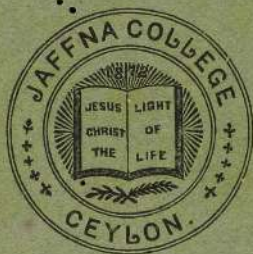


Jaffna College

MISCELLANY



Vol. XX.
No 1.

March, 1910

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Comets and their Influence on the Earth

By Allen Abraham B. A.

Now that Halley's comet is in the sky, people are asking whether we have to expect any danger from it. Some people are of opinion that it may dash against the earth and break it into pieces. Others think that it may cause pestilence and disease. The eminent French Astronomer Flammarion has declared, "If the oxygen in the atmosphere of the earth were to combine with the hydrogen of the comet's tail, the inhabitants of the earth would die from suffocation; if on the contrary, there were a diminution of Nitrogen, an unexpected sensation of physical activity would be experienced by every one and the human race would perish in a paroxysm of joy and delirium." This comet has already begun to gain a bad name because of the disastrous floods in Paris, and the people of Jaffna have begun to see the evil effects of the comet in the scarcity of rain and the consequent failure of crops. So then, the comet is blowing hot in Jaffna, and cold in Paris!!

Do comets, have any influence at all on the earth? Before answering the question, let us consider for a moment, the relation of comets to the

solar system, and their origin and 2nd, the nature of their physical constitution.

Besides the sun itself, the planets and their moons, the periodic comets are also included in the solar system. They are however supposed to be naturalised members of the family as they did not originally belong to it. Comets move in three kinds of orbits: parabolic, hyperbolic and elliptic. The comets which move in elliptic orbits go round the sun, returning to the nearest or perihelion point in fixed periods of time. But those that move in parabolic and hyperbolic orbits will not return again, unless, influenced by the planets, their paths are changed into ellipses.

The generally accepted theory as to the origin of the periodic comets is that they did not originally belong to the solar system but have been captured by the big planets Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune. All the short period comets whose periods of revolution round the sun range from 3 to 8 years, pass very near to Jupiter's orbit at some points in their paths and are spoken of as Jupiter's family of comets, having been attracted into the system by that planet. About 27 belong to this family and their number is on the increase year by year. Saturn is credited with having captured two, Uranus three and Neptune six. Halley's comet belongs to Neptune's family of comets, its path extending far beyond the orbit of Neptune. So then comets do not originally belong to the solar system. They enter the system from an infinite distance moving in parabolic orbits. When they come near a planet, they are either accelerated or retarded in their speed. If accelerated, the orbit becomes hyperbolic; so, the comet never returns for a second observation. If on the other hand, it is retarded, the orbit becomes elliptical and the comet becomes a naturalised member of the system and returns at regular intervals.

Now we come to the nature of their physical constitution. Comets consist of three parts, namely, the coma, the nucleus and the tail, which however are not completely distinct but run into each other by insensible degrees. The word comet is derived from the Latin word *coma* meaning hair, because it generally looks like a hair star. The Tamil words

generally used for it are *வாய்க்கொண்டி* and *சூமகோழி*, the latter being borrowed from Sanskrit. *வாய்க்கொண்டி* means a star, with a tail. But *சூமகோழி* the Sanskrit derivative, is more scientific and defines the object better than the English word. *சூமம்* means smoke or vapour and *கோழி* a star, so *சூமகோழி* means a smoky star, and the most accepted explanation of a comet's coma and tail is that they consist of vapours sent out from the nucleus; so then the essential part of a comet which is always present and gives the name to it, is the coma or nebulousity which like a hazy cloud or faintly shining matter surround the bright center called the nucleus. This bright center or nucleus is not found in all comets but commonly makes its appearance as the comet approaches the sun. It is this bright star-like point near the center of the coma that is usually pointed out in determining the comet's place. The nucleus and the coma combined present the appearance of a star shining through a small patch of cloud or fog and are together called the head of the comet. This tail is a continuation of the coma and consists of a stream of illuminated vapour growing wider and fainter as it recedes from the head until the eye can no longer trace it. As the comet approaches the sun, the tail follows it like the smoke and steam of the trail of a locomotive. But it is a curious feature noticed from the earliest times that the tail is always turned away from the sun. The tail follows the comet as it approaches the sun, but precedes it when the comet recedes from the sun.

