

MORNING STAR.

Jaffna, Thursday, June 23, 1853.

BURNING OF THE DEAD AND ACCOMPANYING RITES AMONG THE TAMILIANS.

[CONCLUDED.]

While the ceremonies, mentioned in our last number, are in progress, the family servants (a class of people of the covia caste, who were formerly slaves), rub the head of the corpse with rapped oil, the juice of the lime, the pomace of the olive fruit, and also bathe the body with the water in the koompan before referred to. While the body is being bathed and other preparations going on, the female friends of the deceased breathe their loss by singing in dolorous tones, mourning songs, which describe the worth of the departed. They also beat their breasts with the palms of their hands and howl and cry in a loud and most pathetic manner. After the bathing is over, the covias place the corpse on a rough sort of couch or cot, in front of the consecrated fire, and rub sacred ashes over the body. On the forehead of the corpse, a round spot is made with powder of sandal wood. They put at the same time into the mouth of the corpse a mixture of betel, arecanut, lime, a piece of tobacco, and spices if they can be had.

After all these preliminaries are gone through, the friends of the deceased call the tom-tom beaters, the washerman, barber, and blacksmith, and give them each a piece of new cloth having a piece tied at the corner. These cloths they are required to tie around their heads. After this, the covias place the corpse on a bier, decorated according to their ability and taste, sometimes quite beautifully, with flowers, ornamental papers, &c., and bear the same to the burning place on their shoulders, accompanied by the before mentioned persons, including the carpenter and the friends of the deceased. While thus proceeding to the choordu karda, the washermen spread clean cloths on the ground so that all who attend the funeral may walk over them, and the barber carries with him the fire-brand taken from the consecrated fire. The covia women fan the corpse, while the nalava women blow in the mouths of earthen vessels, making a slightly musical, grun noise. After they all reach the burning place, the eldest son, or if there be no son, a near relative, cleanly shaved and newly bathed, approaches the pile, attended by the barber, who carries in his hand a new earthen vessel, filled with water. After the body is placed on the pile, the head is turned towards the south, the nearest relatives and friends put rice into the mouth of the corpse, according to their respective ages, at the same time dropping a small copper coin, near the face, which is picked up by the tom-tom beaters, and is one of their perquisites. When this is done, the son of the departed takes the vessel from the hand of the barber, and, being accompanied by the same person who has carried the head, he walks towards the pile, and the next time, when the barber cracks the vessel, and the son lets it fall on the ground. Immediately he kindles the funeral pile, and his friends hurry him home, not allowing him to linger or to look at the work of his flames. A few persons only remain to see that the corpse is wholly consumed, while all the others return home and bathe themselves.

On the third day, the friends of the deceased call their guru and repair with him to the burning place, where they gather the ashes of the corpse and put them in a new earthen vessel, which they throw into the sea or river, thereby hoping that the soul of the departed will be carried to heaven. This is done on the morning of the third day, with certain ceremonies, and in the afternoon, the friends invite all the relatives and the servants who their family are, and immediately they begin to eat. On the eighth day, they procure many kinds of food which the deceased used to eat when alive, and set them in the place where he usually took his food, thinking the spirit of the departed will come and refresh itself. At the same time the females cry with a loud voice and make many lamentations for the dead. It is worthy of notice that when one of these mourning women stop crying, all immediately stop crying. Again, for the last ceremony, that is a part continue waiting after the others have ceased, there will very soon be another death in the family. On the thirtieth day, the last ceremony, called untheyritte, is to be performed near a tank. Until this is performed, it is supposed that the spirit of the deceased will be in charge of Vidava, an inferior god, to whom the principal offerings are made on this occasion. The principal offerings are made with more or less of show and display. A pambul or shed is erected for the accommodation of the guru and the company while performing this last rite. This ceremony is very much like the one before described of the six foot square figure and its accompaniments, only that this is still longer and more wondrous. (The Hindus suppose if the ceremony of untheyritte is not performed, the soul of the departed is situated in a lower order of being, and fall of heaven, or the desired end of transmigration and appearing in a higher order of being. If the eldest son, whose duty it is to cause the performance of the rite, fails to do it, he is supposed to render himself liable to the certain curse of the gods.)

It should be remarked that in connection with nearly all the Tamil people when bathing—they rubbing it upon their bodies to aid in the work of cleansing and purifying.

these ceremonies, there is a very great amount of gestulation and muttering of prayers on the part of the guru, and of prostrations and various kinds of superstitious movements of the hands, &c. on the part of the relatives. Who, in view of this account of the vain ceremonies and superstitious notions, in bondage to which immense numbers of the human race are held, would not rejoice in the spread of Christianity, civilization, light and knowledge in the earth. And who, after having seen the power of his example, influence, wealth and prayers, in spreading the knowledge of true religion, and salvation through a crucified Saviour, which knowledge destroys such ignorance and puts an end to such absurd and ridiculous vanities?

