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THE HINDU ORGAN.

JAFFNA, WEDNESDAY MARCH 7, 1900

The Islands.

Elsewhere we publish an earnest and weighty memorial presented to the Legislative Council by the Honourable Dr. Rockwood on the 21st ultimo from the inhabitants of certain Islands which form a portion of the District of Jaffna. A perusal of the document is sure to disclose a state of affairs in the Islands which ought to attract the serious attention of the Government and result in the prompt redress of the grievances complained of. These Islands are practically cut off from communication with the Peninsula of Jaffna; and only those who have some acquaintance with them know the great discomfort and inconvenience the Islanders suffer on account of their isolation and absence of ready means of communication with Jaffna. It is inconceivable that the interests of nearly 35,000 persons who, according to the latest return of the Registrar-General, inhabit these Islands should have been so long neglected by the Government and that they should have been left to shift for themselves as best as they could, without sharing in the benefits which the other portions of the Colony enjoy.

We know by personal experience that a trip to some of the Islands entails greater troubles, worries and inconveniences than one experiences in a voyage to some parts of South India, although the former are within 15 or 20 miles from Jaffna. A causeway, therefore, connecting the Island of Velanai with Jaffna, either at Arali or at Pannai will, not only make the former practically a part and parcel of the District, but also will generally afford great relief to the other Islands, especially Punguditivu, Analaitivu, and Nainativu, which are in close proximity to the Island of Velanai.

Owing to the isolated condition of the Islands, the people are entirely at the mercy of the Headmen, who do not scruple to abuse their power and influence. The exaction of 25 cents from each Road Tax payer in aid of the War Relief Fund and a similar levy last year for the building of a Latrine at Kaits would not have been possible in any other parts of Ceylon. Had it

not been for the visit of a gentleman from Jaffna to one of the Islands, last month, the attempt on the part of the Headmen to recover what was intended as a voluntary contribution as a tax would have never come to light, and the Government Agent could not have, as he has just done, put a stop to this exaction. We bring this fact to show that with a causeway constructed as prayed for in the memorial, not only the physical comforts of the Islanders would improve but their political condition also would be ameliorated by the more frequent visits of officials, of tourists and land-owners from Jaffna to the Islands.

The Islands possess not only a rich soil suitable for different varieties of cultivation, but, unlike the Vannies, enjoy a salubrious climate, more salubrious than even the Peninsula of Jaffna. Those that are and have been at the head of affairs here have bestowed and are bestowing much attention to the development of the Vannies, in spite of their deadly climate and sparse population, and do not seem to have bestowed any thought on the improvement of the condition of these Islands, although they are, so to speak, at our very doors, and contain a large population who are, on account of their isolated position, the poorest and the most helpless among Her Majesty's subjects in the Colony, and are subject to very great discomforts and inconveniences. Most of the Islands are devoid of internal means of communication. The roads opened by the late lamented Mr. Dyke have fallen into such ruins that their traces are in some places entirely lost. In the Island of Punguditivu such is the case, and only two miles of road are kept in repair at an annual cost of a hundred rupees or so, although about one thousand rupees are recovered annually by road tax in that Island alone.

A causeway as prayed for in the memorial is more necessary in the interest of these Islands than even the extension of the railway is to the general prosperity and well-being of the Northern Province. The memorialists are perhaps unaware that in the public Address presented in Jaffna to His Excellency Sir J. West Ridgeway, in January 1897, this causeway was mentioned as one of the chief wants of the District. Otherwise they would not have failed to bring this important fact to the notice of His Excellency and the Hon'ble members of the Legislative Council.

We are glad that some of our daily contemporaries in Colombo have earnestly taken up this subject and commended the Memorial to the favourable consideration of the Government. The Hon'ble the Tamil Member has not yet done any signal service to his constituents. It is to be hoped that he will earn the thanks of the people of these Islands by securing for them the construction of this causeway. We also earnestly hope that our Government Agent also will realize the neglected condition of the Islands and the necessity of this causeway for their welfare, and see his way to strongly urge on the Government the urgent need of constructing this work, which, we believe, will not present any engineering difficulties, or entail expenditure beyond the present means of the Colony.

