

CASTE AND CLASS.

The Aristocracy of the Maritime Provinces of Ceylon.

BY J. W. P.

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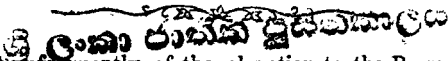
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PRICE ONE RUPEE.

CASTE AND CLASS.

The Aristocracy of the Maritime Provinces, OF CEYLON.

FIAT JUSTITIA RUAT CÆLUM.


We hear, not infrequently, of the elevation to the Peerage, of English, Scotch, and Irish gentlemen;—men distinguished for their statesmanship or eminent parliamentary talents, men distinguished as Naval or Military Officers for their heroism, or men distinguished for their extraordinary literary talents. And, verily, no imaginable harm is occasioned to the peoples of England Scotland and Ireland by the elevation of their distinguished sons. Many of our readers are doubtless aware that Peerages are conferred even on such as are of the blood royal. Nor, because they are so conferred, are the son of the Shoe-black and the son of the Chimney-sweeper excluded from the Peerage. They may aim at greatness, and by dint of perseverance and assiduousness may attain it.

The Peer, whether English Scotch or Irish, naturally and essentially possesses a keen sense of his own dignity; but that sense, however keen, happily does not impel him to regard his countrymen in the hamlet walks of life with disdain. He does not think it derogatory to his dignity to associate with the Squire. The Peer may even marry the daughter of the Squire, and the Squire the daughter of the Peer; and no discarding from the family or social ostracism is the consequent. Nor, indeed, do we see any great gulf between the Peer and the Yeoman. The Peer treats the Yeoman, not with contempt, but with due deference. The Squire often meets the Yeoman on terms of perfect equality. The Squire may, without incurring, in the least degree, the displeasure of those connected to him by affinity or blood, marry the Yeoman's daughter; nay, it may not be, in the least, objectionable for the not well-to-do Peer, to marry the daughter of an opulent Yeoman.

The Peer does not look down on the working people as though they were hardly anything above the brutes. In the labourer he realizes what he himself is—a human being. He does not forget that all or some of his ancestors had earned their bread by means of labour. He is alive to the fact that the labourer of the day may successfully aim at greatness, that a higher pinnacle of greatness may await the labourer. History tells him that Geniuses and Heroes have been found not only among the aristocracy and Gentry. Having made these few prefatory observations, it would be hardly necessary for us to impress upon the minds of our readers that, in England, as well as in Scotland and Ireland, any man may in any direction attain eminence by means of industry and perseverance, may become a Peer, may become a Dignitary of the State, may lead the Bar; that low-birth is no impediment or hindrance to his progression. We shall now come to the subject of Caste and class in Ceylon.

The subject of Caste in Ceylon has always continued to attract a no inconsiderable degree of Public attention, and we believe it will be conceded by our readers that the subject has attracted more attention since the assumption of the Government of this Island by our present Ruler, than at any period anterior to it. We propose, in these pages, to present to our readers, our own views as those of an unprejudiced mind, regarding Caste and Class, and the influence which Governmental recognition of Caste and Class, inevitably produces on the community at large.

Sir Arthur Gordon professedly tolerates all forms of religion. Our readers are not to infer from this statement that we suggest, that his predecessors had been intolerant towards the religious convictions of others. More than any previous administration, Sir Arthur's has been marked by religious toleration. His policy we admire and applaud. We wish we could exculpate His Excellency when we come to consider the insalutary results produced by his too close contact with a pretended local aristocratical institution. It is with profound regret we say we cannot.

We have heard of the recent revival of the rank of "Adigar" of the Kandyan Provinces. This rank might rather have lain buried in the sacred oblivion of the past than have been revived by Sir Arthur; because there has been no promulgation of any declaration of the Adigar's superiority to the Maba-Mudalyar. Why should the question of precedence not have been determined simultaneously with the revival of the rank? We do not doubt that the Kandyan Archives and the Dutch records still extant would help towards the solution of the difficulty, if any difficulty really exists. For our part, we do not hesitate to say that the position of an Adigar is very much

higher than that of the Maha-Mudalyar, although there seems to be no disposition in the Government even to suggest it. We are afraid that some apprehension had existed, which deterred our Ruler from declaring in favor of the Adigar—perhaps an apprehension that such a declaration might startle, or excite the jealousy of the Maha-Mudalyar. We have adverted to this matter, only in order to convince our readers of the omnipotence of the Maha-Mudalyar and the impotence of a waning, humiliated, Kanlyan Aristocracy.

