

THE LATE HON. J. PARSONS.

"A Native," writing from Kandy, gives an interesting and appreciative sketch of the career of the late Government Agent for the Central Province. He says:—

Mr. Parsons had been ailing from fever for some time after his return from Harrispatu, where he went on commutation duty. He therefore sought change on Mr. Karslake's estate and came back in better health. On Friday he was not so well and his medical attendants had anxious consultations: on the same night he expired suddenly. Mr. Parsons wished to go to England, but stayed in Ceylon one quarter too long.

Perhaps this is not the time to estimate the worth of one over whom the grave has just closed, but if there is one lesson to be learnt from his life, it is that he was a self-made man. Mr. Parsons had no adventitious aids, no very remarkable talents, but he worked his way up in the ladder of life by slow but continued and persistent perseverance. Mr. Parsons came to Ceylon with Mr. Ackland who owned coffee properties in Ambagamuwa, and entered the Kandy Kachcheri in the first instance as clerk, and subsequently as Deputy Fiscal. From that time he evinced a great desire to learn the Sinhalese and Tamil languages, which he soon acquired, so as to be able to converse in both. And during the so-called Rebellion of 1848 Mr. Parsons was appointed Provost Marshal by the late redoubtable Colonel Drought, the officer commanding the Kandyan Provinces, and in those days of terror and death, when martial law was proclaimed, many a person who was taken on suspicion or charged with being disaffected, was saved from the rigours of unnecessary and cruel imprisonment by the timely aid and kindly interference of our late Government Agent.

Mr. Parsons was afterwards promoted as extra Government Agent on the recommendation of Mr. Buller, the then Government Agent, Kandy, and during Mr. Buller's absence on circuit, the late Mr. Dyke, the much-respected Government Agent of Jaffna, visited Kandy, and was a guest of Mr. Parsons, who was occupying then "Tom Power's House," now Mr. Walker's residence on the hill. It was there an intimacy was formed between these two gentlemen which lasted through their lives. I remember then a deputation of the Jaffna residents in Kandy, proceeding to the house and congratulating Mr. Dyke upon the peace and quietness of his Province, when compared with the insecurity to the lives and property of the people in the Kandyan Provinces.

You must also remember the "famous libel case." Many who were the principal actors in that exciting drama have passed away. The only one now living is Mr. Buller, who is far away from the Province he administered so well. The strain upon Mr. Parsons' mind and the mental anxiety he endured told upon his health, and he was so dangerously ill that his life was then despaired of. It was at this time that Mr. Parsons formed the friendship of the late Captain Sim, then commanding the Royal Engineers at Kandy, who stood his friend in his time of sore trial, while his old friends were alienated from him, but time and truth healed all wounds.

After the recall of Lord Torrington, Sir George Anderson assumed the reins of government, and, while staying in Kandy, the Kandyan chiefs took into their heads to entertain the Governor. The idea was promoted and carried into execution by the untiring exertions of the then extra Assistant Agent, and was undoubtedly a "great success." This entertainment was viewed as a presage of better times to the Kandyan nation, and as an earnest that the people were loyal and appreciated the privileges of good Government under the British rule. From this time, Mr. Parsons was looked upon with favor by the Government, and he was sent to Jaffna, where he became the valued assistant to Mr. Dyke. Here also he was near death's door, but his life was spared.

I am not going to note Mr. Parsons' subsequent rise in the service and the different positions of trust he held. I am only concerned with his appointment to the Chief Agency of Kandy, which realized the aspirations of his early life. He returned to us in good health, and performed his responsible and onerous duties for four years, but wear and tear of mind, continued devotion to duty, and exposure to rain and sun, told upon his constitution, which was not naturally strong, and he "died in harness" in the work he loved so well in the "old Palace" where he began his public life, and where he loved to live.

It is stated that the late Government Agent did not possess great "administrative abilities" when compared with his few peers in the service, but, what was more valuable to him, he was endowed with good common-sense and great tact. When conflicting interests were clashing, when mixed questions which betrayed strife and passion arose, his shrewd sense was then pre-eminent. Mr. Parsons was an Agent who understood the vested interests of European and native. His influence among the Kandyans was immense. There was no hamlet or village he did not visit, no native tract or path he was not acquainted with, no family of consequence whose early history he did not know, no religious fane or pansala he did not inspect, no linguist or pandit whose acquaintance he did not seek. Whether he did his duty according to his lights "nobly" I know not, but he did his work in the battle of life truly and well.

One great evidence of Mr. Parsons' worth was afforded by the tribute of sympathy and respect shewn by the very large concourse of all classes of people who followed his remains to the grave. From His Excellency the Governor to the lowest Kandyan and boutique-keeper, the roads were lined with men whose expressive faces shewed how they regretted the death of the Government Agent—so suddenly taken away.

May his afflicted family be supported in this great bereavement by Him who heals all wounds!