LOCAL & GENERAL.

The Weather—The drought still continues. Not a drop of rain has fallen for some time past. The heat during the day is unbearable.

The Government Agent—Mr. Ievers is now engaged in acquiring lands for the railway in the Town and its vicinity.

The Postmaster-General—Mr. Moysey the Postmaster-General after inspecting the Jaffna Post Office left by the Lady Gordon on the 27th ultimo.

Steamer Service—The competition between the steamers of the Ceylon Steamship Company

and that of Messrs Noorbhai and Co. is growing very keen, resulting in the reduction of passenger fare from Rs 5 to Rs 2 by the steamship company. The rival company also intends, we understand, to make a similar reduction, and the public are the gainers by the competition. Till last month passengers could go to Colombo from here and vice versa by steamer once a fortnight only. Now there is weekly service by each steamer of the rival companies and the charges also are less than half of what they were. The Ceylon Steamship Company has also reduced the freight on cargo by half. Mr. William Mather, the Jaffna Agent of the Ceylon Steamship Company, has gone to Colombo, to consult, it is said, with the Managers of the Company in the Metropolis in regard to the further reduction of cargo freights and passenger fares should it become necessary.

Personal—Mr. V. Sianatmby District Engineer's Clerk, Pussalawa, is now in Jaffna, on leave. He returns to his station next week.

Crime—In a quarrel last week at Nallore among goldsmiths three men were seriously stabbed and they are now in the F. N. S. Hospital.

At Manthavil near Chavakachcheri the son-in-law has killed his father-in-law in a quarrel in regard to some land.

The Udaryarship of Vannarponnai West—We are glad to learn that Mr. Kandiah Rammalingam, the Police Vedhan of Vannarponnai South West, has been appointed by the Government Agent as Udayar of Vannarponnai West, in succession to the late Mr. Lampillai Ponnampalam.

Mr. J. K. Namasyvayam Pillai B. A.—This gentleman who is one of the professors of the Hindu College has come off successful in the last B. L. Examination of the Madras University. We congratulate Mr. Namasyvayam on his success. We understand that he will continue to be a Professor of the College for one year and then go over to India to commence the practice of his profession. Mr. Namasyvayam's great abilities and high principles are sure to win him success in whatever line of life he might choose to follow.

The Fiscal's Office—Mr. K. O. Kadiramer, Head Clerk of the Jaffna Fiscal's Office, has been appointed as Deputy Fiscal under Mr. Rudd, who will thus be relieved largely of his responsibilities as Deputy Fiscal and devote the greater part of his attention to his duties as Superintendent of Police. We understand that this arrangement does not involve any additional expenditure to Government. Mr. Kadiramer is an able officer of Government and had acted in a similar capacity for a long time in Batticaloa.

The Tamil Sangam and the Director of Public Instruction—A grand Reception was given to Mr. S. M. Burrows, Director of Public Instruction, by the Members of the Tamil Sangam, at the Sivapragasavitiyasalai on Wednesday the 28th ultimo. The place was very tastefully decorated for the occasion and a large number of gentlemen were present in response to the invitation of Mr. Kailasapillai the President of the Sangam. The Government Agent, Mr. Ievers and Mrs. Burrows also graced the occasion by their presence. Mr. Kailasapillai read an address to which Mr. Burrows made a suitable reply. We are obliged for want of space to hold over the publication of the Address till our next issue. We hope the Director will see his way to grant the requests made in the Address.

The Acting Attorney-Generalship—Strenuous efforts are being made by the enemies and rivals of Mr. Ramanathan, as they did on two previous occasions without success when the Attorney-General went on leave, to prejudice the Government against the Solicitor-General and deny him the right of becoming the acting Attorney-General. We do hope that His Excellency Sir J. West Ridgeway will see through their machinations and do justice to this able and faithful public officer. In the midst of so many attempts by his enemies to blacken Mr. Ramanathan's character, no one ever dared to say anything reflecting against him in his official capacity. We hope to show in our next issue that the attacks on Mr. Ramanathan, championed by the Ceylon Observer are undeserving as they are not actuated by the best of motives. We publish in another column a just exposure of the tactics of Mr. Ramanathan's enemies by the Ceylon Independent.

