

**DUTCH BURGHER UNION OF CEYLON**

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# Journal of the Dutch Burgher Union of Ceylon.

“Eendracht Maakt Macht”

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# Journal of the Dutch Burgher Union of Ceylon

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

The new year 1990-1991 promises to be a good and fruitful year for the DBU under the inspiring Presidentship of Mr. Harold Spelde-winde aided by funds sent from Australia, from The Eighty Club (Melbourne), The Burgher Association (Melbourne), The Brohier Memorial Trust Fund (Melbourne), The Forgotten Peoples Fund (Melbourne), The Burgher Welfare League of Western Australia, and the Australia Ceylon Fellowship (Melbourne)

Thanks to the generosity of our Australian friends and the generosity of friends in Sri Lanka our work in social service and in St Nikolaas' Home has been considerably expanded. We are grateful to our friends for their help, which although considerable, we must remember that the Burgher Community remains, according to the Governor of the Central Bank, the poorest community in Sri Lanka. According to the Director of Census and Statistics the number of Burghers and Eurasians (they are telescoped together) is 38,000. We are never sure of the exact percentage of Burghers in this total.

We are privileged to have in this number of the Journal a very entertaining and interesting article "A Quest for Cousins" by the distinguished author Lorenz Ludovici. After a lapse of over fifty years since he left for England in 1929, at the age of 17, he has made several trips to Sri Lanka and Australia, following the great Burgher diaspora, to re-trace his numerous cousins. Early in May 1991 he attended the 80th birthday party of his cousin Mrs. Kathleen Jansz in Sydney, where my wife and I had the pleasure of meeting him and his wife. We wish him and his charming wife Maria many more happy years.

## A QUEST FOR COUSINS

By Lorenz Ludovici

I have cousins galore: first cousins or cousins german, second cousins and third cousins. Or is it cousins once or twice removed? I've often wondered what collective noun to apply to them. A pride as in a pride of lions? Or a gaggle? Or a covey? Or maybe a flock? The choices are numerous. I have never made one. Unhappily I had not seen any of these many cousins for some six decades, except those who happened to visit me in London where I have lived for over sixty years. Miles and miles of air and sea space have kept us apart not lack of affection nurtured during childhood and adolescence. In part it was my failure to re-visit Ceylon before the great Burgher diaspora. I did get to Ceylon in 1987 after an absence of some fifty-eight years but I was too late for the majority who had left for Australia and elsewhere but mainly Australia. With the Ceylon cousins we (my wife and I) soon established close and affectionate ties. We had still to do the same with the Australian cousins, though I had sustained somewhat tenuous links with them over the years, epistolary links of course. Reports of births, marriages and deaths, of academic, professional and vocational successes, had filtered through to me.

Among letters from all those cousins were some that protested that we'd been only a step away from Australia during our three visits to Ceylon from 1987. We could no longer refuse to listen to pressing voices, to get there to re-forged once strong bonds. In April 1990 we reached a decision. I called up my cousin Kathleen Jansz, née Collette, in Sydney, to be answered by her jolly grandson who said, 'We're polishing up the family limo to come and meet you at the airport.'

We were on our way, through Colombo and Kuala Lumpur.

We emerged at Sydney airport clutching a photograph of my cousin Lorraine Jansz. We didn't have to look at it. There was instant mutual recognition between us and Lorraine and her husband, Dr. David van der Straaten. This was Sydney. And we were unquestionably there. Crossing Sydney Bridge shouted it to us. The 'family limo' turned out to be a handsome French Peugeot 604 in which we sped to my cousin, Kathleen Jansz, at Epping, a Sydney suburb. Dr. David van der Straaten, bless his generous heart, had taken a week off

from his medical practice to show us the sights. Jet lag unnoticed, we went first morning after our arrival, to see the Norman Lindsay Museum and Gallery at Springwood in the Blue Mountains. For me the Norman Lindsay Museum was a must. His son, Jack Lindsay, the poet and novelist, was one of my oldest friends over whose In Memoriam celebrations Sir Bernard Miles had presided at Cambridge where Jack lived with his family. Bernard Miles had presented Jack's translations of Greek plays by Sophocles and Aristophanes at his Mermaid Theatre in London. A melancholy occasion for me those In Memoriam celebrations at Cambridge, just before our departure for Sydney.

By the greatest good fortune we had got to Sydney in time for my cousin, Kathleen Jansz's 79th birthday, and we are being much urged to be there again for her 80th. A passionate *afficianado* of cricket, me, I caught a glimpse of Bowral where Bradman spent his early years and practised batsmanship with a stick and rubber ball which he bounced off a wall. An Australian friend, a member of the club, took me over the Sydney cricket ground where, in my imagination, I watched Bradman play and Larwood and Voce bowl their hated leg theory. I recollect — all the great Australians I'd watched at Lords and at the Oval over the years. Indeed, I now live right opposite the Nursey End at Lords. Make no mistake. The Sydney Cricket Ground is superb and, without the crowds and the formerly raucous cries from The Hill, serene. Sydney itself is one of the most beautifully sited cities in the world and I've seen a number of them in my time.

We'd have liked to stay longer in Sydney where, I must tell you, I went to a Presbyterian church service again for the first time since I had attended Bambalapitiya and Regent Street as an adolescent. The hospitable David van der Straaten drove us some 500 miles to seek out more cousins in Melbourne. The most interesting moment of that long drive was passing by the spot where Ned Kelly was gunned down. The vivid paintings of the scene by Sydney Nolan swam before my eyes. Evadne Gibson, née Collette and her daughter Vilma, still more cousins, welcomed us with the greatest warmth in Melbourne. Like her sister, Kathleen, Evadne had been a childhood playmate of mine.