NEWS FROM CHINA.—By an Extra Colombo Observer of June 14, we have very interesting and late news from China, to the effect that in the rebellion, which has now been going on in China for a long time, the rebels or insurgents have possession of the city of Nankin; that they profess to be the followers of the true Jehovah and that they actually have a correct translation of the Bible, which is openly circulated among them. The North China Herald gives the following account of them, though it is proper to remark that another paper, the Hong Kong Register, partly contradicts it. Our readers will therefore make some allowance for the statements of the Herald, which are as follows:

"Their moral code, the insurgents called the 'Heavenly Rule,' and on examination proved to be the tenets of the Christians. The only objection strictly enforced by the leaders of the movement, chiefly Kwang-tung and Kwai-se men, who are not merely formal professors of a religious system, but practical and spiritual Christians, deeply influenced by the belief that God is always with them. The hardships they have incurred are punishments and trials of their heavenly Father; the successes they have achieved are instances of His grace. Their objection to the Christians rests on the special attention of the Almighty of which they believe themselves to be the object. With proud humility and with the gleaming eyes of gratitude, they point back to the fact, that at the beginning of their enterprise, some four years ago, they numbered but one or two hundred; and that except for the direct help of their heavenly Father, they never could have done what they have done. The advocates of the imperialists, spread all kinds of lies about us. They say we employ magical arts; the only kind of magic we have used is prayer to God. In Kwang-se, when we occupied Yung Guan, we were sorely pressed; there were then only some two or three thousand of us. We were beset on all sides by much greater numbers; we had no powder left, and our provisions were all gone. But our heavenly Father came to our aid, and showed us the way to break out. So we put our wives and children in the middle, and not only forced a passage, but completely beat our enemies."

Postscript.—By another Extra Observer of Friday last, the 17th, we have still later news from China, by which we learn that the rebels continue to hold Nankin, and that they have also taken Aken, after two hours hard fighting.

In Java, two Americans, a captain and a mate of the schooner Elbert, have been condemned for high treason and sentenced to 12 years imprisonment. The Observer says this will probably lead to troubles between Holland and America. We do not know this. If they have really been guilty of high treason, we hope and believe they will be left to suffer the sentence pronounced upon them.

SURGICAL OPERATION.—At the Friend-in-Need Society's Hospital, on the 11th instant, Dr. Cowen, assisted by Mr. Gould, amputated the leg of a patient below the knee for extensive long standing disease of the bones. The operation was performed according to Professor Ferguson's method, viz. by semi-lunar incision and transfusion, without withdrawing the knee, and the limb was saved in two minutes. This is the seventh amputation, we learn from Dr. Cowen, that has taken place since the hospital was opened in 1850, and of this number but one case has proved fatal, a fact which speaks most favorably for the idiosyncrasy of the natives in withstanding the shock and other consequences of serious operations. With the higher degree of nervous sensibility, and inflammatory predisposition of the European constitution, such happy results would hardly have been realized.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.—The communication of "M. S." we fear would do more injury than good, as some persons might make a difference in our designs. The author—"G. P. S." on the vexed question of "No Materialism" in the Literary Mirror, is not suited to our columns. Such an article should be sent to the editors of the Mirror, if to any one. The author can have his letter on application to us.—To "A Christian" we would say, we fear your views will not be well received through the Star, and we advise you to make a personal application to the party concerned, which we doubt not would be kindly considered.

GREAT HEAT.—The heat at Madras is said to be "awful"—the thermometer standing at 92 degrees at midnight and one hundred and four degrees at 4 o'clock, p. m. Disease was very prevalent. Indeed, complaints of the heat come from every quarter nearly, and cholera is prevailing to a fearful extent in many places on the continent. We are favored in Jaffna with a cool wind, and the heat does not appear to us to be unusually oppressive; neither are we aware of much sickness in the country.

DEATH.—Died in Jaffna, on Monday, June 13, of bowel complaint, E. S. Whitehouse, Esq. Mr. Whitehouse was an active and efficient sea-going man, and was much respected. His loss will be greatly felt by his family and the Jaffna community in particular, and also by his numerous friends elsewhere.

CIVIL APPOINTMENTS.—F. H. Campbell, Esq. is appointed to be Acting Landing and Tide Surveyor at Galle; also P. F. Panderka, Esq., to be Assistant Collector and Landing Surveyor at Jaffna.

We notice that Mr. Henry Toussaint of Jaffna has just now passed his examination at the Royal College of Surgeons in England.

Correspondence of the Morning Star.

JAFFNA, June 16, 1853.

