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DUTCH BURGHER UNION OF CEYLON, MONTHLY BULLETIN

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"COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE AMONGST THE ANCIENT SINHALESE."

Professor G. P. Malalasekera dealt with this intriguing and fascinating subject in a most satisfying way. He provided a wealth of detail (notwithstanding the paucity of written records), quoting passages from the writings of poets and philosophers. He built up an air of romance, poked fun slyly but sympathetically at some of the old customs of courtship, and described the ideal of feminine beauty in a forthright manner that left a slight blush on the faces of some of his listeners.

The Sinhalese, he said, had a religion and a philosophy which did not encourage the material things of life, but they were warm-hearted enough to give full play to their feelings and to enjoy themselves. The Sinhalese was the Asian counterpart of the Italian in Europe. He was by nature warm and impulsive. His language too showed the resemblance; it gave full play to the vowels. Like the Italian, he was a good lover.

The ancient Sinhalese had a high conception of feminine beauty. The poet had described a beautiful woman as one whose face was like the moon, not round but radiating gentleness and softness, whose breasts were like swans, whose waist was so slender that it could be grasped in one hand, whose hips on the other hand

were broad like a cartwheel, whose complexion was fair and golden, and whose figure was as supple and entwining as a creeper. Her eyes were long, broad near the nose and tapering away towards the ears. They were so long that she should be able to see the tips of her ears.

Mrs. Beeton told us how to make a chicken stew, but she did not say how we should go about procuring the chicken. That was left to us. In the same way, the poet had provided the recipe for beauty, but he had not said where they got the bird. Where were the trysting places? The young people had many opportunities, Dr. Malalasekera said. They met when they went out to collect firewood, when they went into the fields, at fairs (where the girls armed with syringes were fond of squirting water into the faces of young men), at pinkamas, peraheras, and at the village well. They also met at the river bathing places, where mixed bathing was not uncommon.

The lecturer went on to describe the customs of marriage. When the marriage was of the type when the bride left her home to go to that of the bridegroom, there was an interesting ceremony in the course of which she stood on a plank of wood, off the ground from which was lifted bodily by the bridegroom and carried out. Standing on the plank symbolised the severance from the soil of her fathers. Before she was carried away the bridegroom gripped her hand in his, and on the clasped hands water was poured. The significance of this ceremony lay in the fact that the water fell from their hands to the earth, where it recorded their marriage. Immediately after the ceremony the couple were sent out into the darkness to look at Arundathi, the star of Constancy..

The average ages at which marriages took place were 25 years for the men and 15 years for the women. At this age, brides were expected to have learned all the accomplishments provided for in the book "The Science of Love". Among other things they were expected to know dancing, singing and music and at least one school of philosophy so that they could converse with their husbands in in their more serious moods. They were also expected to know how to teach birds to talk so that when they were too shy to tell their husbands anything, they could use birds as a medium !

Notes.

To judge from the condition in which the Sinhalese Class found the Hall on Sunday morning, July 21st, the children's party held the previous evening must have been a great success. This was confirmed by the organisers who have reported that the 58 children present had a good time,

Having dealt faithfully with the children, the officials of the Union have now turned their attention to the older people and are concentrating on a party to be held towards the end of September to be known as "Old Folks at Home". The Choral and Dramatic Group will put on a couple of original items. There is no truth in the story that in order to make the party an unqualified success the organisers are arranging for the news of a scandal to break on that particular day.

:-:-:-

A certain amount of acid comment has been heard by us on the method adopted for increasing subscriptions to the Social Service and Education Funds. Members will remember that a circular was issued with the Bulletin asking for an additional 50 cts. per month for these two funds and inviting those who did NOT agree to pay this extra subscription to notify their unwillingness by signing and returning the slip annexed to the circular. This method of approach was characterised by some as a sort of blackmail. In refreshing contrast to these grumbler, however, was the member who was contemplating the reply that he did not agree to subscribe fifty cents monthly to the two funds as he preferred to subscribe one rupee.

Brain Teasers.

By W. J. A. VANLANGENBERG.

III.

My friend Gin-Sling writes :—

"Life on Sintam is grand. I spend every evening drinking bahru, eating pofferchees and being fanned by lovely lushinees. Oh, boy, aren't they intoxicating and I don't mean the bahru which has a kick like a mule.

Which reminds me that I went yesterday to the famous temple of Dobahru, (which means the Temple of the Sacred Intoxicant) accompanied by my favourite lushinee. The priests are a fine lot of men and have to observe the thirteen platinum precepts. The ninth read as follows :—

'Within half an hour of sunrise a priest shall, in honour of the right limb of the sun, walk in the temple garden without stick or stone; in such manner that his right leg shall travel twenty nine feet further than his left leg. There shall be no severance or mutilation of limbs, nor shall artificial members be permitted. This over, the priest shall face the sun and consume seven beakers of bahru.'