We believe that the predecessors of Sir Arthur Gordon, from Governor North to Governor Longden, had decidedly been averse to the recognition or encouragement of Caste and Class distinctions. The Government has ever been fully sensible of the impossibility of bringing even by its own positive endeavours, any amalgamation of the different classes of the people of this Island; but its aim had always been the complete obliteration of those Caste and Class prejudices which indubitably demoralize the community at large; especially the ignorant portion of the community which sadly crouches under its own degradation. We are no advocates in favor of the amalgamation of the different Classes; but we desire to see the Government do justice to all communities or all sections of the different native communities. The Government has always had in view the moral and social elevation of the people; its eventual triumph would only have been a question of time. But, forsooth, were the policy which has been pursued by Sir Arthur be persistently maintained till the termination of his career in this Island, were his successors to adopt and continue to maintain his policy, the vast majority of the Singhalese population of this Island will degenerate to their primitive level. We emphasize this assertion, because our knowledge of the natives of this Island, of their characteristics, of their susceptibilities, is not so limited as some might suppose.

We shall now consider whether there is or there is not a Singhalese aristocracy in Ceylon. Our contention is that there had been an aristocracy in the Kandyan Kingdom, but since the cession of that Kingdom to the English, that aristocracy has lost its wealth and its prestige, and has degenerated into the condition in which we behold it now. Its degeneration is not to be attributed, as some might suppose, to itself, but to the predominance of an enlightened Government which, until recently, has not practically recognized the existence of any aristocracy. Its degeneration may also be ascribed to its isolation from the chief Seat of the Government. We shall offer no further observations on the Kandyan aristocracy. We must now invite the attention of our readers to the pretended aristocracy of the Maritime Provinces.

We are inclined to believe that a Native aristocracy in the Maritime Provinces never existed. It must be conceded that it is always difficult, and often impossible, to prove a *negative*, to prove that a certain thing did not exist or did not occur. If such an aristocracy ever existed, history or tradition should establish the fact. We defy proof of the past existence of an aristocracy in the Maritime Provinces. It is to be regretted that most of those who pretend to belong to the *aristocracy* have scarcely any idea of what could be the signification of the word. Perhaps, they suppose that a Madalyar whose great-grand-father had been a Mudalyar is an aristocrat; or, perhaps, they suppose that aristocracy is a word which admits of considerable latitude of signification! The pretensions of this self-constituted aristocracy are rather startling and greatly amusing. It pretends to have occupied for several centuries the highest position in the Island, its Ruler alone excepted. We are not aware that any reliable proof exists, or can be adduced, to establish its pretensions. We do not hesitate to declare openly that the ancientness or antiquity of the aristocracy (?) of the Maritime Provinces is problematical, if not utterly mythical. Our own conception of an aristocracy is far different from that ludicrous interpretation put upon the word by most of the "first class gentleman" of the day. To enable our readers to form a just estimate of the aristocracy of the Maritime Provinces, we may as well say that our own idea of it is this,—that this aristocracy is composed of the descendants of the servants of the late Dutch Government and servants of the Dutch—some of Tamil extraction, some of Singhalese extraction, some possibly of both Singhalese and Tamil parents—whose position under the Dutch Government was analogous to that of a Court Interpreter or a Mudalyar of a Corle or Mohandiram, or Arachy of the present day. How the descendants of the Natives who had only about a century ago served the Dutch Government as Mudalyars, Mohandirams and Arachies, can claim to form an aristocracy in the present age, we cannot conceive. But Sir Arthur Gordon, if we may Judge from the phenomena of recent years, verily believes in the existence of an Aristocracy in the Maritime Provinces and its antiquity. We are afraid that Sir Arthur's prejudices are now too strong and too deeply rooted to admit of the possibility of our disabusing his mind of such a hallucination. We should not be surprised at the partiality of Sir Arthur to a native aristocracy, if a native aristocracy really existed. Nor, indeed, would we complain of such partiality so long as we are aware that Sir Arthur himself belongs to the aristocracy of Great Britain. But our contention is that no native aristocracy had ever existed, or can exist, in the Maritime Provinces. That institution which pretends to be aristocratical is an excrescence of modern date; nay, coeval only with the administration of Sir Arthur Gordon. We confidently challenge the

adduction of proof in support of the contention that an aristocracy does exist, proof in support of its antiquity, proof in support of its continuity. The burden of proof is on those who assert a fact in the affirmative, and we trust that no attempt will be made to shift it on us. If our contention be correct that no aristocracy has ever existed, then it must follow that the so-called first class Mudalyars and their children are not entitled to those immunities and privileges, which only, an aristocracy can lay claim to, and which properly appertains to it.