Gubernatorial—Her Excellency Lady Ridgeway and Miss Ridgeway returned to Ceylon on the 22nd ultimo after nearly 12 months absence in England.

The Transvaal War Relief Fund—The contributions to the fund in Ceylon now amounts to Rs 78,000.

Serious Riot Near Colombo—Religious riot between the Roman Catholics and Buddhists occurred at Paliagoda near Grandpass on the 25th ultimo. In the course of the riot one man was killed and about twenty injured, and several houses and boutiques were looted and much property was damaged. A large force of armed police interfered and put down the riot and restored order in the village.

The War—British subjects all over the world are jubilant at the relief of Kimberley and Ladysmith and at the surrender of General Cronje with 4000 men. The tide has now turned and all anxieties in regard to the beleaguered garrisons are at an end. No news has been received of the relief of Mafeking, but it will follow as a matter of course. It remains to be seen what opposition the Boers will now offer from within their own frontier.

A COWARDLY ATTACK ON AN OFFICIAL.

The writer of the anonymous letter to the *Observer* who says that "grave charges are pending" against Mr. Ramanathan and that he "should not be allowed to fill that office again until he has fully cleared himself from the direct charges and the serious imputations made against him in connection with the long-drawn Dicklatch case" ought to be ashamed of himself. If he is a brother Advocate of Mr. Ramanathan's doubly shame to him. There is not a word of truth in what he says. There are no charges grave or otherwise pending against Mr. Ramanathan. Mr. Ramanathan has acted twice before as Attorney-General. He is now Solicitor-General, and for fifteen years was a member of the Legislature. To make statements about him which are absolutely and totally false, to say that there are "grave charges" pending against him—which is pure fabrication and malignant invention—under cover of anonymity, is a proceeding as disgracefully mean and underhand, that it is safe to presume the writer is a man of no character. Can "Fiat Justitia" specify any of these grave charges alleged to be pending? We cannot help expressing our surprise at the Editor of our respectable contemporary admitting such a cowardly and scandalous letter to his columns. If he possesses any of the courage of his nationality let him specify clearly in black and white what those "grave charges" are and give so the official concerned an opportunity of "recovering" heavy damages. If not, let him hold his peace and "ware of anonymous correspondents" from Hultsdorf who are only too eager to emulate the example set in high places of penning anonymous screeds for the purpose of stabbing an enemy in the back. As the Governor's attention has been pointedly drawn to this matter, we invite His Excellency's attention to the *Observer's* response to this challenge which we make solely in the interests of fairplay.—Independent

THE SUPREME COURT AND THE NORTHERN RAILWAY

A correspondent, writing from London to the *Times* of Ceylon by the last mail says:—

"It is settled, I believe, that the Hon. Frederick Moncrief, at present Puisne Justice in the Mauritius, is to succeed Mr. Withers on the Supreme Court Bench, and it is also said that a lawyer is to be sent out from London to succeed Mr. Lawrie when the latter retires shortly."

"Another piece of news is that the Northern Railway is to be constructed entirely by your Government, and that none of it is to be given out on contract, as was at first intended. The reason for this I have not been able to learn but the information comes from very good authority, and it is in keeping with the Government policy of railway building of late. It will be a disappointment to those who sent in tenders for the construction, of whom, I believe, there were two—our old friend F. D. Mitchell being one of them."

A PETITION FROM THE ISLANDS

The minutes having been read by the Clerk of Council (Mr. J. J. Thoburn).

The Hon. the TAMIL MEMBER (W. G. Rockwood) rose and presented the following petition from some of the inhabitants of the island of Valanai, Punkudutive, Analaitive, Nainative, and Delt praying for the construction of a causeway between the Peninsula of Jaffna and the Islands at the Araly ferry.

To His Excellency Sir Joseph West Ridgeway, K. C. B., K. C. S. I., Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Island of Ceylon with dependencies thereof and the President of the Legislative Council of Ceylon, and to the honourable members of the Legislative Council.