Cousins galore? I found them in Melbourne, two cousins german, Evadne Gibson and Nesta Jonklaas, née Loos, who had produced children who had produced children who had produced children, my cousins once, twice and thrice removed through such multiplication.

So, in Sydney and in Melbourne now, it had been cousins all the way. And remembrance of things past.

One non-cousinly discovery in Melbourne was the cartoonist, Aubrey Collette and his wife. We had last seen them some thirty years before when they arrived in London with an introduction to me from the film director, Lester James Peries. They were not then man and wife and we arranged for them to be safely married at our nearest registry office. They remembered — where we had almost forgotten — a modest wedding luncheon we offered them at our place after the ceremony. Or was it high tea with a cake my wife had baked specially for the occasion? We lunched delightfully with Aubrey Collette and his wife in Melbourne where he lived in retirement after having served as cartoonist first on *The Australian* and then, for seventeen years, on the *Melbourne Herald*. They were parents to three grown-up children, all pursuing their respective callings with marked success.

We managed also to catch up with another friend of adolescence, Neliya Kelaart née Foenander whose husband, Mervyn Kelaart, another friend of adolescence, had been such an outstanding cricketer. Neliya's uncle, S. P. Foenander had been an ardent collector of cricketing memorabilia which are now on show at the Lords Museum. The career of Neliya's son, Ray Kelaart, signals one of the success stories of the Burgher community in exile. He began very quietly in England as an aircraftman in the RAF, migrated to Australia on the £10 scheme some time after his parents settled in Melbourne, went into the insurance and finance business and turned himself into a millionaire. He and his family live in a twenty-room mansion on the outskirts of Melbourne with beautiful surrounding gardens and with a swimming pool and tennis court. Could he have paralleled his achievements had he remained in Ceylon? To us, the most refreshing aspect of the story is the demeanour of Ray Kelaart and his English wife which remains wholly unspoilt and simple.

The ensuing phase of our journey was all the way by train from Melbourne to Perth through Adelaide. Cousins were inescapable. I had some in Adelaide also, Ruth Piachaud Ludovici, widow of my cousin Edward Ludovici who had been in the legal department of the South Australian Parliament. My last sight of Ruth had been in her mother's house on the Havelock Road in Colombo when she was a little red-haired girl of about five or six.

She brought her son, Antony, along to meet us, he the headmaster of a school in Adelaide. Need I add that we did not fail to visit the Adelaide Oval and take in the new Bradman Stand which Sir Donald Bradman himself recently opened.

From Adelaide we sped day and night through the ruddy, scrubby Nullarbor Plain, relaxing in our comfortable sleeper and wolfing down the copious meals in the refreshment car. We had noticed already in Sydney and Canberra that the Australians are great trenchermen. By comparison the English are sparing eaters. We found we could never finish what they gave us everywhere. We cannot praise too highly the comfort and service provided by the Australian railways.

Perth, at twenty past seven in the morning with a strong drizzle dampening the roads and the roofs. And two cousins to meet us, even at that early hour. Up to then all the cousins had been on the maternal side of the family. Now came Dora Ludovici to welcome us at Perth Station, a cousin on the paternal side. David Schokman was there too, the husband of yet another cousin, Denise Loos, whose father Gordon Loos was my cousin german. David and Denise Schokman had stayed with us in London two years previously and we were to spend our time in Perth with them and with Gordon's widow, née Kathleen Maartensz who was the third inmate of the household. From Denise, David and Kathleen, memorable hospitality.

My accumulation of cousins continued in Perth, Dora Ludovici and two sisters of hers, of my paternal line. One of them, Jeanne, I had given away to her husband, Bill Whitelaw, while she was living at Sutton not far out of London. Her sister Dora had been in England several years and used often to spend week-ends with us. We were therefore no strangers, but, the third sister, May, I had never set eyes on before.

George Albrecht, whose mother, Elsie van der Straaten, was a cousin german of my mother's, was a happily re-discovered cousin among the host (have I found the right collective noun?) of my Australian discoveries. He lived with his family in Hill Street, down the slope from the Wolvendahl Church and opposite the imposing home of the van der Straaten family, my mother's mother's people. My mother and her sisters had spent most of their adolescent years in that house. I always remembered George Albrecht as an excessively tall young man

but now he seemed far larger than life, a giant who might have shone as a line-out jumper in a rugby team though I am sure he never handled a rugby ball in his life. We swept away the years and spoke of our Saturday afternoon excursions to the Elphinstone Cinema in Maradana, pedalling away on our bicycles from Mutwal where I was at the time living. We laughed over our excitements at the old Douglas Fairbanks sword-thrusting dramas which we hugely enjoyed as youngsters. Was **The Three Musketeers** among the films we saw? I feel sure it was.

But hail and farewell. I had seen almost all my many cousins. All had without exception given us the warmest of receptions. Affection that had never really been extinguished had been wonderfully rekindled. I had re-tied the knots that had, perhaps, grown too loose over the fallow years. We left Perth for Colombo one rainy evening, cherishing oh such a flood of souvenirs! And so, Australia, cousins, and the remembrance of things past, and, the we'll meet again — soon. That is the hope.