To determine whether a Singhalese "Wellala" family is respectable, or whether one family is more respectable than another, the "Gey" (family) name is the safest criterion. We have often analyzed the aristocracy (?) and we have discovered that there are many aristocrats (?) whom many a ("Wellala") cultivator in the Paddy field toiling in the heat of the mid-day sun would be ashamed to own as his relation. Again, there are villagers with or without some rank, or with or without wealth or means, or in a condition of abject poverty, who are not second to the very best among the so-called first Class "Wellalas." We hold that the "first class Wellalas" are first class, only in their own estimation, only according to themselves, but they are not so by Law, or by appointment, or even by suffrance. For our part, indeed, not the dread of all the paraphernalia of war would induce us to bow our heads with reverence before any man who has the effrontery to pretend that he is a first class "Wellala". It may not be amiss here to remark that the first class (?) "Wellala" man—a veritable demi-god—treats the rest of the Wellalas "with characteristic indifference and with some degree of contempt, sometimes undisguised, sometimes disguised. The first class "Wellalas" seem morally and socially separated from those on whom they contemptuously look down—the rest of the "Wellalas". Whether such indifference and contempt can be said to be compatible with a true Christian spirit we ask our readers to Judge. But they are all Christians, or, as most of them would have it, "first class" members of the Church of England.

We cannot forbear mentioning that not a few among them worship the *yellow robe*, and give alms to the Buddhist Priests, in the hope of prospective reward, or in expiation of their sins, notwithstanding their profession of Christianity. They must be terrible hypocrites who, while they are worshippers at the Temples, can unscrupulously go to a Christian Church and pretend to worship an Omniscient God in spirit and in truth. But we are not sermonizing, and we must apologize to our readers for having almost insensibly digressed from the subject before us.

We now come to the most important part of our subject. No one who has watched carefully the phenomena of recent times and endeavoured to

trace them to their causes, can possibly resist the idea that the Governor has been very partial to the first Class Wellalas ; partiality which, indeed, seems as marvelous as it is intolerable. We cannot account for this partiality otherwise than as the result of some misapprehension as to the position, in Ceylon, of the Wellalas who pretend to be of the first class. There are many important considerations which that partiality suggests to us, as it must undoubtedly suggest to our readers.

The antecedents of most of the first class (?) native gentlemen who have served the Crown, or, in other words, have rendered meritorious (?) services to the state are too well-known to the public of Ceylon. If there has been anything particularly detestable in nearly all the old-standing first class (?) Wellalas, it is their contempt of those around them, whether they be also Wellalas or people of any other Caste. And we have proofs exhibited almost daily before our very eyes, that the children have imbibed the principles of their parents and they follow in their footsteps. Most of the old Mudalyars, indeed nearly all of them have ruled, to use what seems to be a commonplace expression, with a rod of iron. They have been as tyrannical as they possibly can be ; yet it is the first Class (?) "Wellala" youth whom His Excellency sends into the Corle, invested with rank, and armed with authority which seems limited and limitable in theory, but which in practice seems unlimited and illimitable. Is the Wellala Youth of 20 or 21, whether of the first, second, or third class, morally or intellectually fit to rule a Corle ? We do not see the wisdom of preferring first class (?) raw, inexperienced, giddy-headed youths to natives, whose experience knowledge information and antecedents are undoubtedly the best guarantee of their fitness to administer a Corle. Sir Arthur Gordon is the son of a Peer who had at one time been at the helm of affairs, and why was not Sir Arthur appointed the Governor of Ceylon or of Fiji, at the age of twenty ? That objection which might then have been urged in his case may with equal or greater cogency be urged in the case of the Youths he has appointed to important offices since he became the Governor of this Island.

We next come to the question of means. It is obviously a momentous question. We may naturally ask—What are the means some of the first class (?) Youths are possessed of ? Wealth, or a private income, is necessary to support their position and dignity. It cannot be pretended that the insignificant salary they receive is adequate for the support of their position. A first class horse and trap, travelling carts, Terai Hats and Helmets with turbans, patent boots, dazzling Scarfs, silk tweed and superfine black cloth suits, neat Appas, all these are no doubt expensive commodities, and they must have them, because they ape everything European, unlike their fathers, and

it has been well said that

“The young Ceylon Mudalyars
Have not their father's ways,
Their customs are quite different
From those of former days.”

