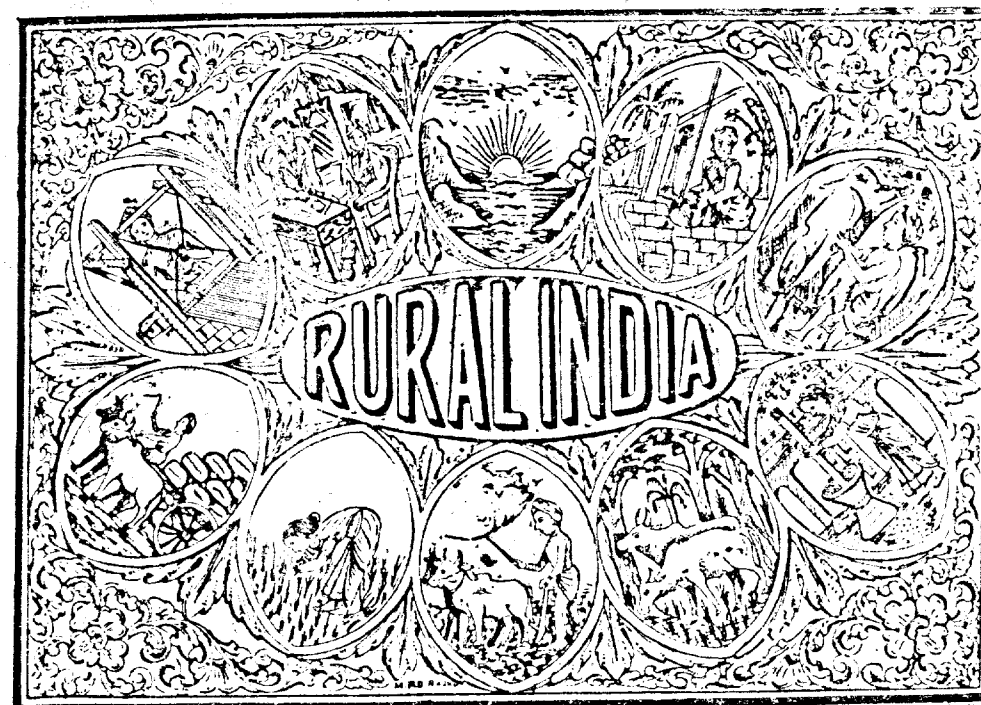


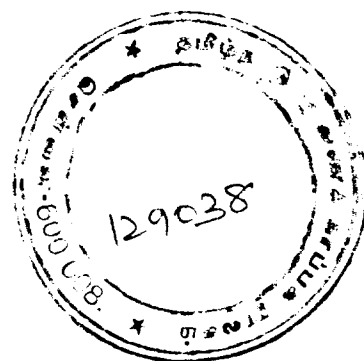


JOURNAL OF THE MADRAS FOREST PANCHAYATS.

Office:

Mylapore:

Madras.



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Honorary Editor:
A. Swaminatha Aiyer, B. A.

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RURAL INDIA

Managing Editor :—A. Swaminatha Iyer, B. A.

Vol. VI

October-November 1931.

No. 10-11.

THE VILLAGE AND ITS PROBLEMS.*

(By the Editor)