The humble memorial of the inhabitants of the Islands of Valanai, Punkudutive, Analaitive

Nainative, Delt, and the landed proprietors living in the peninsula and owning lands in the Islands.

May it please Your Excellency,—

The memorialists are the residents of the Islands in the vicinity of Jaffna which are seven or more in number and contain according to the last census, a population of 31,736 which is about 1-10 of the entire population of the Northern Province and is 1-6 above the population of the District of Mannar and $\frac{1}{2}$ above the population of Mullaitive and Vavuni; they all feel the crossing and the recrossing of the Araly ferry and the transporting of the produce of the land, articles of trade, necessaries of life, manure for cultivation, from one side to the other to be irksome, tedious, and attended with unavoidable delay and expense; and it is also detrimental to their advancement and civilization as may be seen by comparing them with the people of the peninsula of Jaffna.

Since the British assumed the Government of Ceylon, the material prosperity of the Island has gone on by leaps and bounds; roads have been opened, rails have been laid; telegraphic communication has been started, trade has increased, education has been encouraged, public works of utility have been accomplished, new industries have been introduced, and everywhere there are signs of advancement and prosperity. But the memorialists regret to state that in the general improvements, the Islands alone have not been fortunate enough to share and enjoy to any perceptible extent, although they pay equally with others for the general revenue of the land.

There are Colleges and high schools in the peninsula; but from the want of a free and easy communication between it and the Islands the school-going population find it almost impossible to profit by it. Education in the Islands is much behind the requirements of the times, thus far only a few vernacular schools have been opened and these are found to be not proportionate to the population of the Islands. There is nothing of English education in the Islands though the people feel very keenly the need of it. These states of things are partly due to the lack of an easy communication between the Islands and the peninsula.

The sea between the peninsula and the Islands is so shallow and muddy near the shore that boats cannot reach the shore. It is therefore heart-rending to see men, women and children wading through water and mud in an indecent manner at the Pannai ferry to reach the boats and back again to the shore. The memorialists also suffer from the famine prices they have to pay for all the necessaries of life. Rice is sold much higher in these Islands than in the peninsula, and there is always a scarcity for vegetables; but if communication is made easy so as to allow carts and other vehicles to run between the Islands and the peninsula, things would not sell so high. Bazaars, schools and private Dispensaries will then be opened and hundreds of men would be saved from the quack treatment of the so-called native doctors.

In the years gone by, the seasons were regular and rain fell in abundance and the lands in the Islands yielded a large quantity of paddy and other grains for the consumption of men and animals; but of late seasons have altered, rain fall is scanty and the annual produce of the lands is almost nothing. Hence the inhabitants have to go in search of employments for trade to other part of the peninsula. But for the sea between them they could not go at stated times and the result is they have to be confined to their homes and become wasted by starvation and want.

There is an extensive Crown waste land between Mundaitive and Chiravanai and, if easy communication is opened, nearly the whole of the Crown land could be sold and eventually be converted into flourishing fields and coconut and palmyrah tops.

Araly ferry is almost centrally situated as regards the Islands on the one side and the markets on the other to which the Islanders resort. Therefore all Islanders going to the bazars and markets, Courts and Kachcheries and for other business in the peninsula prefer to pass and re-pass by the Araly ferry which is about a mile and a quarter in width. Therefore the memorialists humbly think that Araly ferry will be the most convenient place to construct a causeway between the peninsula and the Islands. They also humbly think that it would be a boon and a blessing to the agricultural population in the Islands and to others who own large farms in the Islands. It would also give an impetus to the food producing capability of the Islands and allow petty traders and small merchants to have free intercourse with people living in the peninsula.

Under these circumstances the memorialists humbly beg and pray that Your Excellency and the honourable members of the Legislative Council would graciously be pleased to take into consideration the matter of a causeway for the Islands and vote a sufficient supply for its construction.

For which act of goodness and charity, the memorialists as in duty bound Shall Ever pray.

THE CENTRAL IRRIGATION BOARD.