COOK'S TOURISTS IN CEYLON.—Our readers may remember that this time last year a party of Cook's tourists, under the guidance of Mr. C. A. Barattoni, visited Ceylon on a voyage round the world. Mr. Barattoni, who is now making the sixth annual tour of the world, landed at Galle by the P. and O. steamer *Thibet* last Thursday, and has taken his party to Kandy by this morning's train, meaning to return on Wednesday. The party consists of the following ladies and gentlemen:—Mr. Chas and Mrs. Niele and Mr. E. Niele, Evansville, Ind., U. S. A.; Mr. S. B. and Mrs. Paige, Oshkosh, Wis., U. S. A.; Mr. A. J. Brandon, England; and Mr. F. C. Bronschoed, Hamburg.

PLANTING.

KELEBOKKA, 7th Jany.—A regular deluge of rain here all yesterday and last night: rainfall since yesterday mid-day till 6 o'clock this morning, 8 40 inches. The past three months have been very wet, as you will see per following rainfall:

	1877		1876
October	22'65	against	12'92
November	28'32		16'58
December	28'89		18'79

Total three months 79'86 48'29
January to date this year 14'33, against 0'10 last year and 4'79 the previous year. Wind and leaf disease have done a great deal of mischief lately, and the latter is so bad just now that the prospects of good crops next season are far from what one anticipated some three weeks ago. The present crop is about finished, and with a few exceptions will be short of estimates. The roads to Panwila and Cabragalla is not in particularly good order, but the liberal sums voted for the upkeep this year should put them in good repair. We were much shocked at the death of the Hon'ble the Government Agent, and great sympathy is expressed for Mrs. Parsons in her sad bereavement.

RAKWANA PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION.
CONFERENCE WITH MR. HUGHES, ANALYTICAL CHEMIST.

A meeting was held at the Rakwana resthouse on Friday, January 4th, to confer with Mr. Hughes. The meeting was largely attended, and among those present were noticed:—Messrs. O'Dowda (Chairman), Raikes, T. Fraser, G. Watt, P. B. Watts, Mackenzie, Hawkins, Cruickshank, Churchward, Seymour, Hector, Milne, Stuart, Maitland, Keith, Hunt, Dean, and G. D. Brabazon Dr. Allardyce and others.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. O'Dowda), in introducing Mr. Hughes, dwelt at some length upon the mission that had been entrusted to that gentleman in Ceylon. He felt quite assured that Mr. Hughes had manfully done his duty and deserved the thanks generally of merchants and the planting community at large, and Rakwana in particular. It must not be supposed that Mr. Hughes is his official capacity was about to perform or had worked miracles, but he felt confident that he had quitted no district without imparting a large amount of useful knowledge founded upon a good practical experience. (Applause.)

Mr. HUGHES then rose and remarked that while in other districts his time had only admitted of his visiting a few favourite estates. Difficulty of communication had prevented him doing more than he had done. While in Rakwana he had visited some 22 estates, and mentioned the following:—

Springwood	Bulatota	Ellengowan
Glenalvah	Everton	Gongalla
Benlmond	Rangweltanne	Colonna
Boyne	Aigburth	Dundonnel
Allington	Gilgarron	Palamcotta and
Golden Grove	Caledonia	Nahaveena
Martinstown	Lauderdale	
Barra	Vegeria	

and had seen soil with qualities quite equal to that of other districts. He thought the district in the past had not had the treatment it deserved. On some estates he had noticed a very dark and what he called the Haputale variety of soil, and could see no reason, with the judicious and careful application of manure, why Rakwana as a district should not do as well as any other district in Ceylon. There was also in Rakwana, he considered, in many parts a fine field for the profitable cultivation of cinchona. As to manures most suitable for application in dark soils rich in the production of wood and leaf, a nitrogenous manure was not so beneficial as a mineral kind. In light colored soils he thought the application of cattle or a similar manure was most suitable; but the great difficulty in bulky manuring was transport. Wire shoots, he considered, would very soon pay for themselves. If compost heaps were able to be made close at hand, he would certainly advise the application of such, of course mixed with lime. The use of compost heaps he considered would be found profitable generally in Rakwana. Rakwana, he thought, had advantages over many districts in the Central Province, such as Dikoya, Maskeliya, and Dimbula, which seemed to have very little in the way of chena or jungle stuff available as manure, while in Rakwana there was plenty, and the best use should be made of it. Chena and jungle stuff finely cut up and mixed with alluvial deposit and lime, then allowed to lie for two or three months, made he thought a far more profitable manure than any other, considering the present cost of transport. Among other soils he had on a part of one estate noticed a large quantity of ironstone on the surface. The coffee about seemed to be thriving, and he was at a loss to account for it; except the subsoil was especially rich. A further examination was necessary. When he had completed such examination he would let the district know the result. Any large quantity of ironstone was usually, he thought, an indication of poor coffee soil. The permanency of most estates depended greatly, in his idea, upon the chemical combination of the rocks on them. He had seen several varieties, but just then could not speak of them. In a short time he hoped to be able to throw some light on their respective values. As regarded the application of bones there was, he was sure, much waste. He had seen bones applied in pieces half an inch long: this was simply wasted. Bones, unless very finely crushed or treated with sulphuric acid, were almost useless. Dissolved bones were, he thought, the most suitable manure the coffee tree could have, but mixed with bulky manure; at the same time judgment should be used in its application. As to leaf disease he hoped to have further opportunities of making investigations, and the result he would make known to the Central Association and if possible suggest some remedy. For the large white grub he considered cattle or cake manure a remedy, such attracting the grub and allowing the tree to strengthen itself. The white bug was, he believed, most prevalent in places where trees suffered from "wet feet." For