It is no argument that the parents of these youths possess abundant means or extensive property. Their coffers may be empty, and many of them may not be possessed of *unencumbered* property. It had always been an inflexible rule not to appoint men as Mudalyars and Muhandirams, who had no *independent* means. But where is the rule now? The salaries which the Mudalyars and Muhandirams receive are, as we have observed, inadequate to maintain their position. We remember a representation, not long ago made by the people of a certain village to the Government, against an unremunerated Headman. It was represented to the Government that the Headman was a *professional witness*, that he was daily at the Gansabawa Courts, and very frequently gave false evidence for the sake of lucre; that he was not possessed of independent means; that the only property he was possessed of was worth Rs. 500, but that had been mortgaged with another for Rs. 500. The Mudalyar who was asked to report on the matter, observes that the headman's indebtedness is a fact but that he will be in a position to discharge the debt! How a needy unremunerated headman, who is also a notorious perjurer, will be in a position to honestly discharge that debt we are unable to understand. Our own belief is that the headman would never be able to pay that debt in the position in which he is placed, unless he oppresses the people. We cannot too strongly condemn the appointment of men to offices of trust and responsibility, who are not possessed of independent means, or property absolutely their own, because the present age is one in which corruption has notoriously run high, and it is manifestly unsafe that elated, ostentatious youths without any independent income should be let loose among a timid grovelling people, who in a condition of abject servility have always been prevented by fear from laying their grievances at *Head Quarters*. Assuming it to be an established fact that their ancestors had done well in the discharge of the duties of their trust, we decline to believe that the sterling qualities of honesty and uprightness, and administrative talents are hereditary in particular lines of descent. Temptation is as irresistible in the case of impecunious aristocrats, as it is in the case of any other mortals; in truth, temptation in the case of the former is stronger. In Ceylon, an aristocracy is unmaintainable, because there is no wealth; but in England, owing to the affluence of his fortune, the Peer finds no difficulty to support his position; and *that fortune* is hereditary, descending whole and entire.

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from father to son. In Ceylon, the infinitesimal sub-division of landed property among sons and daughters, their children and grandchildren and remoter descendants result in their impoverishment. Wealth is necessary to the existence of an aristocracy; and men of wealth can be honest and can rule a people without oppressing them in order to their aggrandisement.

We have remarked, and very justly so, that Sir Arthur has been partial to the first class (?) Wellalas. It would undoubtedly tend to make the truth more precisely understood in this respect were we to place before our readers certain facts. We have before us outward manifestations of Sir Arthur's partiality, we have incontestable proof of it in the results; and we need not therefore speculate in the direction of psychological facts.

Many, or most of our readers are doubtless aware that since Sir Arthur Gordon assumed the Government of this Island, nearly all, if not all those appointments, which the ambitious native could envy, have been conferred on the aristocrats (?) of the low-country. Some of these appointments have been conferred on men whose intellectual and moral fitness is questionable. Can one single fact be urged in justification of the preference of these aristocrats (?) to other "Wellalas" or individuals of any other Caste, whose superior intellectual and administrative ability, whose experience and probity are better guarantee of their fitness, not to mention the services of their ancestors? Assuredly not! We fully understand the term "the glorious uncertainty of the Law" and being subject to the dreadful "Penal Code" which contains many ambiguous clauses, on which more than one construction may be put, we think generalization more safe than particularization. Nor is it necessary we should speak of particular persons or particular offices or appointments for our present purposes. We have the patent fact that nearly all, if not all, the appointments which a native could envy have been conferred on the aristocrats (?) of the low-countries. We have only to see if Sir Arthur Gordon, as the Governor of this Island, has been justified in conferring such appointments on the aristocrats (?). We certainly do not quarrel with Sir Arthur for honoring the aristocrats (?) with his august presence at their "Wallauwas" on festive occasions. With this we have nothing to do. Nor with the honor done to the Maha Mudalyar on the occasion of the local celebration of Her Majesty's Jubilee. There are some people who are prone to inveigh against the Governor for these uncalled-for tokens of kindness, as they characterized them, but we have only to join issue with His Excellency with regard to one question only, and that question we have already proposed.

