographical lives of all the great men of Ceylon owing to the exigencies of time, patience and other considerations. I could not give that degree of fulness to each celebrity as to satisfy the most fastidious tastes, but as much as was gathered from materials to which I had access, The lecture is not full but fragmentary. The salient features of a few typical lives have been taken. Sir Muttucumarasamay's life showed that he aspired to imperial ambition and citizenship of the world. Mr. Alwis impresses the fact that man makes his ancestry. Sir Samuel Grenier has a stand-out feature, and that is determination, Casiechetty was a man of letters, of literary bent. Lorenz taught the duty of joyousness: Morgan complete citizenship; Ondaatijie courage unconquerable and Bonjean sacrifice. I find there are

### Many Names Omitted.

Pandit Batuwantudawa, Goonetilleke, the Editor of the *Orientalist*, Arumugan Navalar, a Hindu poet, C. M. Fernando, Mudaliyar Rajapakse, C. H. de Soysa, Dunuville, James Stewart, George Wall, A. M. Ferguson, Harry Dias, H. L. Wendt, J. L. Vanderstraaten snr., There is a lamentable lack of biographical data. I beg to suggest that somebody should make up his mind to collect the materials and write a book or a series of books on Ceylon celebrities. People of Ceylon are said to be lamentably wanting in a historic sense. Lives of great men are cherished in every country and preserved. Individual life is often the history of a community, at least its honour and glory. A book is wanted and he who writes one will confer great benefits on the present and future generations, for,

"Lives of great men all remind us,  
We can make our lives sublime." (Applause.)

### Vote of Thanks to the Lecturer.

Dr. M. SINNETAMBY.—Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen, I have been asked to propose a vote of thanks to the learned lecturer. I have not been given due notice and the prospect of having to propose the vote of thanks makes me feel diffident. My feelings are of diffidence, pride and pleasure. I cannot speak very well, because I experience some of the feelings which Mr. Alwis experienced when he was for the first time in the Supreme Court. (Laughter.) My pride and pleasure of mind is in saying that I express the gratitude of the Cinnamon Gardens Literary Association for the honour they have done me in asking me to propose the vote of thanks to Mr. Tambyah who has entertained us with a really intellectual treat and who has the rare gifts and qualities

that go to make an ideal lecturer (applause.) His literary attainments, his exalted facility of diction, his knowledge of persons, his oratorical powers eminently qualify him to speak with authority on "Ceylon Celebrities." Mr. Tambyah is a very modest man. He has not included the living celebrities in his list and if I were the lecturer I certainly will include Mr. Tambyah on the top of the list (applause) because there are a good number of celebrities in Ceylon who have not come up to the lime-light of public attention. Mr. Tambyah is one of them. Perhaps he has not appealed to the Ceylon Press. His modesty has prevented him from doing so. We owe him a deep debt of gratitude for coming here to-day and giving us a lecture on the lives of Ceylon Celebrities. I am sure all present here will gratefully and unanimously accord him a hearty vote of thanks. (Continued applause.)

Mr. RUFUS MENDIS seconded the resolution which was carried with acclamation.

### Mr. Grenier's Remarks.

The CHAIRMAN.—My remarks will be brief, because the lecturer has dealt with a subject which is not only interesting in itself but interesting to those who might claim either to be related to the persons referred to in the lecture or be acquainted with them in any way. When I came here this afternoon I had no idea that the lecture would be so interesting. With some of these celebrities I am glad to say, I was personally acquainted. I knew nothing about Quint Ondaatjie, such a great fighter, who went to Holland and enlisted the sympathies of the Hollanders and who had been looked upon with great admiration and respect by aliens, but in my young days I heard very frequently of him from a clergyman of the Church of England of the same name the Rev. Simon Jurgen Ondaatjie of Colombo. He was of the same spirit as Quint Ondaatjie—a great fighter. He preached very able sermons and delivered them with very great force. He had the habit of coming down from the pulpit and asking the people for their opinion of his sermon (laughter.) On one occasion—I was then a little boy at St. Thomas' College—I met him after his sermon. I knew what he would ask me. He asked me what I thought of his sermon. I answered that it was a splendid sermon. From that time he referred to me as a very nice young boy (loud laughter.) Next to the Rev. Ondaatje, comes Mr. Cassichetty. Well I did not know him, but I knew a distant relation of his Mr. J. J. Cassichetty who was a Police Magistrate. He was a very learned man. He translated books of old Dutch Jurists. He reproduced in the best classical English the old Dutch version of what the law was on certain subjects. Well I do not know whether these two gentlemen belonged to the Chetty Community of Colombo or were the descendants of the Hittites, Saivites or any kind of *ites* (laughter.) They have left behind them proud examples of attention to work strict integrity of character which we might think and cherish in