this efficient draining was the best cure. He had found most districts anxious to obtain analyses of their different kinds of soil, and he would ask the local Committee to select such soils as they wished analysed and forward them with notes as to their past history, present treatment, &c., &c. Mr. Hughes then resumed his seat amid applause.

A cordial vote of thanks to Mr. Hughes was proposed and carried with general acclamation.

Mr. HUGHES, in a few appropriate words, then returned thanks in the most cordial manner for the great attention with which the Committee of Rakwana had listened to his remarks. He would only add that he had met with the warmest hospitality in every district he had had the pleasure of visiting, and he took the occasion of mentioning this, as he scarcely thought it probable that for some time to come he should have the pleasure of meeting so large a body of planters.

A conversation then ensued in which the planters generally took part and elicited a vast amount of information from Mr. Hughes.

A vote of thanks to the Chairman and acting Secretary closed the proceedings.

Correspondence.

To the Editor of the Ceylon Observer.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE NORTHERN PROVINCE.

SIR,—No good can come now of mere anonymous correspondence on the subject of maladministration in the North. If charges anonymously made are to be equally so must be the defence anonymously put forward. In your last issue one of two correspondents has vented his spleen against Sir Coomara Swamy* or indulged in vague generalities. If he had reflected for one moment and not allowed his passion to blind his reason, he would have seen that the Tamil representative did in fact nothing beyond simply calling the attention of the Council to the charge publicly made against Mr. Twynam. Was there anything wrong in doing this? Why did not these gentlemen who now write anonymously to rebut these charges adopt this course long ago? Not one but many newspapers referred to them and challenged these concerned to put them in Court. Not even a reply was vouchsafed. Here was a public scandal. What really is the use of an unofficial member of the Council, if he is not at least to call for some explanation about it? This is all that Sir Coomara Swamy has done. Even this he wished to avoid, as he stated. But goaded on to it by his constituents, the alternative lay before him as to whether he should please the Government Agent of the N. Province or serve his countrymen. He was very moderate in his own opinion, and even wished again and again that Mr. Twynam might be able to repel all these charges. A man who proposes to represent a people cannot without good reason ignore their wishes. When complaints are made persistently for nearly half a year through and when no notice has been taken of them by the authorities, really what harm would have been done by Sir Coomara Swamy asking whether Government intended to pay any attention to them at all. All that he could do was this—he had power to do no more. Anyhow this course must have at least satisfied the Tamils, who began appealing to him in terms such as these (vide *Examiner* article), "Wake up, Sir Coomara! your countrymen in the North are being trodden down." But really all these are side issues. It matters not what the Tamil representative did in this matter, whether it meets with the approbation of your correspondent or not. A public man cannot please everybody. When he attempts to do this, there is an end to his usefulness. But the question is, these charges, by whomsoever made, are they true or false? You have, in fact, suggested the only solution possible. Let the perpetrators of the calumnies, for such, in fact, they are, be prosecuted and punished. In that case Mr. Twynam and his friends ought to be really thankful to Sir Coomara Swamy, who, as you have correctly stated, and as I know, has not the least trace of ill-feeling towards him and will be rejoiced to learn that he has not fallen off from the high position which he once occupied. Some would fain think that the Tamil representative should have investigated these charges himself. This is simply absurd and impossible. What power or right has he to summon witnesses or hold an inquiry? And if he ventured to do this, may not his very conduct in this respect be impugned or totally misconstrued? Those who now complain of him would have equally complained of him then for his officiousness. His duty was simply to interpellate the Government. They have the power, whether in Court or out of Court, to inquire into these matters. If every member of Council were to collect evidence to prove the complaint he may have to refer to in Council, he would be simply degrading his position. But further it will be impossible in many cases to do this during the short time the Council sits. All that a member can do is to determine whether the subject is worthy of the attention of the Council. And those who may think that the Jaffna scandals do not fall under the category must have either gone to a long sleep during the last half-year or been totally indifferent to the feelings and sayings of an important section of Her Majesty's subjects in this Island.

SCYLLA OR CHARYBDIS.

* The correspondent referred to is the last man in the world to write for the sake of venting spleen.—Ed. C. O.