Comets are the bulkiest bodies known and in some cases thousands of times larger than the sun. As a general rule the head of a comet is about 100,000 miles in diameter. Many are however larger. The head of the comet of 1811 at one time measured 1,200,000 miles, more than 40 per cent larger than the diameter of the sun itself.

The magnitude of a comet's tail is by far its most imposing feature. The length in several cases has been known to exceed 100 millions of miles. The tail of the comet of 1882, which was seen in Jaffna just before the dawn, rising in the east and spanning the sky more than half the way towards the zenith, was estimated to be 100 millions of miles in length, which

is more than the distance of the earth from the sun. It was some 200,000 miles in breadth at the head with a diameter of 10 million miles at its extremity. It exceeds the size of the sun itself by more than 8000 times.

While the volume or size of comets is so enormous, their masses appear to be insignificant and "airy nothings." Astronomers are unable to estimate the mass of comets. The masses of heavenly bodies are generally estimated by their attraction or influence upon other heavenly bodies. But it has in no case been possible to detect any action whatever produced by a comet on the earth or any other body of the solar system from which we might deduce the comet's mass. They have frequently come so near the earth and other planets that their own orbits have been entirely transformed, but they produced no effect whatever upon the motion of the planet which disturbed them. If their masses had been even as much as the 100,000th part of the earth's, they would have produced some appreciable effect on these bodies. The irresistible conclusion is that though they are enormous in size or volume, they contain very little matter. The total amount of matter though very small, compared with their size, is yet to be estimated at some millions of tons.

The size of a comet being so great and its mass so small, its density must be inconceivably small. It is estimated to be even less than the density of the residual air left in the best vacuum we can make. How then does it happen that bodies of so infinitesimal density can move in orbits like solid masses with such enormous velocities? It must be remembered that in a vacuum a feather falls as freely and as swiftly as a stone. Interplanetary space is a vacuum far more perfect than any air-pump could produce, and in it the rarest and most tenuous bodies move as freely and swiftly as the densest.

Although the mean density of a comet is small, the density of the constituent particles of it need not be so. The head of a comet is supposed to be

a swarm of meteoric stones, though no one can say whether these stones are many feet in diameter or only a few inches, or only a few thousandths of an inch like particles of dust.

Halley's comet is famous because it was the first comet whose periodicity was determined in a romantic way. Edmund Halley, the Astronomer Royal of England, observed this comet in the year 1682 and comparing its orbit with those of other comets recorded as having appeared before, discovered that this comet moved in the same path as those that appeared in the years 1531 and 1607. He therefore came to the conclusion that these must be the records of the same comet appearing at an interval of 76 years. He confidently predicted that the comet would return in 1759. It did appear in 1759 and again 76 years later in 1835. Its past history has been traced as far back as 240 B. C. The Chinese annals have kept a careful and accurate record of these appearances.

The length of this comet's orbit is about 3255 million miles and the breadth at its broadest is about 800 million miles. It visited us last in 1835 and having crossed the paths of Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune in its advance and return journeys it is just now entering the orbit of the earth. It is in the Western sky now in the evening in the constellation known as Pisces near the planet Saturn. It can be seen with telescopes of very small size. It will pass behind the sun in the middle of March and will then become a morning star visible even to the naked eye, reaching its perihelion point on the 20th of April. It will pass between the earth and the sun on the 19th or 20th of May being then nearest to the earth at a distance of 14 million miles. For a few days after this, it will be at its greatest splendour, being visible to the naked eye as an evening star. In consequence of its nearness to the sun it will move with the tremendous velocity of 3 million miles a day, and pass out of sight in a few days.

Will this comet during its sweep round the sun do any harm to the earth? According to our pre-

sent scientific knowledge, there are four ways in which comets may affect the earth. (1) The first is by attraction. As comets are material bodies not originally connected with our system, some may approach the earth suddenly and make it travel faster round the sun or throw it out of its orbit. But this is not probable, because the masses and consequently the amount of attraction they exert upon the earth, as far as we know, is inconceivably small. Lexells' comet in 1770, Biela's comet on more than one occasion and several others came very near the earth. What was the result? Their periods of revolution were changed by the attraction of the earth to the extent of several weeks, but in no instance has the length of the year of the earth altered by a single second. In 1779 a comet approached so close to Jupiter that it actually got entangled among the moons of that planet. The moons all the time pursued their courses as if the comet had never existed; but the comet was thrown entirely out of its course and had its orbit changed and has never since been visible to terrestrial observers though before this occurrence it regularly visited the sun every $5\frac{1}{2}$ years. In fact, no astronomer has so far been able to detect any action whatever produced by the attraction of a comet on the earth or any other body belonging to the solar system.