these days. There were some others incidentally mentioned by Mr. Tambyah to whom I was personally known. Mr. Muthukrishna—an excellent man kind-hearted, and gentle, was associated with me in the Bar. In the District Court then the practice was divided between us. I held him in the greatest regard and esteem and when he left the Bar to go elsewhere I felt it to be a great personal loss. There was another reference to Mr. Muthukrishna when I was a little boy in Jaffna, very many years ago—some people want

### To Make Out that I am Very Old

I used to go to the Supreme Court to hear the speeches of Counsel. Very often I was turned out by the peons, especially when there was an objectionable case going on. I watched Mr. Muthukrishna the Deputy Queen's Advocate, make splendid speeches. By his expressive words he very often obtained the verdict for the Crown, by the way in which he presented the case and by the way he cross-examined his witnesses. It was a pleasure to hear him speak or address the Jury. These are the men I knew in the years gone by. Then there is the reference to Mr. James Alwis. When I joined the Bar Mr. Alwis was about to retire. He used to come to the Courts very frequently but had little practice in the District Court and his practice consisted in asking for postponements (laughter.) I believe it was to enable him to give his time for the engrossing study of literature that he got away. Invariably the postponements were readily granted. I remember his appearing once in the Supreme Court. The Deputy Queen's Advocate presented the indictment to the Jury. Mr. Alwis in addressing the Jury said that the indictment was the most awful piece of tom-foolery he had ever heard in all his life. This angered the Queen's Advocate who told Mr. Alwis that if he had any objection to the indictment he was not to address the Jury as they had nothing to do with the law. "Very well" said Mr. Alwis. "I repeat that the indictment is the greatest piece of tom-foolery I have heard in all my life." (Laughter.) I think he was successful in getting his client off. He could put up a good fight always. Standing with a look of defiance at the Bench or the Bar mincing his words, he was altogether an effective speaker, one whose words were considered very weighty both by the Bench and the Bar. Sir Richard Morgan, of whom I have a very clear recollection impressed me as a man of ponderous build presiding at the Appeal Court. His appearance added weight to dignity. He had such a big and massive face. Whenever he addressed the Bar they were all attention. As regards Lorenz, I was in his house a week before his death. His intellectual face was looking pale. He did me an act of kindness which I will never forget. I was a young lad. I don't mind mentioning it. It was nothing to be ashamed of. There was place vacant in the Customs—a clerkship. I asked Mr. Lorenz for a letter to the

Collector Mr. Halleley. "My dear boy Mr. Lorenz said. I gladly give you this letter. Mr. Halleley is a very great friend of mine! I am sure he will do every thing he can for you." He sat down and wrote the letter. He gave the letter but I never got the place. It is perhaps lucky it was so. If I got it, I would be somewhere now in some obscure place; I would not be occupying the high position I now hold. That was Lorenz all over. Kind-hearted and affectionate, he lived a life of joyousness, invested the spirit of jollity all over the place. Wherever he went he used to make them happy—men, women, children. It was

### **A Distinct Loss to the Community.**

that he died. As regards the other gentlemen persons of whom Mr. Thambyah spoke one was Archbishop Bonjean. I remember the time that he was in Jaffna, a priest not very many years ago. I remember hearing him deliver a lecture. He was a great friend of my brother. They were always together and a very warm friendship existed between them due perhaps to the common French blood in them. Samuel Grenier was his best friend to the last. I remember him making a speech. He was a very indifferent speaker and stammered. Fortunately he sat down. Years afterwards when I was an Advocate I appeared against him in that famous Madhu Church case. I had to cross-examine this venerable prelate. Some feeling of awe I felt because I could not bear to think of having to put any question to this prelate standing before me. I however went on with my work and I met the Archbishop afterwards and he greeted me most heartily, made no reference whatever to my cross-examination, nothing about the subject at all. Ever since we had always remained friends. A circumstance I could remember, is that he used to pass my house every evening and now and again he gave me a call. Few in Ceylon can have the large intellectual capacity he had. He was not only a learned man, he was a man of deep thought, a great speaker, a splendid English scholar. One could hardly say that. Notwithstanding the fact, most people who are foreigners write and speak English better than the English themselves. This is due to the fact that they speak classical English from books they read largely. Bishop Bonjean in his noted controversy with Dr. Boake emerged victorious and Rev Boake was very badly beaten, worse than any boy he had beaten in the school. With reference to that portion referring to my brother it won't be right on my part to say anything more than to thank Mr. Tambyah for the way in which he referred to him. We had to fight our way inch by inch, never to falter and the greatest obstacles placed in our way we overcame. I think this is the great secret of success. Never acknowledge to be beaten. The darkest clouds hanging over our heads will pass away if you are determined. (Applause.) The next reference is to Mr. Muttucumaraswamy, a person I did not know, but I have seen him. The impression made in my