Rural reform is in the air in India and the conviction is growing that if India is to come to her own, it must be through the village. Throughout India there is now a new zeal for rural work and it is appropriate if the simple fact is recognised that 90 percent of the people of India live in their 7,00,000 villages and in these villages are embedded the characteristic features of Indian civilization. The late Mr. K. T. Paul the great Indian leader and social worker whose untimely death evoked universal sorrow has in his characteristic manner stated that Rural India is Real India and "India is really there in the villages", a view which has been endorsed by such a well known worker as Dr. Macnicol, recently secretary of the National Christian Council of India who after a life time of conspicuous service in India, of deep study of her problems and with a ripe wisdom of Indian affairs has stated that "all who would touch the heart and mould the life of India must go down among the silent masses of people. They must turn their backs upon the cities and the life of the cities". Great Indian thinkers like Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi have come to the same conclusion. The poet of Santiniketan while regretting the fatal neglect of villages which are compelled to offer to the ungrateful towns cheerless and unintelligent labour for work carried in an unhealthy and impoverished environment has urged that serious efforts should be made to bring back life to them in its completeness "making them self-reliant and self-respectful, acquainted with the cultural traditions of their own country and competent to make an efficient use of the modern resources for the improvement of their physical, intellectual and economic condition." So also Mahatma Gandhi who is reported to have said that the future of India would be decided not in her cities but in her villages. He was of course referring to political issues but unquestionably his statement covers the whole range of Indian economic and social problems.

There is the tradition of a golden age of the Indian village when it was a highly developed social unit nearly if not completely self-sufficing. We have ample evidence of this in the records of the Chola and Pandya administrations of South

* The Christian mission in Rural India by Kenyon L. Butterfield with a "Foreword" by Dr. John R. Mott (International Missionary Council, New York and London 1930.)

India. These villages were functioning in the early days of the British Connection and Sir Thomas Munroe a former Governor of Madras has described the South Indian villages as "those little republics" which was not the language of exaggeration. Thus historically the Indian village is a self-governing unit. Even now it has its full complement of servants and its recognised leaders. It largely determines its own affairs. Through various causes, political and economic as well as social, this village unity has considerably broken down. On the basis of the materials available attempts have for sometime past been made to revive the old village life and to restore it to something of its original status. This work which goes under the now familiar name of "Rural Reconstruction" has been undertaken in the spirit of service by private individuals and bodies. The most vigorous single attack upon the short comings of Rural India thus far made is the work of a Government official and his wife Mr. and Mrs. F. L. Brayne whose operations have been described by Mr. Brayne himself in his book *The Making of Village India*. One of the earliest and best conceived efforts at rural reconstruction under non-official auspices is that of the school organised by the poet Tagore as a part of his general educational project. It consists of an institute of rural reconstruction and is designed (1) to win the friendship and affection of villages and improve cultivation by taking a real interest in all that concerns their life and welfare and by making a lively effort to assist them in solving their most pressing problems, (2) to take the problems of the village and the field to the class room for study and discussion and to the experimental farm for solution and (3) to carry the knowledge and experience gained in the class room and experimental farm to the villages in the endeavour to improve their sanitation and health, to develop their resources and credit, to help them to sell their produce and buy their requirements to the best advantage; to teach them better methods of growing crops and vegetables and of keeping live-stock; to encourage them to learn and practise arts and crafts and to bring home to them the benefits of associated life, mutual aid and common endeavour. Our readers are aware of the practical steps taken by Sir Daniel Hamilton, the merchant Prince of Calcutta who by applying the principles of co-operation in his colony of 30,000 acres situated in the Sunderbans of Bengal has indicated the direction in which a landlord can make a contribution to rural reconstruction. He has utilised the co-operative scheme throughout with co-operative banks, co-operative stores and co-operative rice mills. In his colony, there is adequate educational and medical service. No money lenders are allowed in the colony and the villagers have no debts except to the co-operative banks. There is no thieving and there is no litigation. Promising work has also been done by several women's institutes, the Servants of India Society and other rural welfare organisations like the Ramakrishna Mission. Government effort has been negligible. By far the most effective and satisfactory enterprise in this direction has been by missionary bodies.

Sometime ago Dr. Kenyon L. Butterfield visited Rural India in response to the invitation of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council and the invitation of the National Christian Council of India, Burma and Ceylon. Dr. Butterfield has for many years been a prominent figure in the American and international country life associations and has years of successful experience as head of two leading agricultural Colleges and is acknowledged as one of the front line of rural socialists today. His visits and the discussions he held with Indian and missionary leaders have served to focus attention as never before on this problem.

