

among the Basutos performed as ceremoniously as among the ancient Greeks, while some of the folklore tales of this nation, given by Cassalis, can be paralleled, incident for incident, with some of the Greek tales, which in many instances were borrowed from the Egyptians. I should explain that I am thinking of the god Obas (Vulcan), not as the blacksmith of later mythology, but as the very essence of supreme being."

Apropos of the above it may be of some interest to know that among the minor relics of the Dutch occupation of Ceylon which are exhibited in the Colombo Museum, there is a silver heirloom plate upwards of six inches in diameter, the general shape square, with the angles elegantly scalloped, bearing the following inscription in Dutch, indicating that it was dedicated to the memory of one Nicolaas Kuyselaar, a master coppersmith, who died in Colombo on the 19th April, 1774 :—

Ter  
Gedagtenis : Van den  
Eersamen  
Nicolaas Kuyselaar,  
In Zyn Leven Baas der  
Smits, en Kuypers ;  
Gebooren te Stynbach,  
Den 13 April, 1714, Overleeden  
te Kolombo,  
Den 19 April, 1774  
Oud 60 Jaaren  
En 6 daagen.

It may be added that the silver plate bearing the above inscription is the only example preserved in this Museum in which the word "Baas" (which has been anglicized or "americanized" into "boss") occurs.

ED., S. Z.

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6. *Flying-foxes (Pteropus medius) at Barberyn.*—Having lately been afforded an opportunity of landing on Barberyn island, of whose flying-foxes and crows Dr. Willey\* has already given a most interesting account, I was enabled to make a few additional observations on these bats.

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\* Spol. Zeyl., Vol. II., Part V., p. 50.



*Resting Habits.*

In the day time "the bats may be seen suspended in rows from the midribs of the palm leaves." They invariably select very high trees, and usually congregate in colonies of about six to ten on a tree, several such trees being together. Occasionally, they are to be seen on twigs and slender branches of other trees, but show a distinct partiality for cocos—mainly, I think, because these are higher and because the bare stem renders it more difficult for any enemy to approach unseen. These bats are very wary, and all in the vicinity take to flight when disturbed in any way, as by firing a gun. They are extremely tenacious of life and very difficult to kill.

*Sexual Gregariousness.*

It is well known that amongst bats in general the species are social and gregarious, but that the two sexes do not, as a rule, intermingle, and only come together at the nuptial season. At other times they live apart, and sometimes at considerable distances, so that in a large colony of a given species not a single individual of the female sex may be found, while in another the females will abound and not a male occur. This colony of flying foxes at Barberyn appears to be entirely composed of males. Four specimens were shot and all proved to be males, nor were any females or young observed. Dr. Willey refers to a similar colony on islands in the Bentota river, and it would be interesting to ascertain the sex of the individuals of which it is composed, and, if a female colony, whether it is entirely mutually complementary to the colony at Barberyn.

*External Parasites.*

The specimens shot were obtained with a view to examination for any peculiar fleas, but none were found. A large and very active bat-tick, however, was common, running freely over the body and wings; it is apparently a species of *Nycteribia*, a very remarkable apterous genus of parasitic Diptera. None of the flying foxes shot were free from these ticks, usually about half a dozen being present, but in one case only one adult specimen and one very immature. These parasites seem a great source of annoyance, the bats being seen often to scratch themselves as they hang on the trees.

*Preference for Islands.*

The habit of resting by day on islands, wherever these are accessible, seems to be general amongst the species of this genus. Keller\*

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\* Keller, "Madagascar, Mauritius, and other East African Islands," p. 40.



says ;—" They especially haunt the coast region (of Madagascar), and spend the whole day clinging fast by the claws to the branches of the large trees on the lonely islands. At dusk they set forth for the places on the coast and plunder the fruit trees." And again\* :—" Further out to sea (from Nossi-be) one perceives Tany Kely, an uninhabited islet which serves as a safe asylum for the large bats." In both these cases, *Pteropus Edwardsii* is the species referred to. It need hardly be pointed out that this partiality for islands is potent as a protection against enemies such as snakes and carnivorous mammals. There appear to be no snakes in Barberyne except a small *Dendrophis*.

T. BAINBRIGGE FLETCHER.

H. M. S. "Sealark," March 12, 1906.

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\* *l. c.*, p. 155.



Fletcher, T. B. 1907. "Flying-foxes (*Pteropus medius*) at Barberyn." *Spolia zeylanica* 4, 35–37.

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