(2) The second way in which the earth may be affected by the comet is by a collision with its head. As regards the probability of the earth colliding with a comet, it is to be admitted that such an event is possible. There are several comets, the orbits of which pass nearer the earth's orbit than the semi-diameter of the comet's head. If the earth and the comet should happen to cross the point at the same time, they are sure to have a collision. In the year 1832, Biela's comet approached so near the earth that collision was apprehended. The comet crossed the point only one month before the earth reached it.

In 1881, the "Spectator" caused an alarm by predicting a collision of the earth with the remarkable comet of that year. The prediction was not fulfilled. But if the earth lasts long enough, it is

practically sure that sometime the earth and the comet will certainly come together.

What will be the consequence of such collision? With our present knowledge of the nature of the physical constitution of a comet, it is impossible to speak with certainty. Every thing depends on the size of the separate particles which form the mass of the comet's head. If they weigh tons, the earth would experience a bombardment which would be a very serious matter; if as it seems more likely, they are for the most part smaller than pin heads, the result would be simply a meteoric shower and we should be witnessing a display of shooting or burning stars, and as a consequence of the burning, some extraneous matter will be introduced into our atmosphere. After all, such a collision will be a very rare event. If we accept the estimate of Astronomer Babinet, they will occur only about once in 15,000,000 years.

(3) The third way in which a comet may affect our earth is by enveloping the earth with its tail. It is possible that not only by colliding with the head of a comet but also by being enveloped by the tail, our atmosphere would take in some of the components of the comet and that may affect the animal and vegetable life on the earth. The earth did actually pass through the glorious comet of 1861. On many other occasions also the earth did pass so near comets that some of the attenuated vapour of their tails must have come within the earth's attraction and been absorbed in its atmosphere. Whether the effect was deleterious or salubrious or whether it had any perceptible influence at all, is only a matter of speculation. The probability is that, on account of the very low density of the cometary matter, no sufficient amount of vapours would remain in the air to do any appreciable mischief or good by poisoning or enriching the atmosphere.

(4) The fourth way in which a comet may affect the earth is by falling into the sun and increasing its heat. Except perhaps in the case of Encke's comet in which astronomers have observed a progressive shortening of the period there is no evi-

dence of any action going on that would cause a now existing periodic comet to strike the sun's surface; it is however undoubtedly possible that a comet may enter the system from without, so accurately aimed that it may hit the sun. The celebrated comet of 1680, from the study of which Sir Isaac Newton proved that comets are subject to the same law of gravitation as the planets came so near the sun that it was feared that it might rush into the sun, for at its perihelion passage it was only 144,000 miles from the sun. Had the velocity of the comet slackened a little, it would have collided with the sun in 3 minutes. The comet of 1843 passed still nearer the sun, its perihelion distance being only 32,000 miles from the sun. But the chance of a comet falling into the sun is as rare as its chance of colliding with the earth. If a comet actually strikes the sun it is not likely that the least harm will be done to the earth.

Now which of these four possibilities is probable in the case of our present visitor? It will not, as we have seen, influence the earth's orbit by attraction as this is contrary to previous experience nor should any collision with either the earth or the sun need be apprehended as the comet at its nearest approach will be 14 million miles from the former and 55 million miles from the latter. The only possibility that may be feared is the earth being enveloped in the comet's tail and some of its matter entering into our atmosphere. As the distance between the earth and the head of the present comet is going to be only 12 million miles, and as the tail will be turned away from the sun and directly towards the earth, there is the probability of our earth plunging into the tail of the comet. In that case we may all expect to have a cometic vapour bath on the 19th or 20 of May. Whether the effect will be salubrious or deleterious is only a matter of speculation. Shall we perish, as astronomer Flammarion predicts, of suffocation or in a paroxysm of excitement and delirium? There is not the least fear of this calamity, as on several previous occasions our forefathers had such a plunge and came out unharmed.