A writer of some note observes that "Of all the principles of justice there is none so material to the moral rectitude of mankind, as that no man

can be distinguished but by his personal merit. When a man has proved himself a benefactor to the public, when he has already, by laudable perseverance, cultivated in himself talents which need only encouragement and public favor to bring them to maturity, let that man be honored." Our contention is that any man who has distinguished himself by his personal merit, who has by perseverance cultivated in himself talents which need only encouragement to bring them to maturity, should regardless of Class and Caste be preferred to him who has not so distinguished himself. That the members of one particular *Class* or Section only should be preferred, should be allowed to monopolize all enviable offices because they belong to that particular Class or Section, is as scandalous as it is unreasonable and unjust. We see members of one particular class appointed either as Assistant Government Agent, or Magistrate, or Mudalyar, or President, or Mohandiram. Can any excuse be suggested for these appointments, other than the fact that the lucky gentlemen belong to one particular Class? It cannot be pretended that they are more educated, or more wealthy than the others. We have to look for wealth and scholarship in other directions. The late Mr. James de Alwis was an excellent specimen of a Singhalese gentleman. His erudition, his information, his social position, entitled him to the first place among the Singhalese; yet, we learn from his auto-biography, that he reflected with pride that he had belonged to the middle class. And, truly, he had not belonged to any aristocratic family. He was a self-made man, and we are inclined to think that if he came of a "first class" family, he would never have attained the highest place among the Singhalese.

We apprehend that most of the members of the "first class" families do not appreciate the worth and importance of a good education. A Presidency or a Mudalyarship or a Mohandiramship is all they seem to care for and aim at; and in consequence of the facility with which they can obtain any of these posts, they sadly neglect those early opportunities of acquiring a good education presented to them in School. So it is obvious that the Government is not only doing an injustice to the public by its deliberate disregard of the claims of deserving men and by rendering only "first class" youths eligible to higher offices, but it is unintentionally doing harm to the "first class" youths by its stipulation, express or implied, to provide for them in the public service, whether they be conspicuous dunces or good scholars. The same may be said of the sons of the Kandyan Chiefs. Since the death of the late Mr. Advocate Dnunville—the first and the last eminent Kandyan gentleman—we have not known a single distinguished Kandyan gentleman; distinguished by his talents and education. Messrs Panabokke and Molamare are splendid specimens of Kandyan gent.

men, but their abilities do not rise above mediocrity. The highest ambition of the Kandyan youth seems to be, to become a Ratamahatneya or a Corale-Mahatneya. He seems to aim at no other goal.

We take it that the appointment of first class (?) natives as Magistrates, Judges, and assistant Agents, is a slur on the Burgher community. The Burgher community is an educated community. It is second to no community in Ceylon. The late Mr. Lorenz was undoubtedly the best man that Ceylon ever produced; and it is certain that his like we shall never meet again. The late Sir Richard Morgan, Mr. Frederick Nell, and the Honorable Chevalier James Van Langenberg were men of whom Ceylon was, and ever should be, proud. Well-educated men and highly-educated men among the Burgher community are at the present day too numerous, and we need not therefore mention names. But what has Sir Arthur done for the Burgher community? Some may be of opinion that in the appointment of Mr. Grenier to the high office of Attorney General, of Mr. Eaton as the Police Magistrate of Matale, of Mr. Swan as the Police Magistrate of Panadura, and of Mr. Morgan as Police Magistrate of Balapitmodera, the Burgher community has been fully recognized. From this opinion we must be permitted to dissent. Having had every opportunity of knowing the feeling of the Burgher community, we doubt very much that the appointment of Mr. Grenier has given satisfaction to that community. Many of those who sit with him at the bar may, in their intercourse with him, disguise their true feeling, but we need not be so hypocritical as to disguise our own. As to Mr. Advocate Eaton, we do not consider it an honor done to him, that he has been appointed a Police Magistrate of an outstation. If Sir Arthur has thought it otherwise, he could not have committed a greater mistake. Mr. Eaton, though unfortunate, is a truly good man. He was an eminent pleader in the Kandy Courts, and he is a man of the most incorruptible integrity. We are far from supposing that he has been favored or honored in his appointment as a petty Magistrate. Nor are we surprised that so unostentatious a man has accepted a post, which only ordinary men could envy. And now a word as to Mr. Swan and Mr. Morgan. Is it too much to appoint them as Police Magistrates of outstation Courts? No conscientious man can answer this question in the affirmative. The former is a son of a late Assistant Colonial Secretary, and the latter of one who had rendered eminent services to the Crown. The former had been an eloquent pleader at the Bar, and the latter is a Barrister-at-Law; and when one considers the abilities and the position occupied by the *first class* Singhalese gentlemen antecedent to their elevation to the *Civil Service*, when one considers the numerousness of the well-educated Burghers, whose superiority to the *first class* Singhalese gentlemen