Frankly the first part of the precept had me beat, though I was assured by a Pooda that it was faithfully carried out. The second part was, I found, quite easy to perform.

No one will tell me how the walk is performed without damage to the priests and it is most embarrassing for me to admit I am unable to solve the difficulty. For love of Amsterdam help me."

Can you help Gin Sling?

Shopping Expedition.

Mr. Fernando's great ambition is to beat Ripley at his own game. "Believe it or not" he told me the other day "I had an extraordinary example of coincidence last Friday. Perera, de Silva and I, each accompanied by his wife and only daughter went shopping to the Fort. None of us spent more than twenty five rupees. When we returned we discovered there had been an amazing chain of coincidence.

Firstly each person bought as many articles as he or she paid cents for each article.

Secondly each man spent more than his wife and each mother more than her daughter; indeed each man spent as much as his wife and daughter combined.

Thirdly the number of articles bought by members of the same family were prime to each other.

Fourthly all the girls bought an even number of articles."

"Very remarkable" I commented.

"So it was" went on Mr. Fernando "it is a pity I have forgotten the figures. But I remember that Mrs. Perera bought four articles more than I did and little Sita spent more than one girl and less than the other."

What was Sita's surname?

Educational Census.

Report of the Education Committee.

Only 59 forms were returned of some 450 that were issued and it is doubtful whether the figures therefore are representative.

The returns seem to suggest that not much assistance need be given by way of financial aid among members of the Union, and the "Census" is of little value as regards that side of the activities of the Education Committee.

The two most valuable conclusions it does seem to afford are:

(1) that the position regarding the study of Sinhalese remains unsatisfactory. The returns indicate that there are 90 children of members who ought to be studying Sinhalese (or Tamil) in school; of these 12 are not doing so at all (in some cases for fairly good reasons); as regards 29 others parents make no report at all on their progress; 21 may definitely be regarded as weak or unsatisfactory; only 29 (just under a third of the total number) may be regarded as making reasonably satisfactory progress.

(2) The Committee is in possession of particulars regarding 22 children who are receiving Secondary Education; their progress will be watched with special interest and attention. Any assistance which may be required will be given as speedily as possible.

Sinhalese Classes.

Only 10 members have so far availed themselves of the facilities provided for learning Sinhalese. The classes began on July 14th and have been held on Sundays at 9.30 a. m. Mr. Wanigatunga of the Training College is in charge. Since most of those who have joined the class had hitherto made very little progress in reading and writing Sinhalese, a start was made from the very beginning.

We are positive that there must be many more members who are sadly in need of a knowledge of Sinhalese (or will be shortly) and we invite them to come in now. Remember, Sunday mornings at 9.30.

Personal.

Among those who left for England by the "Atlantis" in July were Mr. and Mrs. A. L. B. ("Leo the Lion"), Ferdinand and Mr. Ivan Ferdinand. In wishing them bon voyage at the last meeting of the General Committee, the President said he had no doubt that every card played in England by our popular ex-Treasurer would be a Trump.

Among the others who left by the same ship were Rev. and Mrs. B. de Kretser and Mr. N. E. Ernst.

We hear that Dr. H. A. Dirckze, who was transferred to Ambalangoda in January of this year, is due back shortly in Colombo on transfer. The Doctor and his wife have been very enthusiastic and helpful members and their return will be warmly welcomed.

We congratulate two members who have recently been appointed acting Heads of Departments. They are Mr. W. J. A. van Langenberg, Acting Director of Commerce and Industries, and Mr. H. K. de Kretser, Acting Controller of Imports, Exports and Exchange.

We regret to record the death on July 1st at the age of 65 years of Mrs. Grace Myra Ebert (nee Heppenstall).

Mr. Cyril van Langenberg has return to the Island from England.

Meetings for August 1946.

St. Nikolaas' Home Fund	Tuesday	6th	6-30 p.m.
Genealogical	Monday	12th	6-30 p.m.
Finance	"	"	7-00 p.m.
Education	Tuesday	13th	6-30 p.m.
Social Service	Wednesday	14th	6-30 p.m.
Entertainment and Sport	"	"	7-00 p.m.
Literary and Ethical	Thursday	15th	6-30 p.m.
General Committee	Tuesday	20th	6-30 p.m.
St. Nikolaas' Fete	Tuesday	27th	6-30 p.m.

From the Minutes of a meeting of the General Committee held on Tuesday the 16th July 1946, at 6-30 p.m.

Business arising out of the Minutes:—

(a) It was reported that letters were received from Mr. N. E. Ernst and Mr. V. S. de Kretser thanking the Committee for their letters of congratulations.

(b) The circular letter (re Subscriptions to the Social Service and Education Funds) had been posted to all members and 18 replies were received from members stating that they were not prepared to subscribe.