The Anglo-Vernacular

By J. K. Chanmugam, B. A., L. T.

A learned but erratic judge, once presiding over the Metropolitan District Court, is reported to have said to an able lawyer practising before him, "Your Sinhalese-English will do, sir, sit-down." The fact is, that the Anglo-Vernacular is such a recognised institution in Ceylon and India, that some of the best scholars think in the Anglo-Vernacular, speak in the Anglo-Vernacular, and write in the Anglo-Vernacular.

There are some, even among the most enthusiastic educationalists, that wish to hand down this heritage to posterity. They would romanize Urdu, and teach English through the Vernacular. This has considerably hampered the progress of education and true culture.

There are educational authorities in India, who believe that a pupil should pass at least the Vernacular third standard, before attempting to learn English; while others would expect a standard as high as the fifth before the pupil is introduced into the mysteries of the English language.

There are men in this Colony, who are in the forefront of educational service, and whose noble example has an inspiring effect on others, that believe that the instruction to the Ceylon youth must be "through the medium of the Vernaculars and on a Vernacular basis," and that "without a thorough knowledge of the Vernaculars, the Ceylonese educated boy will never have a thorough knowledge of English."

While it is permissible for a Ceylonese boy, under certain conditions, to undergo a short period of instruction in the Vernacular, before attempting to learn English, it is practicable to commence the study of the two languages simultaneously. The study of the Vernacular deserves to be cultivated for national and linguistic purposes, but to expect culture, is to court disappointment. To attempt to discover modern science, mathematics, and philosophy through

the mass of Vernacular literature, is to go out again in search of the philosopher's stone. To insist upon "a thorough knowledge of Vernacular," with a view to "a thorough knowledge of English," is neither national, nor educational, but it is the surest method of perpetuating the Anglo-Vernacular.

The bane of English education in Ceylon has been the teaching of English through translation. The English idiom must continue to be hopelessly foreign to the Ceylonese. Some of the best scholars have taken years to unlearn the evil, and are ever engaged in the attempt.

Opening an ordinary First Reader, the following phrases and sentences were noticed, which the advocates of the Vernacular-English system will do well to translate for the pupil.

Look on, and look at.

The rope is broken and the plate is broken.

I must do it, I should do it and I ought to do it.

I have it, and I have got it.

Troubled by fleas, and being troubled by fleas.

They turned me out, and it turned out.

&c, &c, &c,

It is not claimed that these sentences cannot be rendered into Tamil, the vernacular that concerns Jaffnese; but one has to consider the labour lost in this strenuous age.

Nothing would be a greater calamity in education, than to neglect the study of the vernacular. Tamil and English, for instance, are two distinct languages, and they should be taught as such. Any attempt at amalgamation is disastrous. Import no English into the vernacular class, and no Tamil into the English class. The hybrid, that so beautifully flourishes in our English schools, is neither ass nor horse.

It is idle to quote Burma, Africa, or America. Not even Japan will suit this country. The environment is different. It has been proved in some of the schools in India and Ceylon, and particularly in the Federated Malay States, that there is a *direct* and *natural* method of teaching English. By this method the environment of the learner is *made* almost identical with that of an English boy learning his own vernacular. It is "things! things! too many words!!"

as Rousseau would exclaim. It is *things* and not *words*, that are placed before the pupil. The senses are constantly educated. It is much easier to teach a child the word *cat* by placing a cat or a picture of a cat before the child, than by going through the barbarous process of conning by heart, as it is usually done. C, a, t = cat = *cat*. On the very day the child enters the classroom and almost within the first hour, an intelligent teacher can make it unconsciously learn *stand up, sit down, right hand, left hand, come, go, march*. Even if nothing else is taught, by way of words, during the day, the child will have a stock of 5×8 or 40 words, the first week, and by the end of the month, the store house would overflow with 160 words. Allowing 100 words the first month, the progress will be marvellous at the end of the year. The teacher must prove the father, mother, brother and sister of an English home.