### SIR HENRY WARD'S COMMENTS ON THE BURGHERS<sup>1</sup>

My real sins are the desire to see a rational settlement effected with respect of the Railway, and my refusal to propose a Vote of at least £10,000 a year as an addition to the Salaries of Burgher Clerks, who, in proportion to their work and responsibilities, are better paid than English clerks, already; — better paid, absolutely than nine tenths of the young Englishmen who come out to try their fortunes here in merchants' country houses or upon the Coffee Estates. But the Burghers all marry at 20. Their wives are the most improvident, and expensive of women. The men come to their work in carriages of some kind; and never allow a son, if they have a dozen, to turn his hand at anything useful. All are to be Clerks, or beggars; and if salaries are to be provided to meet these expectations, the Dept. of Public Works may close the doors for ever.— I do not mean that if the present rise in the price of necessaries of life, continue . . . some addition to salaries may not be required. But nothing reasonable, or practicable, would be accepted, just now, by the Burgher Class as a settlement of their pretensions. They have set up the "Examiner" to run down all opponents; and it does its duty honestly by its Patrons, for there is not a defaulter in a Salt Store, or a Clerk who falsifies his Accounts, . . . who is not represented as "a victim to the wicked economy of the fort."

It is some satisfaction to know that the sober, and really distinguished men amongst the Burghers, repudiate this new system. And especially that I have neglected the claims of "Euro: descendants" or "Native Gentlemen" to Promotion. (At this point Ward notes that Bartle Frere of the Indian Civil Service had been very surprised to find R. F. Morgan, C. A. Stewart and de Saram in the higher echelons of the administrative service in Ceylon and viewed it as a marked contrast with India.) Mr. Morgan has written to me to express, in his own name, and that of many others, their entire dissent from the doctrines of the Examiner and their conviction that the Burghers can only hope to hold the large share, which they, in the Administration by holding it under the preponderating influence of England. But Mr. Morgan has nearly reached the highest point in his career. He represents the "Ins." The Examiner, the "Outs." It is the old story — and no great harm can come of the difference.

<sup>1</sup> Source: private letter from Sir Henry Ward to the Duke of Newcastle, 14 February 1860, fol. 10983 in the Newcastle Mss., University of Nottingham.

## NOTE ON SIR HENRY WARD'S COMMENTS ON THE BURGHERS

By Percy Colin-Thomé

Sir Henry Ward was Governor of Ceylon from 1855 to 1860. He left Ceylon on June 30th 1860 to assume duties as Governor of Madras and died there of cholera on the 2nd August. The private letter to the Duke of Newcastle dated 14th February, 1860, contains sweeping generalisations regarding the improvidence of the Burghers and their desire for clerical jobs. These comments are in marked contrast to the sentiments expressed by Sir Emerson Tennent only a few years earlier in the 1850s:

They (the Burghers) have risen to eminence at the Bar, and occupied the highest positions on the Bench. They are largely engaged in mercantile pursuits, and as writers and clerks they fill places of trust in every administrative establishment from the department of the Colonial Secretary to the humblest police court. It is not possible to speak too highly of the services of this meritorious body of men . . . (Ceylon, 1859, Vol. II, p. 156).

Ironically, Ward himself was a free spender in his youth. According to J. R. Weinman: "Sir Henry Ward went through two fortunes. He lived and spent like a Russian Grand Duke before the Revolution or the Jubilee Plunger". (Our Legislature, 1947, p. 49).

Ward's observation is inexplicable as he showed a true appreciation of the merits of hard workers whom he had generally encouraged and advanced. He proposed and carried through Council a graduated scale of remuneration, and one of his administrative achievements in Ceylon was the enhancement of the salaries at all levels in the Administrative Service.

His statement that, "(The Burghers) have set up the 'Examiner' to run down all opponents, and it does honestly by its Patrons, for there is not a defaulter in a Salt Store, or a Clerk who falsifies his Accounts who is not represented 'as a victim to the wicked economy of the fort,'" calls for comment.

It is curious that Ward does not mention the name of Charles Ambrose Lorenz who was at this time the Editor of the "Examiner." There is no doubt that the trenchant criticisms of the Administration in the "Examiner" often irked Ward.

One of Ward's daughters had married John Bailey who soon rose to be the Principal Assistant to the Colonial Secretary. His appointment to this office in Colombo caused heart-burning in the service and savoured of nepotism. This matter was exposed in the "Examiner" much to Ward's annoyance. Another incident concerned Lorenz' fearlessness in opposing and criticising the Kandyan Marriage Ordinance in the Legislative Council, an opposition which also aroused Ward's indignation. With a, "Sit down, Sir," to the Colonial Secretary Sir Charles Macarthy, the Governor said, "I will answer the Hon. member myself." He denounced the opposition in unmeasured terms and said that the legislation was for the betterment of the social and moral condition of the the people; but instead of co-operating, the Ceylonese held it up to derision and ridicule. "If the Hon. Member delights in such pastimes, let him go to Hulftsdorp and quibble there," said Sir Henry in stentorian tones. When the work for the day was over, the Governor felt that he had been needlessly cantankerous and motioned Lorenz as he was leaving the Council Chamber and whispered, "Come and have a glass of wine at Queen's House." The thorny phases of the Ordinance were in fact analysed in a more rational and calmer manner. Lorenz had a better knowledge of Kandyan law and customs than anyone in the Council and his only concern was that no injustice would be done to the Kandyans. Ward grudgingly conceded this. Eventually the Bill was disallowed and another Bill introduced which disclosed the sanity and sweet reasonableness of Lorenz' clear judgement.

In his early days Ward was a politician and entered the House of Commons as a Member for St. Albans. Although a Liberal in politics in his own country, he was in no hurry to introduce democratic reforms, such as demands for popular control of the Legislative Council and a general replacement of the system for nomination by one of election of members into Ceylon. On one occasion he informed the Colonial Office that:

in a Colony the population of which consists of seven or eight thousand European settlers, a small though intelligent class of Burghers, and two million of Sinhalese, Tamils and Moormen wholly unaccustomed to the working of a constitutional system, you cannot introduce the principle of Representative and Responsible Government as is applied in Canada . . . the Crown for many years must hold the balance between European

and native interests, if it wished to see order maintained and legislation impartially conducted.