Dr. Butterfield's impressions and the findings of the series of Conferences held during his journeys are recorded in the report before us. As well stated in the "Foreword" by Dr. John R. Mott this compact volume of 158 pages affords a comprehensive, up-to-date and informing conspectus regarding the rural needs and problems of India and the measures for meeting them. Although the various measures recommended are intended for the guidance of missionary bodies engaged in rural welfare work, they afford valuable suggestions to Government and non-official agencies as well.

After detailing his itinerary (chapter I), Dr. Butterfield draws attention to some of the conditions that furnish the background (Chapter II) for enterprise in rural India and refers to the vastness of the country, its physical features, land tenures, subdivision and fragmentation of land and the chronic poverty of the Indian peasant. Dr. Butterfield's estimate that in this country there is a population as large as that of the United States of America which is perpetually within the zone of the extremest poverty, is correct as well as the statement as regards indebtedness. "Much of the borrowing is for relatively high social expenses as for marriages, funerals, festivals and the like", with the result that there are thousands upon thousands of peasants who eventually lose their land. Malnutrition and consequent lack of vitality and low disease resistance are also serious handicaps. Great hosts of people not only do not have enough to eat but they do not have a balanced ration. The toll of disease is most startling with respect to death but it is equally disastrous in its effects upon the vigour of those who still remain alive. Malaria alone accounts not only for a high death rate but its ravages are even more serious in time lost from work and in reduced vitality. Tuberculosis is rampant. Most diseases originate in dirt either in the village itself or in the water used by the villagers. We would like to draw particular attention to the author's treatment of the rural reconstruction unit (Ch. V) in which he has made original suggestions. A rural reconstruction unit is a group of contiguous villages in which as full a programme as possible of rural reconstruction service shall be made available to all people, all agencies for educational, health, economic and social progress being urged to pool their efforts through some form of community council in an attempt to get the people to co-operate in building a new type of rural community. The real nucleus of the rural reconstruction unit is the community school—a school which shall give the boys and girls an education of the sort that fits them for life in the village. The school must impart as wide a range as possible of rural knowledge and assist the pupils in the acquirement of the various village skills. These schools must minister to adults as well as to youths and must be true centres for the educational life of the entire unit. The community school is really a school for the whole community. It is not merely a school with a community outlook and atmosphere but it is a school that will actually give continuing education to all the people in the community. Organised endeavour is the life blood of rural reconstruction and the value of the co-operative society, whether it is a single-purpose society or multi-purpose society cannot be over emphasised. There are great possibilities of developing local industries especially for the processing of soil-grown products. Dr. Butterfield is of opinion that the rural reconstruction unit is a large enough area for the operation of such concerns and suggests that it is worth considering whether the work of the artisans of the village cannot be pooled in some co-operative fashion within the rural reconstruction

unt. Mahatma Gandhi has no doubt emphasised spinning and weaving as essential to the economic life of the village but as suggested by Dr. Butterfield it is possible to provide a much wider range of choice in occupations for idle time, in order to cater to the differing tastes and capacities of the villagers and to supply to a larger degree the local needs of the people themselves.

The work of mission hospitals and medical missionaries in rural areas is beyond praise. The medical missionaries are quite alive to the needs of rural India in this respect. Indeed the Committee of the National Christian Council which has recently published a survey of medical missions in India has observed that the greatest need of the present time is that of the rural areas and lays special stress on preventive work. This and the service which the agricultural missionary could through Government aid do in rural instruction units are open to all works. This is a field of activity in which non-Christian workers like the Ramakrishna Mission may be expected to engage themselves in following the lead of the Christian Mission Bodies which are already doing very, useful and commendable work in this direction. The rural reconstruction unit will utilise all the forces spiritual, educational, economic, social and governmental that are available and through co-operative methods stimulate the maximum progress of Rural India. Thus by harnessing all available agencies and forces it is possible to attempt a national programme of village uplift to produce a true and lasting civilisation. Space forbids our referring in detail to the building of an adequate rural civilisation discussed in Ch. VIII of the report which we have perused with interest and profit. We would earnestly commend the careful study of the report to all rural workers — Christian as well as non-Christian.