The sympathy of numbers, and the personal magnetism of the teacher, will lend enchantment to the study of the language. A person whose vernacular is English or one who will talk only in English in the class, must be in charge of the First standard. This is a surer and quicker method of using English "as the medium of instruction in subjects having an educational value," rather than waiting "until English is understood," through the filtering process of the vernacular. We have noticed with the greatest satisfaction that Tamil children educated under the above system, in India, Ceylon and the F. M. S., speak, write and understand the English language, vastly sooner than those who have laboriously worked through the Vernacular. The natural method may involve a larger expenditure of money, but what is worth doing, must be done at any cost.

The people of this country are only a drop in the vast ocean of the British Empire. They cannot speak of national education in the sense in which the Japanese do. They have to cultivate the vernacular from the standpoint of a national linguist. To presume to learn the European sciences through the Vernacular, is an impossibility. To insist on "a thorough knowledge of the Vernacular" as a step-

ping stone to "a thorough knowledge of English," is to cultivate a new *Lingua Franca*, the Anglo-Vernacular. "East is East and West is West, the twain shall never meet."



The Physical Deterioration of Our People

By S. H. T. Taylor.

These are days in which problems of the most far-reaching importance, problems affecting the vital interests of this country, are engaging the attention of those concerned in the welfare of Jaffna. How we can improve the material prosperity of this country, how the young people of Jaffna can be given a truly sound and liberal education, how best we can secure for our people a due measure of self-government—these questions have been up for discussion among our men of light and leading and have agitated the inmost feelings of our educated men. But it seems to me that, while something like a due measure of interest is beginning to be taken in the subjects of education, agriculture, industries, trade and self-government, almost absolutely no thought is given to the most important of all subjects—the physical deterioration of the people of Jaffna. On no subject is there likely to be so sincere a consensus of opinion as on that of the physical condition of the people of Jaffna, and it will be universally admitted, with hardly any dissentient voice, that the people of Jaffna are steadily deteriorating in their physique generation after generation. He certainly must be a man devoid of the powers of observation and judgment who has not found within living memory an alarming deterioration in the health and strength of the sons and daughters of Jaffna. Instead of endeavouring to establish a truth so well and widely recognized, it would be beneficial to inquire into the causes which have worked this ruinous change in

our people and propose briefly such remedies as are likely to prove efficacious in removing it.

One great reason why the process of the physical deterioration of our people has gone on unarrested in its course is that the people themselves have set no actual value on the development and strength of their bodies. The well known scriptural saying, "Seek, and ye shall find," is as true of the body as it is of the higher things of the mind and soul. If the bodies of our people have grown weaker and weaker generation after generation, if our grand-fathers were very much stronger and longer-lived than our fathers and our fathers possess sounder bodies than we of the rising generation, if various sorts of what are called 'new' diseases by some doctors play havoc among the people, if gray-haired men of ripe age and experience are getting to be 'rare aves' in our community, if the giants of the by-gone days of our country, the giants who shook their country by their rare deeds of extraordinary physical strength, have no successors among us, if our men and women show unmistakable signs of frail and feverish bodies as opposed to the strong and cool constitutions of their stalwart grandsires, it is chiefly because we as a people have most scandalously neglected the cultivation and development of our muscles and limbs, and have been content to let ourselves drift into a puny race unfit to make sustained efforts in the keen struggle for existence carried on among us with ever-increasing keenness. Neither the people nor the Government have seriously thought in the least about the extreme importance of a careful cultivation of the bodily powers of young Jaffna. Unlike in India where in most parts the old custom which prevailed in ancient times according to which the Maharajahs took the greatest care to promote the physical development of their people by various means, is still most zealously maintained by those rulers, here in Jaffna, and for the matter of that, in Ceylon, no serious thought seems to be taken of the supreme necessity of keeping the bodies strong and healthy and working for the promotion of health and vitality among the people by systematic exercise. The art of wrestling which is so assiduously and ardently practised with the best re-

sults in many parts of India, which is responsible to no small extent for the strength of the ancient Hindus, Greeks and Romans, and in the promotion of which many Maharajahs show so much zest, is practically unknown in Jaffna; and the quarter-heartedly played cricket, which is not well suited to our young men for a variety of reasons, is about the only game indulged in and encouraged in our schools and colleges for the physical amelioration of the rising generation.