Despite his verbal skirmishes with Ward, Lorenz was among those who heaped praise on the Governor when he left the island. In moving a reply to Sir Henry Ward in a formal address of farewell in the Legislative Council on the 19th June 1960, he stated:

I believe there is no one here today who does not feel that in parting with Sir Henry Ward we lose the services of one of the ablest and most energetic Governors that ever occupied that Chair . . . I ask you, then, to look at his career as a whole. What difference can it make to the colony that I, or any other member of the Opposition, may have felt an occasional disappointment, when if we look around us, we find tokens of the greatest prosperity; the Country intersected with roads; the rivers spanned by bridges; public buildings erected in every town; the penny-postage and the electric telegraph established with entire success; pearl-fisheries yielding unheard-of revenue; the trade and the commerce of the Island extended beyond all past limits and every facility given to private enterprise; and beyond all, an overwhelming treasure left in reserve to meet our present wants. Which of the Governors who preceded him has left such a Catalogue of good deeds behind him? Which of those whose names have passed into history, could point to works like these for a Memorial of their Government?"



## COLOMBO. MORNING<sup>1</sup>

By Louis Nell

How beautiful a sight as morning breaks,  
To view Colombo stretching by the sea,—  
The grey sky painted with the streaks  
Of Morn, which brings a joyous tone to me,  
That slumbered with the night; but now revived,  
With freshness, and with youth will wake the soul,  
A new Creation seems with Morn arrived,  
And Man renewed for toil looks to the goal  
He daily hopes to reach, but little knows  
That with each step he presses on 'twill fly.  
So the horizon's sought, which farther goes  
As farther we pursue; so man will die  
Before that line he'll reach, which is the bound  
Of all his hopes, where meet his earth and sky.  
How bitter when his bark is cast aground,  
And once sweet promises are proved a lie!  
Behold you frail canoe its broad sail ope  
To fill with breezes from the perfumed East:  
So on Life's ocean Man attempts to cope,  
And spread his vent'rous sail lured by the least  
Deceptive breath of air. He fain would urge  
His dang'rous course, till adverse winds beat down  
His sail,— his wrecked bark floating on the surge:  
'Tis so, from proudest flight the sea-bird's thrown  
With broken upon the billow's crest;  
And pirate kite which hovers o'er yon tope  
Umbrageous, struck before he gains the nest  
He covets. Youth so full, so false with hope,  
Is like the morn to man, who oft looks back  
Upon the rich dawn of his hopelilt birth,  
And loves from that bright spot to trace his track,  
But roused from these sweet dreams is wrecked on earth.  
Thus are we born ambitiously to dare  
The waves; but when our phantom prize is fled,  
Sore baffled in our hopes, we must repair  
To harbour back — our hopes before us dead.

## FREDERICK DORNHORST<sup>1</sup>

By Jepharis

The 50th death anniversary of the great Frederick Dornhorst (1849-1926) in his day the "lion of the Ceylon bar," fell on April 24. Frederick Dornhorst will be chiefly remembered as having fought and defeated Thomas Norton, "the lion of the Madras bar" over the Jeronis Pieris Will Case in 1903. Charles Peiris maintained that after his daughter Elsie's death in 1903, her patrimony should revert to him, his first wife Annie, eldest daughter of Jeronis Pieris, having died in 1891, while Jeronis Pieris' other children, Richard Steuart, Henry Alexander, Lambert Louis, Emily, Theobald and Caroline (Mrs. E. L. F. de Soysa), claimed Elsie's share of the patrimony. Frederick Dornhorst appeared and won the case for Charles Peiris, which explains how he, and later his only son Harold, came into possession of such broad acres. This was the first of three occasions that the great Norton came over from Madras to fight legal battles in Ceylon, the second being for the prosecution in the Dixon Attygalle murder case of December 1906 (when his brother-in-law John Kotelawala, father of Sir John, was involved—he was to die on April 20, 1907 by committing suicide in prison) and the third in connection with the Pedris shooting incident during the height of the Sinhala-Muslim Martial Law riots of 1915.

Frederick Dornhorst was the youngest and only surviving son in a family of nine, his sisters included "Aunt Charlotte," Mrs. J. W. Mack (1829-1908), "Aunt Liza," Mrs. Johnny Prins (1836-1919), "Aunt Sophie," Mrs. W. F. Cremor (1838-), "Aunt Louisa," Mrs. E. H. Prins (1840-1912), and "Aunt Laura" (1847-). His nephews and nieces included the distinguished family of Macks, two lots of Prins', and the famous Arndt family, sons of the sub-warden of St. Thomas' College, Mutwal, who married his niece Hetty Prins, who incidentally with her sister Mary Prins ran an English night school for boys and girls in Mutwal, which later developed into Cathedral College, Kotahena, and Cathedral Girls' School, Mutwal. Frederick Dornhorst himself had eight children, including one daughter, Freda de Saram, my grandmother.

Frederick Dornhorst had his early education at St. Thomas' and Royal (then known as the Colombo Academy) and at the Training College, after

which he was a master in the Academy for six years, where there is now a prize offered in his memory, before entering the legal profession, where as we all know, he distinguished himself for over half-a-century, in 1903 rising to be a King's Counsel.

While sorting out my grandmother's papers shortly after her demise I came across the following document "To my children" written by her father, in my estimation about 1887-8, which we consider most opportune to publish at this time:

### TO MY CHILDREN

My dear children, I have determined to write a short account of my life, the perusal of which I must hope will be profitable to you. If I succeed in awakening in you a desire to live respectably and keep your name unsullied then I shall not have undertaken this task in vain.