MADRAS FOREST PANCHAYATS.

The following are extracts from the report of the Board of revenue on the administration of forest panchayats in the Presidency for the year ending 30th June 1931.

During the year under report, there were 994 panchayats managing an area of 3,383.78 square miles and paying a rent of Rs. 1,55,448 as against 1,047 panchayats with an area of 3,425.19 square miles and paying a rent of Rs. 1,59,026 in the year 1929-30. The decrease in the number and in the area of the panchayats is due (a) to the clubbing of small contiguous panchayats into larger units in the interests of efficiency and economical management; (b) to the transfer of three reserves to Class I and the handing back to the Forest department of eight reserves in the Kurnool district and one in the Nellore district; and (c) to the desafforestation of small portions of a few others in Chingleput and North Arcot districts. The decrease in the rent was partly due to the decrease in the area and partly to the reduction of rents necessitated by a revision of grazing limits so as to give a more normal grazing incidence than before.

The following statement shows the number of panchayats in each district, the area managed by them and the rent payable to Government:—

Serial number.	District.	Number of panchayats.	Area (in square miles) managed by panchayats.	Rent.
				Rs.
1	Vizagapatam ...	8	32.67	562
2	East Godavari ...	5	16.91	225
3	West Godavari ...	13	57.94	1,985
4	Kistna ...	20	98.95	2,384
5	Guntur ...	61	193.63	14,085
6	Kurnool ...	25	143.72	5,719
7	Bellary ...	101	485.20	11,827
8	Anantapur ...	93	448.34	11,922
9	Cuddapah ...	54	216.45	6,053
10	Nellore ...	167	395.77	28,362
11	Chingleput ...	66	112.57	10,318
12	South Arcot ...	73	222.52	15,714
13	Chittoor ...	73	318.42	9,037
14	North Arcot ...	90	275.41	15,525
15	Salem ...	42	158.27	7,597
16	Coimbatore ...	21	60.73	3,715
17	Trichinopoly ...	43	90.88	7,353
18	Madura ...	21	41.65	2,038
19	Ramnad ...	1	0.86	254
20	Tinnevely ...	7	9.84	773
21	South Kanara ...	10	3.05	...
	Total ...	994	3,383.78	1,55,448

The number of cow units that grazed in panchayat forests during the year was 676,312 as against 740,064 in the previous year. This works out to an incidence of 3.18 acres per cow unit as against 2.96 acre during 1929-30.

The number of watchers employed by the panchayats for the protection of the areas under their control was 1,984 as against 2,023 in 1929-30. The average area which each watcher had to patrol was 1.70 square miles as against 1.65 square miles in the previous year.

As in the year 1929-30, there was a further increase in the number of offences reported by panchayats during the year under report, the number being 13,109 as against 11,297 in 1929-30. Eleven thousand eight hundred and thirty offences were compounded for a sum of Rs. 86,694 as against 9,441 offences compounded for Rs. 80,796 in the previous year. Most Collectors attribute this improvement in detection of offences by panchayats to the increased interest taken by panchayats consequent on the orders granting panchayats a moiety of half the compounding fees and fines realized in respect of offences reported by them; and the Board is inclined to agree with them. One panchayat in the Cuddapah district was newly empowered under the Forest Act during the year, while the powers enjoyed by two panchayats in North Arcot were withdrawn because of improper and injudicious exercise of the powers. Two other panchayats in the same district which had been empowered went out of office and the panchayatdars who succeeded them have not yet been invested with powers. The number of panchayats enjoying legal status at present

is therefore 29. Most of these are reported to be exercising their powers properly and judiciously; but a few of them (three out of the five in Trichinopoly and one out of two in Guntur) did not detect any offence during the whole year and hence had no opportunity to use their powers.