It need hardly be said that the development of muscles by good exercise is bound to help considerably in the gradual evolution of a healthy race with the grand possibilities of taking its rank among the enlightened peoples of the world; for sound bodies help the formation of sound minds, and sound bodies and sound minds can conjointly work wonders in every field of human activity. And blessed is the country that possesses a good number of men and women with sound minds in sound bodies. It is such a country that generally attains to true national greatness. It naturally and easily follows from this that if Jaffna wishes to attain to greatness and take its place among lands that have made their marks in history, her sons and daughters should strain every nerve to promote physical development among their brethren and sisters. What loyal son or daughter of Jaffna will not feel a sincere regret for the fact that while practically nothing has been done to *prevent* the physical degeneration of our people, much less to *promote* the growth of their bodies, much has been done to *accelerate* the baneful process of deterioration. The neglecting of regular and systematic bodily exercise either in connection with good, scientifically planned out-door games or by means of agricultural operations, which formed an important, practically the only, means of bodily recreation in olden times among all classes of people in general, when even members of the fair sex belonging to high families personally helped their husbands and sons in such light farm work as suited their strength and attended to sundry household duties, which women of the present day think it the height of dignity to relegate to servants, the indiscriminate imitation of luxurious European habits and

modes of life without adopting at the same time, as a counterpoise, the necessary means of regular bodily exercise for maintaining and promoting the health and strength which those luxurious habits tend to weaken, the indiscrete observance of the custom of intermarriage among close, blood relatives as a necessary sequence of the keeping of caste, the giving up of the highly nutritious though not over-palatable foods of our forefathers for the heavy, richly-spiced, delicious dishes of the present day, the prevalence of vices of a peculiarly deleterious and enervating nature, which being the offspring of an advancing civilization rise with its rising tide—these are among the potent causes of the physical degeneration of our people.

A full and accurate knowledge of the disease, that is to say, a careful and correct diagnosis of the malady, is half the road to recovery. Similarly a good knowledge of the causes that have led to the physical deterioration of our people will take us more than half the way towards the goal of physical advancement. In the first place, it is the duty of every educated man and woman to create in the minds of our people by means of suitable articles in newspapers and magazines and, still more, by popular lectures delivered in Tamil, a healthy public opinion on the subject. A strong feeling against the pernicious causes that are working the physical weakness of our people must be first roused to be followed by an effective campaign against them. Let our young men and women be taught to take some kind of exercise regularly and systematically and to feel that the taking of such exercise *every* day is not less important for their physical growth and well-being than the eating of good, nourishing food. Let a radical change be effected in the quality of the diet of our people. The weak rice made weaker by being boiled twice and deprived of the best part of the nutritive principles it contains must be used much less than it is, and when used, it must be so used that it may give the consumers as much as possible of the nourishing power it has. Other and more nutritious grains should also be eaten, and there must come into general use a pleasant and scientifically-planned variety of food.

Let our rich and influential people who indulge in tall talks about their country's welfare do something practical to their motherland by establishing and maintaining well-equipped gymnasia with the express purpose of improving the physical strength of their children. In this connection, it would be well to put our readers in mind of the great national spirit shown by the people of the neighbouring continent of India in the matter of cultivating their bodily powers, the enthusiasm manifested in that country in all kinds of games and the special efforts put forth to preserve some of the ancient forms of bodily exercise, which, hoary with age, are still very popular, being based on scientific principles and decidedly conducive to a successful cultivation of man's physical powers. A very effectual means of promoting the physical development of our people would be to hold grand public exhibitions of bodily strength annually and to award prizes and medals to those who excel in the trials. Once the taste to excel in rare feats of bodily strength is created in the minds of our young men, and an ambition to be honoured, admired and loved for the superior physical powers they may acquire is kindled in their ardent bosoms, the results are sure to be highly beneficial to the cause of the physical development of the people of this country. The wonderful physical powers of the great Rama Moorthy of India should stimulate our young men to develop their muscles by proper exercise. Though not one may succeed in becoming a full Rama Moorthy, many can become at least quarter or half Rama Moorthys, and that will be something in which the country can take a noble pride. The Government must be made by persistent agitation to take some interest in the physical growth of the people subject to its rule. Let our men of light and leading do all in their power to eradicate the pernicious habits and customs that sap the vitality of our people. The greatest care and moral courage will be needed in performing this very important and peculiarly difficult task, and the lasting benefits that will accrue to this country will more than compensate the trouble and difficulty involved. In conclusion, I would most earnestly recommend the speedy formation of an association for the promotion of the physical development of our

people, and it may be confidently expected that this country will then see the dawn of a new era of progress and prosperity not merely in the physical but also in the material and moral advancement of the people.