I was born on the 26 of April 1849 at Trincomalee, and was the youngest in the family. At the age of five I lost my father of whom I have a very faint recollection. In 1856, when I was seven years old, my mother came to Colombo bringing with her my sisters, two of whom your Aunts Eliza and Louisa, were unmarried, and the other, your Aunt Sophie, was married to Mr. Cremor, who at that date was in the lunatic asylum in Colombo.

Of our family history I have succeeded in gleaning the following information. My grandfather, the founder of our family in Ceylon, whose name was John Christian Dornhorst, is said to have come from Germany and to have been employed in the Dutch Service. I have not been able to obtain any authentic information as to what post he held, (I have since learnt he was an Artillery man. The tradition in our family is that he was a runaway from home who had enlisted) but, if my memory serves me right, my mother told me he was a Constable, that is to say, a sort of petty magistrate (Dutch for Gunner). He was I think afterwards employed under the English in the Naval Stores or Dockyard. I know nothing of his family, on which subject he would appear to have been reticent. But it has been told me by my mother, who heard it from my father, that he had run away from home and had changed his name. This may or may not be. I have with me an old seal belonging to him, with his monogram, crest and motto. It is a motto

<sup>1</sup> Printed in the Tribune of July 12, 1975. Reprinted by kind courtesy of the Editor.



which I trust will influence you in life. "Virtutem Coronat Honor." From a memorandum left by my father which you will find among my papers and which I trust you will treasure, my grandfather died on 9 August 1828, aged 65 years.

Of my paternal grandmother I know nothing, save that she was one Miss Wirtebron and wore what is commonly called "the Misthiya Dress." She was of dark complexion and was of mixed parentage, either of Portuguese or Dutch descent but with native blood in her veins. She was a Roman Catholic while her husband was a Lutheran. She was commonly called 'Mon. Francina.' There were two children born to my grandparents, my father and my uncle John, who was married to Louisa, daughter of Mr. Ernest Godlieb Schultsze. Of my mother's family I know more. She was the daughter of Mr. Jacob Frederick Schultsze, who was Secretary of the Provincial Court of Trincomalee. There were, as far as I have been able to ascertain, two Schultszes in Trincomalee, brothers who had come from Germany. My mother's father was married to Miss Hartsz, the daughter of a Surgeon in the Netherlands army, who was married to Miss Simonsz, the daughter of the Commandant of Jaffna.

My parents had nine children, of whom four, two sons and two daughters, died in infancy. Your Aunt Sophie died in Calverly House in 18 . . . , aged . . . , and at the time I write this, your other aunts are still alive.

In 1877 I married your mother. She was the daughter of Mr. Godwin Sisouw, a Proctor, who was married to Miss Brohier, a daughter of the Chief Clerk of the Colonial Secretary's office. Your mother's paternal grandfather was married to Miss Van der Straaten, and after his death his widow married Mr. F. A. Prins. The old lady is still alive and is a fine specimen of a Dutch woman. On her mother's side your mother can claim descent from the noble family of Ranzouw, her maternal grandmother being the daughter of the Colonel Van Ranzouw, who I believe was a political exile. Your mother's maternal great-grandfather was Captain Brohier, an officer in the army.

You see my children that you have reason to be proud of your descent, and although your success in life and your social position will depend upon your individual character and although I should not like to foster in you the pride of family, still I would like you to know that

I have always been taught to lay stress upon respectability. While not despising others of low parentage you must make it your endeavour to live worthy of those from whom you are descended. Be select in the friends you keep, but be more select in the marriages you contract. Don't marry beneath your station, and if possible, don't do your children the injustice of being ashamed of their parents. There is a growing tendency in our midst to deprive the respectable Burghers of their undoubted social position. It will depend upon you and others of your generation as to how far that tendency will be encouraged. When the time comes for you to settle down in life, choose your spouses from families having something more to boast of than wealth or only social position. I would rather that your future partners were poor and of good birth than that they were rich but of doubtful parentage. Don't misunderstand me. The pride of birth without individual character will be an offence and a stumbling block. But only remember that good birth to one who has attained a good social position is and will always be an inestimable advantage. Don't despise those who have worked themselves up to a high social level, because they have no mound of ancestry to stand upon. But at the same time while you mix freely with them in society you should avoid mingling your blood indiscriminately. Especially do I address my daughter now, for remember a man raises the woman, no matter who she may be, to his level, but a woman sinks down to her husband's position, if she marries beneath her. But enough of moralising.

Although I had the misfortune to lose my father when I was but a child, I had the special good fortune to have a woman for a mother, who was one of God's priceless treasures. My early life was spent in great poverty. My father during his lifetime had kept the family in easy circumstances and I have reason to believe that the Dornhorsts were respected by all classes of the community. My father was for a long time Secretary of the District Court of Trincomalee, and enjoyed the privilege, in those days accorded to Secretaries, of practising as a Notary. I believe he quarrelled with the District Judge and resigned and for a long while maintained his family upon the income earned from his notarial practice. He was subsequently appointed Head Clerk of the Fiscal's Department, in which I believe he continued until obliged by illness to give up his place. He would appear to have put by enough to buy houses and lands but like many of our class he lived beyond his means and was suicidal in his generosity. From what my

mother has told me of his willingness to help those who appealed to him for pecuniary aid I have reason to fear that I have inherited his failing of not having the moral courage to say 'no' even to a most undeserving applicant. I think my children I have done you wrong by this weakness but I trust that the provision I intend to make for you will be such as to enable you to generously forgive this fault of mine. When my father died, all he had was sold except our house, which gave my mother a rental of £1 a month. When the family came to Colombo my mother's income was the pound above mentioned and an allowance of Rs. 7.50 given her by the Government. But my sisters came to the rescue and opened a school which helped to find us in curry and rice. Besides there was what was left, after providing for his maintenance, of Mr. Cremor's pay, which my sister Sophie, always large hearted and generous, placed at the disposal of her mother and sisters and her little brother, your father.