Out of 994 panchayats, the working of 133 or 13 per cent is reported by Collectors to be good, 559 or about 56 per cent fair, 99 or about 10 per cent improving and 203 or about 20 per cent indifferent. Last year 13 per cent was reported to be good, 56 per cent fair, 12 per cent improving and 19 per cent indifferent.

During the year under report, 370 panchayats dug new wells or repaired old ponds and wells in their areas at a cost of Rs. 27,907, as against an expenditure of Rs. 31,433 by 395 panchayats in the previous year. One hundred and twenty-four panchayats effected other improvements such as, formation of cart-tracks, construction of culverts, etc., at a cost of Rs. 3,359; in the previous year 281 panchayats spent Rs. 10,258 on such objects. The slight decrease in the expenditure for improvements to water sources is attributed to the fact that some panchayats were not able to find the necessary funds, as the expected grazing revenue was not realized owing to the prevailing economic depression. The reason for the large decrease in expenditure under the other improvements is due to the introduction of the cochineal insect for the destruction of prickly-pear which costs practically nothing and for which large sums of money were being spent in previous years. As stated in the Board's Administration report for the year 1929-30, the work of eradicating prickly-pear in panchayat areas by this means was taken on hand systematically. The Forest Panchayat Officer, after making himself familiar with the nature and habits of the insect, gave personal instructions to all the Forest Panchayat Deputy Tahsildars and also introduced the insect in 44 panchayat areas in their presence. The method of propagating the insect and helping it to spread was also demonstrated to them. Detailed instructions were also issued by the Board in the matter and Forest Panchayat Deputy Tahsildars were ordered to introduce the insect into all panchayat areas containing prickly-pear. This has been done and the cochineal insect has been introduced in almost all the panchayat areas containing prickly-pear. The insect reported to be spreading well in all the districts and the destruction of prickly-pear is progressing satisfactorily.

The provision for allotting lands to watchers for temporary cultivation in order to supplement their pay and to stimulate their zeal in protecting the forest appears to have been little used in the year. Only five watchers have been granted lands under this rule during the year (two in the Cuddapah district, two in the Trichinopoly district and one in the North Arcot district). Collectors will be asked to make greater use of this provision.

There were 26 Panchayat Deputy Tahsildars at the beginning of the year. Two additional Panchayat Deputy Tahsildars, one for each of the Nellore and North Arcot districts, were sanctioned with effect from 1st May 1931 but were abolished later as a measure of retrenchment.

The Board is of opinion that the working of the panchayats in the Presidency has on the whole been satisfactory.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Madras Forest Panchayats.—We print in this issue extracts from the report of the Board of Revenue on the administration of Forest Panchayats in this Presidency for the year ending 30th June 1931

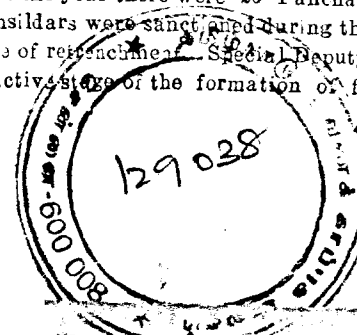
It is gratifying to note that as in the previous year there was a further increase in the number of offences reported by Panchayats during the year under report most of which were compounded. Collectors attribute the improvement in detection of offences by Panchayats to the increased interest taken by them as the result of the policy of handing over to Panchayats half the compounding fees and fines realised in respect of offences reported by them. Trust begets responsibility and Government will we hope explore further avenues of granting additional privileges and concessions to the Forest Panchayats who we have no doubt will cheerfully willingly and successfully shoulder further responsibility to the credit of Government and themselves.

Forest Panchayats are classified as good, fair and indifferent and it is stated that only 13 per cent of the Panchayats were "good." On what data this classification is made and what steps are taken to give opportunities to indifferent Panchayats to improve themselves are not known. One has a shrewd suspicion that the Panchayat Presidents who are in the good books of the Special Deputy Tahsildars are "good" Panchayats and the others are "fair" and "indifferent" Panchayats.