Editorial Notes

- Although our celestial visitor claims too much space in our present number, yet our readers will not grudge it, seeing that he will not encroach upon the Miscellany for the next 76 years. Exigencies of space forbid the publication in full of Prof. Allen Abraham's interesting and exhaustive lecture, which we had to mutilate to some extent by cutting out the introduction and the highly technical parts. As to the question, whether we have to expect good or evil from our visitor, we are at least sure of this, that he is doing us a great service by raising our thoughts for a while from things terrestrial to things celestial. As to the scare about danger to the earth on May 19th, we may safely take Mr. Abraham's word that nothing of that sort would happen. If anything does happen, why then, we can claim damages from the lecturer—provided, of course, we live to do so.

We commend to the attention of our readers the article on the "Anglo-Vernacular" by an educationist of experience. The question of the vernacular as a medium of instruction is a very large one and has been discussed *pro* and *con* by eminent educationists in India. But as far as we in Ceylon are concerned, this question has passed out of the range of practical politics, and it is too late in the day to discuss it. But the allied question of the "Anglo-Vernacular" is a practical one and worthy of the attention of educators in Jaffna. We are at one with our contributor in his condemnation of teaching English by the filtering process of trans-

lation. Translation, as an exercise in mental gymnastics, is an excellent one. But as a ready means of imparting a thorough knowledge of English, it has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. That the direct method advocated by our contributor is the better way of teaching English, will be easily understood by the superior training given in certain schools in South Ceylon and the F. M. S. where this method is used. In fact, one of the reasons assigned for the difficulty of our boys securing employment in the F. M. S., is their inferiority to those educated there in the use of English. It has become a fashion on prize-days and other educational functions for speakers to exhalt the study of Tamil Literature as the panacea for all the ills that Jaffna education is heir to. Some have gone even so far as to assert that "without a thorough knowledge of the vernacular, one cannot have a thorough knowledge of English." Although we are in hearty agreement with those who advocate a larger place for Tamil in our curriculum, still we maintain that this is for other reasons and not for the acquisition of a thorough knowledge of English.

The extraordinary pronouncement of the highest in the land, that the educated Ceylonese have nothing in common with the masses and are therefore unfit to lead them or represent their interests, has called forth a storm of protest. Undoubtedly His Excellency's statements are highly exaggerated and entirely inapplicable at least to the Tamils. Recognising, as we do, the injustice done to the native races in withholding from them the electoral franchise, yet we are glad to see that the authorities have at last opened their eyes to the denationalising tendencies of the education now in vogue, for which they have to blame none but themselves. If His Excellency is in earnest—we have no reason to suppose the contrary—in his statement that the kind of education received by the educated classes have denationalised them, he ought, to be consistent, to set about reorganising education on national lines. This can be the only logical outcome of the opinions expressed in his message to

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the Secretary of State. If His Excellency takes in hand such a reform, and succeeds in carrying it out, before he lays down the reins of office, the educated Ceylonese will forget the slight put upon them now and will have every reason to feel grateful to him. If, however, nothing is going to be done in a matter of this kind that affects the vital interests of the native races, then the educated will drift farther and farther from the masses, and consequently the native races will have less and less chance of enjoying the privilege of franchise. We hope that the creation of a new non-descript class will have the effect of rudely awakening those who run madly after every thing European.