In 1856, when I had just passed seven, I was sent to a school under the management of Mr. Blake. I knew to read and write figures, having been taught so far by a dear good old lady, a friend of my mother, in Trincomalee, Mrs. de Vos. My teacher at Mr. Blake's school, was Mr. . . . . who there had the title of 'appuhamy.' And we naughty boys used to worry the man's life by screeching the wretched Sinhala doggerel: "Appuhamy pittu hora, kawun kanda yothaya." Early in 1857 I was sent to a school in Small Pass kept by Mr. Loos. At first I was a day scholar, but my mother finding that she could not control me and keep me away from running about in the streets, boarded me, paying the one pound which she could ill-spare.

There are two observations which I wish to make in regard to this incident of my life. The first is that you are all better off than I was. You have a garden to run about and play in and therefore escaped the banishment from home which I had to undergo in my childhood. The other observation is this. Nothing more strikingly illustrates one trait of my mother's character than this act. She was fond, very fond, of me and had she allowed herself to be guided by mere sentiment, she would have let me have my own way and I would now certainly not be occupying the position I am proud to occupy. Her promptly boarding me, especially when she could ill-afford the fees shows how far seeing she was and how rightly she estimated the advantages of early training and early education. Yes I never fail to be grateful for having

such a mother, for had she been weakminded and irresolute and stupidly indulged me, I should not bless her name as I now do. A woman with her character would undoubtedly have succumbed under the weight of poverty and straitened circumstances in a strange land. I was altogether about two years at Mr. Loos' school, and I retain very unpleasant recollections of this period of my life. Mr. Loos was a cruel man who exercised no moral influence over his pupils. He treated me so badly. Perhaps I was not altogether undeserving of the severity shown, for I was a very mischievous boy; that one evening, smarting under the flogging I had received, I put on the clothes of a brother boarder, a boy much older than myself, and in that disguise ran away from school.

When I reached home my mother and sisters could not make me out in my new attire, and when I related to them how I had been treated I was forgiven and told I would not be sent back. I was nine years old at this time. In 1858 I was sent to St. Thomas' College and was put into that last class, of which kind hearted, gentle mannered Mr. Bluet was master. Here I began my Latin and to the good foundation laid here has been mainly due whatever improvement I achieved in my school life. An incident occurred when I was in Mr. Bluet's class which I think is worth recording. Differences had arisen between Warden Baly and Bishop Chapman and all the Collegiate School masters had ranged themselves on the side of the Bishop. My sympathies were with the Warden, not because I thought he had justice and right on his side, because a little podian of ten can hardly be expected to enter into and decide the merits of a quarrel of so serious a character. My partisanship was due entirely to the fact that your Uncle Johnny was the Warden's Proctor. I was staying with your Aunt Eliza, whose house I must not forget to tell you was my home for many years. This you must always remember so that if at any time any of your cousins should require your help and you are in a position to help them, prefer their claims to those of all others. Well, the Warden came down one morning to the school and when he reached our class we all stood up as we had been wont to do in obedience to one of the standing rules of the school. Upon this Mr. Bluet, our master and Mr. Bamforth our Headmaster ordered us to sit down telling us that Mr. Baly was no longer Warden. All the boys sat except myself and I narrowly escaped expulsion for this bold avowal of my partisanship. To go on with the history

of my school life in 1859 I was promoted and began Greek, Algebra and Euclid under Mr. Ellis. In Latin I went through a good deal of the . . . .

I left St. Thomas' at the end of 1859 and for one whole year I was without school. During a large part of this time your Aunt Eliza was staying at my mother's house in New Chetty Street (which I pointed out to you one day when I took you all to show you the merry-go-round) having come there for her first baby, your cousin Hetty, now Mrs. George Arndt, and I too stayed with them. I am ashamed to say I led a very idle life, always in mischief and giving my friends at home great trouble. Your Uncle Johnny was the only one of whom I was afraid, and thanks to the control and influence he exercised over me I was saved from going altogether to the bad. My poor mother was very distressed and her peace of mind was restored only when I was again sent to school. That event happened in 1861 when I entered the Colombo Academy (now called the Royal College) and was placed in the first class of the Lower School with old Mr. Gogerly for my master. Very little serious work was done here. The Lower School of the Colombo Academy during this period was in a very unsatisfactory condition. The masters had not their conscience in their work and the boys were ill-trained and neglected.

In 1862 I was promoted to the Upper School, which consisted of three classes, and in 1864, when I was just fifteen I had attained the proud position of a boy of the first class of the Upper School. One privilege which had hitherto attached to this position was immunity from the cane, which good Dr. Boake used too freely in my humble opinion. But I am ashamed to say that we boys showed ourselves undeserving of the privilege. I must here tell you that the first class in those days prepared for the Calcutta University Entrance Examination, and one had to be sixteen to go in for it. Now it so happened that most of us were under age, and knowing that we had not the dreaded prospect of an exam before us that year, we neglected our work and indulged our animal spirits. As Dr. Boake used to say, we failed to maintain the dignity and position of boys of the first class. We had our teachers, especially kind, gentle Mr. Marsh, our mature(?) head master. A very miserable life. We were constantly in trouble, and it was not long before Dr. Boake treated us, as if we did not belong to the first class, by caning us all round. Here I pause to say that, with all my respect for that good and large-hearted Irish clergyman, whose

memory I shall always venerate, in my opinion he could have done better had he less frequently sought the aid of the birch. Corporal punishment is a barbarous mode of correction, to be resorted to on very extreme occasions, and should always be the exception and not the rule, in dealing with juvenile offenders, both at home and in a school.