is an incontrovertible fact, he cannot but feel indignant at the ridiculously small number of Burghers whom it has delighted Sir Arthur to honor. We fail to find one case of the appointment of a Burgher for which the community to which he belongs should be thankful to Sir Arthur. It is important to be borne in mind that the Burghers are the descendants of a race which had ruled the Maritime Provinces of this Island, and there can be no excuse for the exclusion of Burghers of admitted ability and probity from the service. It may be true they are proverbial for their extravagance, but they do not seem to be more extravagant than the European, or the *first class* native. We have observed that we doubt whether the appointment of Mr. Grenier has given even general satisfaction. There is a story told relative to Mr. Grenier's appointment as Attorney General. It runs thus: Mr. Fleming the late Attorney General, who is a personal friend of Sir Arthur Gordon, obtained leave to proceed to Europe. Mr. Grenier having been called to the English Bar was on his voyage out to Ceylon. Sir Arthur is said to have been under the impression that Mr. Grenier was a European and he had him gazetted, without any hesitation, as Acting Attorney General. His eventual confirmation in the appointment is attributed to the great satisfaction he had given Sir Arthur by his attitude in respect of certain cases of importance which had at the time attracted universal attention. The story is amusing indeed, but we are not in a position to say whether there is any truth in it, or whether it had been fabricated by some inventive genius, who envied Mr. Grenier's elevation. We now come to the "Wellalas" other than those of the *first class*. No one can gainsay that, among them, there are men of great talents, but it is very regrettable that the advantages of honors are inaccessible to them in proportion to their talents. Mr. William Goonetilleke and Mr. L. C. Wijesinghe are profound oriental scholars and as such they are unrivaled. In other respects too, we think they will surpass very nearly all the *first class* Wellalas. Nor are these the only two gentlemen we may name as being superior to the *first class* Wellalas (two or three alone excepted). There are numerous others and we need not name them. Our readers are doubtless aware that there is such a Caste as the Fisher-Caste. Messrs Advocate James Pieris, M. A. Barrister-at-Law; De Mell, M. A., and Goonawardena B. A. we believe, belong to that Caste. The case of these three gentlemen tempts us to repeat the lines.

"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness in the desert air."

Mr. Pieris is a gentleman, who besides being a Master of the Arts and a Barrister-at-Law, has obtained the MacMahon Scholarship. He is a man whom every Ceylonese should be proud, regardless of Caste and Class. It is

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possible, if he were a *first class* Wellala, he may before long become the highest Judicial functionary in the Island. But he is not a "Wellala" or rather a *first class* Wellala; and so long as Sir Arthur rules the land, that sagacious policy embodied in the words "all for the aristocrats; only the crumbs for the rest" must and will be maintained.

We cannot avoid narrating another story, which, we believe, to be true. Some time back a Mudalyarship became vacant. A "Wellala" young man, not of the *first class* applied to a certain Civil Servant, who had at one time been his Superior, for a letter of recommendation. The Civil Servant promptly and significantly asked the applicant whether Mr.—Mudalyar had any *other* daughters to give away. The applicant in his state of bewilderment, could not answer. The Civil Servant, amused by, rather than indignant at, his silence, advised him to ascertain whether Mr.—Mudalyar had any *other* daughters; and if it was discovered he had, to solicit his daughter as well as his assistance, in order to secure the post. The young man bowed reverently and went away.

We are tempted to refer to a conversation we had had with a Planter who chanced to travel with us in the same Coach not many months ago. He asked us whether Mr.—was an able—, and whether he was related to the Maha Mudalyar. We candidly said that, whatever may be the opinion of the Planters, we could not give a favourable opinion of the gentleman referred to, but that he was a relation of the Maha. He then told us that it was wonderful that the Maha could have more influence with Sir Arthur, than any one else in Ceylon, that the Planters believed he was the "favourite" of Sir Arthur. We were rather surprised at the remarks of the Planter, not because we doubted their truth, but because we had never had reason to believe that the Planters knew so much of the Maha Mudalyar and his influence with Sir Arthur Gordon. We often hear the remark fall from the lips of the Native Singhalese, and Native Burghers, and Native Tamils, that the Maha Mudalyar "rules the Island." Our readers will, we suppose, find no difficulty to understand the meaning of the expression. It is an expression which we hear repeated every day; and not unfrequently repeated by some of the *first class* Wellalas themselves. We are as free as the Press to criticise, and animadvert upon, the actions of public men, should our criticisms and animadversions contribute to the public good; and while assuring our readers and those to whom our remarks may give pain that we are actuated by no unworthy motive, we cannot help saying that, as an adviser, the Maha Mudalyar cannot deserve well of Sir Arthur Gordon; and unhappily for Sir Arthur's popularity and fame he has pursued a policy which has generated almost universal discontent. The highest offices to which all natives had