Reports of Committees

(a) **St. Nikolaas' Home.** It was reported that the total amount to the credit of this fund on June 30th 1946 was Rs. 18,161.26.

(b) **Genealogical.** The following, whose names were recommended by the Genealogical Committee, were elected members of the Union after the usual ballot. Messrs. H. K. Deutrom, S. L. Deutrom, B. V. Deutrom, F. R. L. Ferdinands, E. L. G. Koch, F. E. Perkins and Miss M. Sansoni.

(c) **Education.** It was recommended that Mr. L. L. Hunter be co-opted to serve on this Committee and this was agreed to.

(d) **Social Service.** Mr. C. C. Schokman suggested that we make an application to join the Ceylon Central Fund for Ceylon Social Service, this was agreed to. The recommendation of this Committee to co-opt Miss G. van Dort was accepted.

(e) **Entertainment and Sport.** The General Committee approved of the following arrangements made by this Committee.

1. August Dance on the 9th from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. Music to be provided by the "Millionaires" Dance Band. The tickets to be priced at Rs. 5/- each including supper.

2. In September "The Old Folks At Home" possibly with the Choral Group. The date to be arranged and published in the Bulletin.

Literary and Ethical. Lectures were being arranged in September by Mr. Justice Rose and in October by Mr. N. Nadarajah K.C.

Finance. The usual monthly statements of accounts and a list of those in arrears of subscriptions and bar accounts were tabled. The President mentioned that the position of those in arrears was more satisfactory to-day.

Resignations. The resignation of Miss B. Wille, Messrs. A. L. Fretz, J. K. Honter, and C. P. C. Foenander were accepted.

Any other business. Before the meeting closed, the President mentioned that Mr. A. L. B. Ferdinand will be leaving Ceylon very shortly on a holiday and the Committee took the opportunity of wishing him bon voyage.

Calendar of Events.

Dance.—August 9th, Friday, from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. The Millionaires Dance band will play and there will be a supper. Tickets Rs. 5/- each.

Lecture.—Thursday, August 29th at 6-30 p.m. by Mr. A. E. Wood, all on his "Anthology of Ceylon Poems".

Statement of Account of the St. Nikolaas' Home Fund

AS AT JUNE 30th, 1946.

	Rs. cts.
Previously Acknowledged;	16,491 26
Miss E. Buultjens (2nd payment)	200 00
Mrs. Krekenbeek	50 00
Bertram Jansz	25 00
Miss E. A. Orr	25 00
Mrs. Lottie Dickman	30 00
Miss May Jansz	10 00
Miss Mc Naughton	10 00
Mrs. A. Keller	15 00
Mrs. J. E. Piachaud	150 00
C. M. Jennings	50 00
Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Ferdinands	10 00
Dr. and Mrs. E. R. Loos	50 00
T. W. Collette	50 00
Miss F. De Vos	20 00
Miss Olive Rode	15 00
Dr. F. J. T. Foenander	100 00
Mr. and Mrs. Harris de Kretser	250 00
J. R. Toussaint	100 00
H. Vanden Driesen	500 00
By sale of books Miss G. Vandort	10 00
	<hr/> Rs. 18,161 26

Social Service Fund from 26-6-46—20-7-46.

	Rs. c.
C. P. Brohier	... 4 00
Mrs. B. O. Kelaart	... 3 00
B. H. Ohlmuus	... 1 00
C. H. Ohlmuus	... 1 00
V. Arndt	... 1 00
Mrs. M. R. Christoffelsz	... 1 00
Mrs. H. G. Wambeek	... 2 00
Dr. V. R. Schokman	... 10 00
F. R. Loos	... 1 50
Mrs. F. R. Loos	... 1 50
Miss L. Deutrom	... 1 50
Mrs. F. V. Foenander	... 5 00
Mrs. H. Leembruggen	... 37 50
G. V. Grenier	... 20 00
H. A. Collette	... 50
J. N. Staples	... 1 00
G. H. Gratiaen	... 75
H. L. Austin	... 1 50
Mrs. Z. Martin	... 1 50
W. V. R. Kelaart	... 1 50
Miss S. Meier	... 1 50
A. E. Dirokze	... 15 00
	Rs. 113 25

Education Fund from 26-6-46—20-7-46.

	Rs. c.
S. E. de Rooy	... 5 00
Mrs. H. G. Wambeek	... 2 00
Dr. V. R. Schokman	... 10 00
B. H. Ohlmuus	... 1 00
F. R. Loos	... 1 50
Mrs. F. R. Loos	... 1 50
Miss L. Deutrom	... 1 50
Mrs. F. V. Foenander	... 5 00
H. A. Collette	... 50
J. N. Staples	... 1 50
G. H. Gratiaen	... 75
H. L. Austin	... 1 50
Mrs. Z. Martin	... 1 50
Miss S. Meier	... 1 50
W. V. R. Kelaart	... 1 50
	Rs. 35 75