The year 1864 was ill-spent and at its end we, certainly I, had only a record to show of mischief and floggings. The next year we entered upon with firm resolve to work up for our entrance, but it was no easy matter to shake off old habits of idleness and love of mischief. Here I must tell you that I always worked with a head at my classics, English, Latin and Greek. Of History I was very fond, but Mathematics, in every shape and form, was the *bete noir* of my school life. Well when the year was drawing to its close, about October, Dr. Boake took down our names to be forwarded to Calcutta. When I ventured to say that I did not think I was quite prepared to stand the examination that year, I was told that I would have to leave school. ". . . . ." (Latin) said Dr. Boake, or, 'bring your two rupees entrance fee tomorrow.' When I got home I approached your Uncle Johnny, with whom I was staying, and begged for a letter to Dr. B. to let me go in next year. Here was your Uncle Johnny's reply: 'If you don't go in this year, I'll apprentice you to Lafaber.' (He was the family shoemaker). I was on the horns of a dilemma. As then advised, perhaps, I should have had no objection to be sent away from school, but then the prospect of becoming a Crispin and practising the motto ". . . . ." (Latin) was to my boyish . . . . simply dreadful.

To make a long tale short, the Entrance fee was paid, my name was sent up, and to work I set myself in right earnest. The examination was held in the first week in December, and when it was over, I was in no enviable frame of mind. But my suspense was at last afforded pleasant relief when the announcement reached me that I was among the passed candidates in the second division. The Academy failed to get even one through in the first division, while St. Thomas' College passed only one student and that in the second division. In 1866 I entered Training College and was dubbed a Junior Freshman. My fellow-collegians were John Casie Chetty (now an advocate) and Herat de Silva (who was a master in the Academy at the date of his death). The first six months were devoted to preparation for the Turnour Prize, which I stood a fair chance to win as I was fairly good in Greek. My name was sent in but the attraction of a wedding was incontestable, and

in consequence I lost the chance of being the Turnour Prize Scholar that year. The wedding was Miss Fanny Driberg to my friend Mr. Van der Straaten. This was in 1866. I continued in College till August 1867. In 1866 I had a disagreement with your Uncle Johnny, with whom I was staying, and came to my mother. It was a foolish boyish step, but I never forgot the debt of gratitude I owed him and your Aunt Eliza for all they did for me. I was in a contrary mood after I left your Uncle Johnny's and was determined to find employment and support myself. Of course I had to abandon the hopes I indulged in of entering the legal profession and to content myself with accepting whatever came in my way. This was a take down for me but I had brought it myself by my obstinacy.

In trying to be independent of your Uncle Johnny by becoming a clerk in a Government office I was acting like the man in the proverb who cut his nose to spite his face. But tho' I cannot justify this part of my life, I have reason to think that it was providentially ordained that I should go through this ordeal. I can assure you, with my exalted ideas, it was a take down for me, who had ridden and driven to school. Your Uncle Johnny always had his stables full: who always associated with the sons of those who were in a high condition of life, the Dribergs especially: who generally moved in a sphere above that of the clerks: to shoulder an umbrella and walk to the Fort to earn the paltry sum of Rs. 45/- a month. But I had to do it and did it. To get this junior clerkship in the Audit office I had to stand an examination! As I said before although this event of my life seemed a calamity to me, who had seemingly a more ambitious future before him it was a misfortune which proved a blessing in disguise. Living with your Uncle Johnny, who was in well-to-do circumstances, and mixing with people who were above want, I was fast forgetting my true position, the son of a widow whose industry and that of her daughters were helping them to live in modest . . . . .

I now began to think and act for myself, being brought face to face with my true position. I now saw clearly that my future depended on me and me alone. I was sternly reminded that I had no claims upon anybody for preferment. Indeed I may say that my education, in the right sense of the term, only began at this period of my life. I mark it as the crisis, which occurs in the life of every man. It is that tide in the affairs of men of which Shakespeare speaks. Luckily I

recognised the seriousness of the position. In pulling the chain of . . . a flush in a Govt. office, I felt I had gone down many steps in the social ladder, and the . . . of the feeling incited me to acquire by my own deserts that position, which I had hoped to attain to by Uncle Johnny's influence, or more accurately, which my boyish vanity hoped would be mine by right.

*The disillusion was the greatest blessing that befell me. I now resolved to work upwards. I did not like a clerk's life. I had been educated above that sphere. I determined to save enough to buy the stamps required for articles to become a Proctor. In December '67 I heard of a vacancy in the Colombo Academy of the twelfth mastership of the Lower School and applied for it. With Dr. Boake's assistance as well as the Certificates given me by Messrs. Steward and Marsh, I secured this place, which gave me £ 1.10 more a month, the salary being £72 per annum. Tho' my place was that of master of one of the infant classes Dr. Boake put me in charge of the Upper School third class. This was a decided boon to me, the boys were advanced and I had to prepare my work in order to instruct them.*

I now began to acquire those habits of study, method and punctuality, which I utterly failed to form in school. I can assure you my children that but for the responsibility being cast upon me of having to teach an advanced class, my life would have been one without character. Try to form habits when you are young, at home and at school. You will find it difficult to repair the neglect in advanced life. I doubt not but that I was forced by the necessity of my position to set an example to the boys under me, I would have failed to acquire these habits, which are essential to the formation of character, and therefore, essential to success. Yes, there is no more despicable object one can meet with than a colourless man, a man who has no definite opinions, no definite aims, swayed hither and thither, and devoid of all purpose.