To the Editor of the Morning Star.
MY DEAR SIR.—I could hardly regret that any expression used in my former note should have been so worded as to be liable to misapprehension; but the remarks, which my reference to the exclusive character of the support given to the late bazaar elicited from yourself, lead me to apprehend lest it should convey a wrong impression to some of your Tamil readers also. To assert that, on the occasion alluded to, we natives afforded their aid would be as ridiculous as to state; but that very circumstance, to which you allude, the entirely European character of the articles exposed for sale, was what most forcibly impressed me with the "exotic-like" nature of Christianity in this country. The object of my humble communication was not to blame our Tamil friends for want of co-operation in this particular case, but to endeavor, if possible, to stimulate them to efforts having a similar object in view, only emanating from themselves. For the very reason, that my knowledge of Ceylonese habits is so limited, I could not be definite in my suggestions, but satisfied myself with generalities. Permit me, however, to explain what I mean by a circumstance of which I myself became cognizant when in England; I heard my own father some two years ago relate an anecdote at a missionary meeting to the following effect:—"About ten years ago," said he, "my late minister, being called to Shropshire, there was one spot in the country, where a poor but pious man, with a small family, regularly received me on my rounds. Soon after my first arrival at his house, my attention was attracted by a remarkably fine hen, apparently privileged beyond her fellow fowls, as she was permitted with impunity to enter the kitchen. My host informed me that this was his 'missionary hen,' an offering which he had produced entirely to the great cause; a few minutes afterwards his jealous care over her was strikingly evinced; for, being greatly pleased with the animal, which was very tame, I offered her a small piece of bread, when with the utmost alarm he instantly seized my hand, exclaiming, that, 'if her food were too large, her life would be endangered, and he valued her much more than any of his other poultry, because she was the Lord's.' Years have passed by, but I cannot forget my father, 'I have not a gotten that hen; her offspring has been regularly sold every year, and the produce paid over to the funds of the missionary society. Having the curiosity lately to examine the reports, I find that the 'missionary hen' has yielded upwards of £20, and she still continues to form an item in our annual income."

Now, I want, sir, to enquire to whom this country is indebted for her missionary institutions, to whom she owes her churches, her chapels, and her schools, and who, under God, may claim their portion in the harvest of souls to be eventually brought in to the heavenly garner from this land? And I fearlessly reply that they are men and women who exercise integrity and self-denial and effort such as I have described; and what I want to do, without invidious recrimination, is affected chiefly but earnestly and sincerely to invite our noble brothers and sisters, who have so many responsibilities resting upon them, to emulate such examples, doing something, every one of them, to make the religion of the Savior, so to speak, indigenous to the soil. Then in their case will never be heard an antithesis like the following, "Curse ye Meeroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came here to help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

Satisfied with explaining myself to you, I would leave it yourself to put me right with your Tamil readers, while I beg to subscribe myself, My dear sir, yours most truly,
ADVENA.

To the Editor of the Morning Star.

SIR.—The men of many grades and hues are characterized for the high position they occupy in the name embalmers in the records of history, as statesmen, politicians, bankers, lawyers, divines, and the like, together with their virtues, &c., I cannot forbear noticing the name of a gentleman lost to me, and I may say to the community here. I allude to EDWIN STANHOPE WHITEHOUSE, Esq., whose name is recorded on the 13th instant. For one with many, he has been a benefactor to the community in Jaffna, and has been a benefactor to his family circle, he has said that a great man has fallen; for I have lost a kind, sympathizing and benevolent master, under whom I had the honor to serve for the period of 14 years, in the capacity of an account keeper. But the public has lost a truly benevolent friend; the poor a generous benefactor and a respected family are left to mourn their irreparable loss.

With tears in my eyes, I send this for insertion in your next issue, as a humble tribute, (though from a native) of gratitude and esteem for the late Mr. Whitehouse, and remain,
Sir, your most obedient and afflicted servant,
Jaffna, June 21, 1852.
C. SINNANTAMBY.

AUSTRIAN SVANS.—We understand that three Austrian Svans, Counts Privan and Keesigbrunn, accompanied by Professor Schmarda of Prague, are now at Galle making scientific researches, astronomical, magnetic, zoological and ethnological. It is reported that these learned men will remain in this island for one year. They are expected to arrive at Colombo next week, and that Chevalier Privan and Dr. Seemann, who sympathize in the benevolent views of the chief department of zoology which will engage their attention are crustacea and the misurie, the latter never before investigated in this part of the world, and therefore we doubt not this new and unexplored field of tropical fauna will yield many curious and unheard of forms of microscopical creatures.—Colombo Observer, June 6.

"UNCLE TOM" IN FRANCE.—Uncle Tom's Cabin is having as great a run in France as it seems to have had in England and America. Whatever be the opinion on slavery, it will be acknowledged that this work has done one good in France, viz. it has awakened a desire in many minds to read the Bible. Colporteurs have been reported to say that the question has been put to them, whether their Bible were the same as Uncle Tom's, and when an affirmative answer has been given, the Bible has been bought at once.
Cor. of New Orleans Christian Advocate.