mind, personally I mean, is that he was a man with a stoop : wore his hair long. He had a very keen intellectual face. I had very often seen him passing by : he was always pointed out as Mr. Muttucumaraswamy. I saw him after he was knighted,—that was years ago. I remember reading his speeches in Council. Even now I take great pleasure to go over the speeches of older men,—the celebrities of old. I thank you all for the great kindness in asking me to be present this day. The chair was to be filled by my friend Mr. Justice Wood Renton. Unfortunately he was unable to be present. The Secretary, Mr. Nadarajah asked me to fill the place which I have done though not so worthily as my friend would have (Applause.)

### **Vote of Thanks to the Chair.**

Mr. EMMANUEL JAYEWARDENE—Gentlemen, it is my very pleasurable duty to ask His Lordship to accept a vote of thanks from the Cinnamon Gardens Literary Association not only for the graciousness of his presence here to-night, but also for the graceful manner in which he discharged his duties as Chairman. (Applause.) We of the legal profession know what great calls there are on the time of His Lordship in his high office. It is a very great pleasure and gratifying to find His Lordship's capacity for finding the leisure to come here and preside on this occasion. I believe His Lordship also devotes some of his leisure in taking interest in literature, as is evidenced by his recent contribution to "Young Men of Ceylon," the subject being the late Mr. Henry Lorenz Wendt, being a record of Your Lordship's personal esteem. It is an encouragement to the literary aspirations of the Ceylonese. We think the lecture on "Ceylon's Celebrities" is timely, specially at this time when the political aspirations of the Ceylonese are threatened with extinction by the introduction of new facts. It is indeed a very great pleasure to see on this occasion Your Lordship's exalted personage, to encourage our aspirations. You will remember gentlemen that the lecturer in his preliminary remarks stated that he was not referring to the living. I have no doubt you will agree with me that when a future Isaac Tambyah speaks to our sons of the Ceylon Celebrities he will place His Lordship's name in the forefront (applause.) I endorse everything that has been said by Dr. Sinnetamby about the learned lecturer. I beg to be excused if I refer to one other I think when the lecturer spoke of celebrities who have contributed to the good of the country he omitted to mention the medical profession. The celebrities who distinguished themselves in medicine that I can call to mind are such men as the Hon. Dr. P. D Anthonisz, and the Hon. Dr. W. G. Rockwood. I thank the lecturer for his lecture on "Ceylon Celebrities" and I call upon all to carry the vote of thanks with acclamation. (Prolonged applause.)

Mr. A. GODAMUNE, seconded and in doing so begged the Chairman to have the kindness to deliver a lecture to them at an early date.

The LECTURER—I thank you gentlemen, for the very kind words spoken of me.

### **The Chairman Acknowledges Vote of Thanks.**

The CHAIRMAN—I have not been put to any inconvenience in coming here this evening. It is Saturday and I did not have very much work to do to-day. I am very glad to have been able to be here to listen to the lecture to-night. I agree with Mr. Jayawardene that there is a serious omission with reference to the profession of Medicine. He referred to two Drs. Anthonisz and Rockwood, but I think there are several more. One of them is Doctor Kotch, in his time he was the greatest surgeon. Not only was he a surgeon, he was a physician as well. His services were requisitioned almost all over the Island. He certainly had a very large practice. He died at the early age of 37. As for my delivering a lecture, I do not know whether I have the time. If I have the opportunity to put my thoughts together, I shall certainly have much pleasure in giving you one. (Applause.)

The meeting terminated shortly after.

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