I remained a master in the Academy for six years and these were the most useful years of my life. They afforded me a second education. I worked steadily and conscientiously and earned the high opinion of those above me. See the certificates testifying to the manner in which I discharged my duties which were given me by Dr. Boake, W. Marsh, W. Todd and the Director of Public Instruction. I entered Govt. Service in 1867 (Augt.) on a salary of £ 54 per annum and when I left

was in the receipt of £ 350 per annum, £ 150 my own pay as fifth form master and £ 200 . . . pay as acting for Mr. Cull, who had then been appointed Second Principal Assistant.

I took charge of a class in the Academy in 1868 and left in 1874, just six years after, to read for my Advocate's Exam. In February, I stood my 'preliminary' and was afraid I had made a mess of my Latin Prose. It would have been a disgrace if one who had taught the . . . . . Classics should have been plucked at a preliminary exam. I 'slanged' your Uncle John for having placed me in this predicament when I got out of the examination room. The result . . . . showed that my fears were groundless. I was the only one who passed. There were four candidates. I had but ten months to prepare for the second exam and in December of that year attained my ambition of being dubbed an Advocate.

My life since my entering into the legal profession has been a public one. Barring the first six months, when I got little or no work, business came in, and now at the date when I am writing this, I have attained a high position and am in the enjoyment of a large income. If all go well you will begin life with a competency I had none.

I hope you will make good use of the money and property you will inherit. Be kind to each other. Don't let money matters ever create divisions among you. The terms of my will are as clear and as explicit as I could make them. If you live together until you find homes of your own, you will have enough to keep you in comfort and ease.

When I am dead and gone I hope the few words of advice I have here given will be attended to by you all. God bless you my children and help you to lead pure honest lives in His sight and that of your fellow men! This is the wish of your father.

## ART AND THE BEHOLDER

By George Keyt

All true art today is universal. The apparent absence of this quality is actually the result of an absence in the attitude of the spectator. He is as it were, confused by a special accentuation on a given sound and imagines the sound to be localised or even eliminated.

True painting is not description, as there is another language for that. It is not even definition. It is emphasis in its most unequivocal form of line, colour and shape. But to those not literate in it, painting is as meaningless as any other foreign language, though perhaps more tantalising.

In art nowadays it does not necessarily follow that the very thing pictorially conceived should appear on the canvas. In the process of transference a problem may arise, and this is but remotely connected if at all, with the original conception of the picture. The subject may nevertheless be left intact for those who seek it. And for those who do not, or are uninformed in that particular, there will always be another fascination.

In modern art there is mostly no scrupulous application of a formula where technique is concerned. There is no technical problem apart from that which results from a particular work in hand. There may sometimes be a formula—adapted to the purpose—in the case of a variation on a theme. But here too it would of necessity be the painter's formula.

An important aspect of the painting of our time is the endeavour to express the dynamic nature of form, whether animate or not. Here the obsolete naturalistic manner of European painting—of petrified movement—still offers a satisfactory solution to the unrealistic and superficial.

But it is through the mental image that this is truly expressed. It is perfectly legitimate to resort to dislocation and re-arranged disintegration of things and beings represented. Things and beings represented in any true art are never represented as things in themselves. Therefore it is permissible that, independently of their set incidentality, light and shadow and perspective and recession of planes may be handled

in an arbitrary way. They are separate and concrete, visually tangible as it were, and should go to make and support a design when necessary.

How is it possible ever to reproduce what is seen of a face, especially what is continued to be known of that face seen in the mind on recollection? Is it that naturalistic painting attempts to reproduce the face itself? Can anything be more preposterous? At best an effigy continues to emerge, no matter what attempts are made to enliven the features by technical devices; the more "life-like" the appearance, the closer the perfect wax-work is approached.

We there dispense with naturalism as such.

In painting, nowadays, there is an endeavour to solve complexity. This is attempted by difficult simplification. It may be that in the process the complexity gets projected on to the canvas. But the mental imagery revealed may never, with impunity, approach anything so equivocal as words do.

Why must the art of our age be faced by misconception and hostility? It is the inevitable result of some class or other, in a class-ridden world, resenting — among other things not smoothed and rounded off — the analytical revelation of certain aspects of beauty.

Some measure of caution should be exercised even where there is evidence of appreciation in modern art. Social division is responsible for cultural snobbery. But where is the danger in this? There are potential traitors who may turn on us if free culture is suppressed. This has happened before. And there is no length to which they will not go in order to make amends for their indiscretion.

It is the power of instinctive vision in the painter which gives the creative quality to a work of art. Where this power is lacking there is mere derivation. But no art however considerable, is independent of other art, even apart from the field of tradition where its roots are. The direct things of life and nature depicted in painting depend very much on the channel of indirect acquisitions in art expression.

Originality is something which results in creative art; it is not made. But it is more than something which results from a sincere struggle. Those who seek originality would rather avoid the stepping stones. The best, however, are not those who avoid the stepping stones, nor are they put off by the spectacle of those who make for them.

Incentives and influences cease once the actual work of creation is in progress. Thereafter the forces which contributed to it are lost to sight, and the launched thing stands alone — controlled and steered to its destination by a single vision. A painting evolves within itself the solution it presents. It works out its own logic brought about by rhythmic oppositions caused by, and confronting, a particular rhythm which it sets up.

There is an end to things which evolve. When the things which need explanation are explained they not only end in themselves but also end our interest in them. In real painting there is no evolution beyond the point which serves as an avenue to a further variation.

*The foregoing Aphorisms on Art were written by the artist towards the end of 1946 while he was living in Bombay. Printed in the catalogue of the George Keyt Exhibition at the Lionel Wendt Gallery, Colombo 7, 18 - 24 April, 1983.*



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# Journal of the Dutch Burgher Union of Ceylon.

"Eendracht Maakt Macht"

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