been considered eligible, have been filled only by the *first class* Wellalas, or, to speak more plainly, by the relations of the Maha-Mudalyar, and the other *communities* are bitterly mortified by their claims having been ignored. Sir Arthur Gordon may pass by our remarks with magnanimous disdain ; but we beg to assure His Excellency that we shall not be surprised if, at the termination of his administration, he leaves the Island as the most unpopular of Governors. We cannot altogether blame the Maha-Mudalyar, for subordinating the public interests to those of his own relations ; but we cannot exculpate Sir Arthur who has a discretion to use and might have exercised it without giving offence to any section of any community. It is incompatible with good Government to favor, or be partial to, a few of a section because they belong to that section. It seems to be earnestly urged as an argument by a few, that because the Maha-Mudalyar belongs to the *first class*, he is justified in utilizing the opportunities which his position offers him, to provide for his relations in the public service. This argument may seem plausible to the partizans of the favored few ; but we think it admits of easy and complete refutation. Speaking in the abstract, if a man has the confidence of another, he should not abuse that confidence. So also, if he has a public duty to perform he should not subordinate public duty to his own interests. If he abuses that confidence or fails in his duty, he cannot be allowed to absolve himself from his responsibility, under cover of his being of a favored class. What is the position of the Maha-Mudalyar ? He is the chief of the Mudalyars, is ever *bodily* by the Governor, and may be said to be a Mudalyar-in-Waiting. All the other Mudalyars are supposed to regard him as their Chief and to obey his behests. He is supposed to be competent to advise His Excellency on all questions in which the natives of the Island are interested. He is, of course, not supposed to be omniscient ; but he is the recognized mouth-piece of the Governor and the mouth-piece of the Mudalyars. His position is undoubtedly a very responsible one, and his advice may be often very useful to the Governor ; and there can be no doubt that the Governor has a right to seek the Maha-Mudalyar's advice ; but we cannot excuse the Governor for not exercising his right of private judgment. The Maha-Mudalyar is free to advise on all points, or to give his opinion or to make suggestions ; but it is the duty of the Governor to use his reason and see whether it would be safe, or consistent with precedents or just principles to act according to the advice, or opinions, or suggestions of his adviser. The appointment of the Maha-Mudalyar's relations to the higher offices in the public service, shows that the very existence of all classes of natives, save the *first class* gentlemen, has been completely ignored by the Governor, and it demonstrates an arbitrariness or absolutism unprecedented in the annals of

Ceylon, against which a bold stand should be made so long as Ceylon continues to be under the beneficent sway of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. It is simply ridiculous to prefer the descendants of Mudalyars, who may be unfit to discharge important duties, to others who are admittedly qualified to discharge them. That Sir Arthur Gordon can neither see the danger of intrusting mere lads with power, nor the injustice of excluding competent men from important offices, is indeed strange. We do not object to the appointment of *first class* youths because they are of the *first class* but we object to their appointment *in preference to others of admitted ability*, or whose past service entitles them to the favorable consideration of the Governor.

Many of our readers may be aware that an attempt had been made a few years ago to establish, by means of a compilation from ancient Vernacular Authors, the superiority of the Fisher-Caste to the "Wellala". It would have been more prudent for the compiler, who is an old Priest of the Fisher-Caste, to have remained in the obscurity from which he had emerged, rather than have made himself notorious by placing before the public a book or pamphlet which has done incalculable harm. It is not our purpose to establish the superiority of the Wellala Caste to all other Castes. That is not our business; and truly, we are not competent to undertake that task, however easy. Newspaper columns have also been very frequently resorted to, but the impression produced by Newspaper publications being only ephemeral, no great harm, we believe, has been done. But the admirable attitude of the Editors of the leading journals, and indeed of all the English journals, published in this Island, whenever they felt obliged to encourage discussions relative to *Caste and Class* has tended to discourage inflated Writers who endeavour to inculcate on their readers that, in order to ensure universal peace and felicity, the Government should regard Caste and Class distinctions. We admit the impossibility of obliterating, all at once, Caste prejudices. The process should be gradual and slow; and there should be no precipitancy about it. But we cannot too strongly deprecate any action of the Government, which presupposes the recognition by itself of what are in the opinion of the educated public, *invidious distinctions* of Caste and Class. If the appointment of a *first class* Wellala as the Mudalyar of a Corle cannot give offence to the inhabitants of a Corle, the appointment of a *second* or a *third Class* "Wellala" cannot possibly give offence. This is a fact which not even a *first class* Wellala man will have the hardihood to deny. Then, why should not *second* and *third Class* Wellalas be conceded the same privilege which, it seems, only the *first class* men are fated to enjoy, so long as Governor Gordon rules over us. Then, there are Corles inhabited by men, the majority of whom are of the Fisher-Caste; and why cannot a Mudalyar of that Caste be entrusted with such Corles? Or, indeed,