The prevailing economic depression was responsible for a very much smaller amount than hitherto having been spent on carrying out works of public utility for the Panchayat Forests and Panchayat villages such as digging new wells or repairing old ponds and wells and effecting other improvements such as formation of cart tracks, construction of culverts etc. In previous years large sums of money were being spent on the destruction of prickly-pear in Panchayat Forests. The reason for the decrease in expenditure under other improvements is due to the introduction of the cochineal insect which costs practically nothing. The work of eradicating prickly-pear in Panchayat areas by this insect has been taken in hand systematically. The cochineal insect has been introduced in almost all the Panchayat areas containing prickly-pear and the destruction of prickly-pear is progressing satisfactorily.

It is a matter for regret that the provision for allotting lands to watchers for temporary cultivation in order to supplement their pay and to stimulate their zeal in protecting their forests was little used during the year. The Board of Revenue is fortunately alive to the importance of this provision and we trust that improvements in this direction will be noticeable in the next year's report.

At the beginning of the year there were 26 Panchayat Deputy Tahsildars. Two additional Deputy Tahsildars were sanctioned during the year but were subsequently abolished as a measure of retrenchment. Special Deputy Tahsildars were no doubt necessary during the active stage of the formation of forest Panchayats and it is



doubtful whether they are necessary now. The ordinary Revenue staff, Taluk Tahsildars for instance should be able to inspect the Panchayat Forests during their tours. As a measure of economy in these days of economic depression, the passing away of the Special Deputy Tahsildars will not be regretted. We commend this suggestion for the special consideration of the Retrenchment Committee and the Government. With a view to supplementing the work of the Revenue Tahsildars non-official agency might we think be utilised as far as possible. To this end, non-official supervising District Unions should be formed who might in co-operation with the District Revenue staff effectively supervise the Panchayat Forests. They certainly will not be found less efficient than the Special Deputy Tahsildars who have done very little to develop the Panchayat Forests. The majority of them are there marking time and eagerly looking forward to the time when they will be translated to the regular line. If occasionally an enthusiastic Deputy Tahsildar happens to evince more than the usual interest, it is with a view to pick holes in the work of the Panchayatdars, not an over-educated body of people and to unnecessarily harass them. No doubt they get a certificate of merit for efficient supervision and inspection. A Panchayat President who has been always in the good books of the Deputy Tahsildar once humorously remarked that "Panchayat Forests" are a misnomer and that they might well be named "Deputy Tahsildars' Forests".

That inspite of all these handicaps, the working of the Panchayats has on the whole been satisfactory affords ample evidence of the soundness of the policy underlying the movement and the sympathetic intentions of Government. Wherever the grazing rates in Panchayat Forests are unduly high and do not approximate to the district rates fixed by Government, steps are taken on representations made to remove anomalies. Nellore is a district in which the ryots depend upon forests for grazing their cattle and the largest number of Forest Panchayats are to be found in that district. We heard the other day that the ryots of the Venkatagiri Zamindari situated in the Nellore district have been asking the Zamindar for the formation of Forest Panchayats as in the Government tracts, which shows that the Forest Panchayat movement, is appreciated by the ryot population. It seems that in the Venkatagiri Zamindari the grazing fees have been enormously increased during recent years. If it is a fact, the matter needs looking into, in the interests of the ryots concerned.

The following questions put by Mr. T. S. Ramaswami Ayyar, M. L. C., at the last session of the Legislative Council and the answers thereto will be found interesting.

Forest Panchayats

Expenses incurred by Forest Panchayats in connexion with the Panchayats Conference.

611—

*874 Q.—Mr. T. S. RAMASWAMI AYYAR: With reference to the answer to question No. 122, dated the 5th August 1931, regarding expenses incurred by Parannallur and other Forest Panchayats in connexion with the Panchayats' Conference, will the hon. the Member for Revenue be pleased to state—

- (a) whether the Board of Revenue has passed any orders;
- (b) if so, whether the Government will be pleased to place those orders on the table together with the reasons which made the Board to issue such orders; and
- (c) whether the Government will be pleased to call for a report?