A meeting of the Central Irrigation Board was held to-day at Queen's House under the presidency of H. E. the Governor. The other members present were Mr. F. H. Girdlington, Mr. H. Parker, Mr. A. de A. Senewiratne, and Mr. P. Coomaraswamy. Amongst the matters that came up for consideration was, we believe, the proposal to appoint a director of Irrigation Works which office it is considered desirable to create in view of the many large and expensive irrigation works which the Government are about to undertake.—Times Ceylon.

TELEGRAPHIC SUMMARY.

THE WAR

London, February 23rd. Lord Roberts arrived on Monday, when the bombardment began. The cannonade was stopped for half a day on Tuesday, during the pausing which took place, and which ended in General Cronje refusing surrender. Then the whole force of Artillery, including the Naval guns and Howitzers concentrated their fire at a thousand yards' range over a space of a mile. General French meanwhile was engaged to the eastward. The British loss in killed at Paardeburg, last Sunday, was 146.

The Boers occupy the high ridges near Nelthorpe and are opposing General Buller's advance with big guns and rifles. His advance is slow.

Reuter wiring from Paardeburg on the 22nd says the shelling was continued last night, and was intermittent to-day. A large supply column has reached us.

CRONJE SURRENDERS.

London, February 27th. It is officially stated that General Cronje has surrendered with whole force, unconditionally.

Lord Roberts, telegraphing from Paardeburg on the 27th, says:—"General Cronje and all his force capitulated unconditionally at daylight. He is now my prisoner in my camp. The strength of his force will be communicated later. I hope Her Majesty's Government will consider the event satisfactory, occurring as it does on the anniversary of Majuba."

The Queen received the news of General Cronje's capitulation with great joy, and cabled Her Majesty's congratulations to Lord Roberts. Telegrams from all parts of the country testify to the general rejoicing.

A despatch from Lord Roberts states that at three this morning a most dashing advance was made by the Canadians and Engineers, supported by the Gordons and Shropshires, which brought them to within eighty yards of the enemy's trenches. This gallant deed apparently clinched matters, for daylight brought a letter of surrender, and Cronje arrived in camp at seven. In the course of conversation he asked for kind treatment and also that his wife, grandson, Secretary, Aide-de-Camp and servants might accompany him wherever he was sent. Lord Roberts promised compliance with his wishes, and General Cronje starts immediately for Cape Town under charge of General Pretorius.

The prisoners, numbering about 3,000, will be sent to-day to Modder River, and thence in batches to Cape Town.

London February 28th

General Sir Redvers Buller telegraphs from headquarters at Llangawane Plain to-day:—"General Barton's brigade last evening assaulted and carried the top of Pietor's Hill, thus to a certain extent turning the enemy's left."

"The Fourth and Eleventh Brigades, under the supreme command of General Sir Charles Warren, assailed the enemy's main position, which was magnificently carried by the South Lancashires at sunset."

"Sixty prisoners were taken."

"The enemy were scattered in all directions."

"There seems still to be a considerable number of the enemy left on Bulwana mountain."

General Buller adds:—"I hope the British losses are not large."

In a despatch from Lord Roberts, dated the 28th February, His Lordship says:—"The prisoners departed for Cape Town under an escort of the City Imperial Volunteers and the Glosters. The women and children were sent to their homes."

170 Boers wounded were brought to the British hospital. Many were pitifully neglected. The Boers are indignant at Cronje refusing medical aid.

Reuter, wiring from Paardeburg, says:—"On meeting, Lord Roberts and General Cronje exchanged salutes, and upon Cronje dismounting Lord Roberts shook hands with him saying, 'You have made a gallant defence, Sir.' Refreshment was then ordered and conversation ensued."

LADYSMITH RELIEVED.

London March 1.

A despatch from General Sir Redvers Buller dated to-day, says:—"Lord Dundonald, with the Natal Carabineers and a Composite Regiment entered Ladysmith last night. The country between me and Ladysmith is reported clear of the enemy. I am now moving on Nelthorpe."

A despatch from Lord Roberts, dated Paardeburg says that General Clements reports that he occupied Colesberg yesterday and met with an enthusiastic welcome. He secured some ammunition of the rebels.

A Reuter's despatch from Paardeburg, dated the 28th, says that the Boers are reported to be in force to the South-West.