why cannot a Corle inhabited by even a majority of the *Wellalas*, be in charge of a *Mudalyar* of the Fisher-Caste or of the "Chalia" Caste. We have no doubt that a *Mudalyar* of the Fisher or "Chalia" Caste would treat a "Wellala" inhabitant with more justice, humanity, kindness, and respect than a *first class* *Mudalyar* would. Indeed a very few of the *first class* "Wellala" *Mudalyars* treat the inhabitants with even the *semblance* of justice, humanity, kindness, and respect; most of them act as though they were brutes only deserving of being trodden under their holy feet. These are truths, and we can attest them, because we have gone among all classes of the people in this Island and learnt a good deal about them and how they are governed. If anything has a tendency to impede their progress in the march of civilization, and demoralize them, it is the treatment they have become accustomed to at the hands of those who immediately rule over them. Could they dare attempt to make themselves heard at Head Quarters? Before they can dare such a thing they must be prepared to abandon their homes, to leave for ever the village of their birth; to forget those near and dear to them; to betake themselves to some remote part of the Island where they may ensure an immunity from persecution, oppression, and prosecution in a Court of Justice. We have known a certain *first class* Wellala *Mudalyar*, than whom, a more arbitrary tyrannical and wicked man in or out of the public service never existed. We shall say nothing more about him, as the less said of him the better. We need not revert to the fact of the unfitness of many of the *first class* young men, in an intellectual point of view;—and they must be unfit so long as there is no stimulus under which they can be expected to exert themselves—nor need we revert to the unwisdom of preferring inexperienced youths to experienced men who had already established a reputation for themselves.

We consider it reasonable, all facts and circumstances considered, that there should be one immutable, inflexible rule of Justice to every case that may arise. No state interference is solicited in social or domestic concerns. The Government is not asked to compel Miss—of the *first class* to marry Mr.—of the *second class* (Wellala); nor to compel Miss—of the Wellala Caste to marry Mr.—of the Fisher-Caste or of the Chalia Caste or of the Durawa Caste or of the Smith-Caste. With these the Government has no right to interfere. But the Government, which professes to be no respecter of persons, should reward every man according to his merits. Any person intrusted with important functions should be a man of unspotted virtue; or he would be the source of unbounded mischief. Whether he possesses the requisite qualifications to perform those functions is also a point which should be considered. Sir Arthur Gordon very properly thinks that the Natives of this Island should have some measure of self-government; that steps should

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be taken which would ensure the admission of a large number of natives into the Civil Service. This is all well and good. But while there are so many highly-educated natives in this Island, it would not do to appoint *first class* Wellala youths as Magistrates and Assistant Agents and Writers and Judges, because they are of the *first class*. It were better to import Englishmen, Scotchmen or Irishmen, than have native civil servants who are not capable of even writing a good letter. A mere European *polish* acquired in Europe, or in Ceylon by contact with Europeans, would not make a man a good Judge; it is of importance that he should be capable of performing the important functions with which he may be entrusted. We do not propose to vindicate the claims to special recognition, of those of the *first class* who may be said to be actually learned, wealthy, and independent; but it is significant that, while many an ignoramus has been the object of Sir Arthur's kind regard, the really deserving among the *first class* have been sadly overlooked.

And now to conclude. Our remarks, we are sensible, will give no little pain to the "Wellalas" of the *first class*, among whom we know there are many self-opinionated gentlemen; and many also, who, though more reasonable, yet could not be free from that bias which their frequent contact with the others has been calculated to engender. They cannot therefore judge us. No sensible man among them can reasonably be offended with us for boldly declaring the truth. If the truth be unacceptable to them, we cannot help it. We must contend for justice, pure and unadulterated justice, and we need not impress on the mind of a ruler as Sir Arthur Gordon, who possesses a high sense of justice, the injunction—*Fiat justitia ruat cælum*.



ERRATA.

Page	4th.	Line	19th.	...	Gentleman—read— Gentlemen .
"	5th	"	19th.	...	Suffrance—read— Sufferance .
"	7th.	"	28th.	...	Ostentati <u>o</u> n—read— Ostentati<u>o</u>s !
"	16th.	"	10th.	...	Functions—read— Function !
"	16th.	"	22nd	...	Unadulter <u>e</u> d—read— Unadulterat<u>e</u>d

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