Sir J. J. Thomson, the famous Cambridge physicist is credited with a paradox worthy of consideration. He says "It may seem a strange thing to say, but I think a bad teacher is better than a good one. Your good teacher is too clear. Your admirable text-book leaves no difficulties to puzzle over. So the student does not reap the old intellectual training of puzzlement" If this is the case with good teachers and clear text-books, what shall we say of keys, voluminous annotations and sample questions with which students arm themselves against examiners? It was about this state of things that Lord Curzon complained, when he sarcastically congratulated students in Madras on the greater ease with which they pursued their studies, than students at Oxford. In Jaffna, at least, the popular idea is that the best teacher is he who gives the least exertion to the brains of his pupils. It is expected that the teacher should do all the drudgery work for the pupil, and consequently too much time is given by the teacher for the cramming of the brains of the pupils with undigested facts, and too little time given to them to work out things for themselves. No wonder that results in educational work are disappointing.

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College Notes

—The library has recently received an addition of one hundred volumes from the Hastings library.

—The new seats for the recitation rooms are a much needed improvement.

—A new set of lamps for the dining hall are another improvement.

—Mr. Robert Joseph is drill master this year.

—Among recent visitors to the college, we have had the pleasure of welcoming Rev. J. S. and Mis. Chandler from Madura, and Rev. W. P. and Miss Sprague from Kalgan, China. The latter are on their way home to America after 35 years of service in China as Missionaries of the American Board.

—Events of special interest since our last issue have been the King's Birthday celebration with musical and literary entertainment in the evening; the Annual Meeting of the Y. M. C. A. when Rev. A. Lockwood addressed us and reports for the year were read, most of them very encouraging; a Social Gathering for College teachers at Vempadi which was a very pleasant occasion; the Annual Week of Prayer in November; three meetings of the Joint Committee on Union College to prepare plans and estimates to be sent to the Synods and Home Boards for approval.

—It is our painful duty to record the sad death of Mrs. Chelliah Cooke on December 18th after a very brief illness. This is a very great loss to the Church and the Christian community and to her very large circle of friends. Our special sympathy goes out to her bereaved husband, Mr. C.H. Cooke, who has been a much valued member of our staff for many years.

—Another very great loss in the College circle is the death of one of the Directors, Rev. Chas. M. Sanders, which occurred very suddenly on the 24th of December, caused by blood-poisoning. Mr. Sanders was one of the most able and prominent pastors in the American Mission and his loss to the Church work will long be deeply felt.

—The Principal spent three weeks in December in India, during which time he attended the biennial General assembly of the United church of South India at Trivandrum as delegate from the Jaffna Council of the U. C. S. I.



Alumni Notes

Rev. S. K. Ponniah B. A. was ordained on the 19th Dec. 1909 by the Bishop of Colombo and was licensed as curate of St. Andrews, Batticaloa.

Rev. N. G. Nathanael, who was also ordained on the same day, was licensed as Curate at Christ Church, Jaffna.

Mr. A. C. Bissell B. A. has been appointed Superintendent of the office of Deputy Commissioner, Drug, C. P. India, on a salary of Rs. 150 per mensem.

Mr. S. W. Coomarasamy, Police Clerk, Jaffna, has been transferred to Kurunegalle.

Rev. J. K. Sinnatamby B. A. and **Mr. L. V. Clarence** were sent as delegates by the Jaffna Christian Endeavour Societies to represent them in the Christian Endeavour World's Convention held at Agra from November 20-23.

Dr. K. Rajah of the General Hospital, Kandy, was married to Miss Sunthara Ramasipillai, a daughter of **R. Kandiah** Mudaliar on the 14th of November 1909.

Mr. S. K. Nallatamby who was in the Apothecaries' class, Medical College, Colombo, died on the 13th December 1909. He had a distinguished career in the College having obtained a first class in the preliminary examination and the scholarship in the first Apothecaries' examination.

K. Mudlr. Sivasampoo of Chunnagam passed away on the 23rd Oct. 1909. He was one of the most influential and respected residents of Chunnakam and was loved by all who came in contact with him.

Rev. C. M. Sanders. Pastor of the Islands, connected with the Jaffna Native Evangelical Society passed away peacefully on the 24th December 1909.

Mr, William John M. A. of Noble College, Masulipattam has joined the staff of Trinity College, Kandy.



Receipts for the Miscellany

The following subscriptions have been received with thanks.

K. Sivapragasam Esq	1.00
A. C. Chellappah Esb.	2.00
Miss S. B. Howlaed	2.00
Dr. S. Sinnatamby	1.00
K. Rajah Esq.	1.50
V. Kanagaratnam Esq.	1.00

Total 8.50