611 874—

A.—(a) & (c) The Government have not the information but have called for a report.

(b) The suggestion will be considered when the report called for is received.

Kistbandy.—The resolution which was moved at the recent session of the Madras Legislative Council which was pressed and carried without a division brings again prominently for consideration the subject of "Kistbandy" or the scheme of Kist payments. The land Revenue is collected now in *four* equal instalments and the resolution was a recommendation that it might be collected in *six* equal instalments. The Kistbandy is fixed on certain principles which need not be discussed now. Briefly stated, the kistbandy has been fixed with a view to facilitate the collection of revenue on the part of the Government officials and to realise the amount as soon as possible after the harvest when the ryots will be in funds.

Assuming the soundness of the principle on which the "Kistbandy" is based, the question is often asked, "why force the ryots to pay in such a short time when they can conveniently pay in smaller amounts if the payment is spread over a larger period." The collecting agency is a full time staff and is paid for the months when there is nothing doing in the village. In answer to this, it is urged and the objection cannot be easily brushed aside that there will be nothing to collect as the average ryot who is proverbially improvident will spend all that he has on useless objects and will be perpetually in arrears.

It has however to be considered in this connection that the ryot having to pay immediately after the harvest does not get the full value for his produce which has to be sold for whatever price the local merchant fixes in order to pay the Government assessment. Here is a splendid opportunity for co-operative societies to come to the rescue of the ryots. Co-operative Societies could arrange to pay the assessment according to the instalments fixed by Government and then collect from the ryots. The difficulties which the Government agency may feel in recovering from the ryots in non-harvest months may not be felt by the co-operative societies as they will advance moneys against the produce deposited with them. The experiment may however be tried in suitable localities. We wish the Madras Provincial Co-operative Union and the Central Banks will look into this question with a view to evolving a practical scheme.

Hyderabad Horticultural and Poultry Show. We learn from a communication received from the Director of Agriculture, H. E. H., the Nizams Government, that a Horticultural and Poultry Show will be held in Hyderabad on the same lines as last year from 9th February to 11th February 1932. Full particulars and Prospectus can be had from the Secretary of the Show, Office of the Director of Agriculture, Hyderabad, Deccan.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES.

A First course on Sanskrit translation. By V. Krishnamurthi Sastri, Sanskrit Pandit, P. S. High School, Mylapore. (Panini Publishing house, Mylapore, Madras 1931—Price 10 annas.)

The author who has considerable experience as a teacher of Sanskrit has in this book given easy graduated exercises for translating English into Sanskrit and *Vice Versa*. We have gone through the exercises and find them helpful to boys who take up Sanskrit as their Second Language. A glossary of English and Sanskrit words and expressions is given at the end of the book which should be found useful.

Sense in sex and other stories of Indian women. By A. S.H.P. Ayyar, M. A., (Oxon) I. C. S., (D. B. Tarpurwala Sons & Co., Bombay).

In the clutch of the Devil. A drama in five acts by the same author.

We owe an apology to the publishers and to the author for the delay in noticing these books which have been lying on our table for sometime. The unique collection of pen pictures descriptive of the social and domestic life of India which the author has given in the first publication, should appeal to a wide range of readers as depicting the characteristic features of Indian Life, especially of South India. Though the characters and incidents are fictitious, they are easily met with in real life. The sorrows and sufferings of Indian women are described in a light and humorous vein which comes naturally to the author who has the rare gift of story telling in easy narrative style.

In the second book which is a drama in five acts, the author narrates what happens even in these days of enlightenment in the villages of South India, particularly of Malabar. Malabar is credited with being the land of charms and devils and circumstances, often horrible and unmeaning are performed even by the cultured higher casts with the aid of ignorant low caste people to get rid of evil spirits—devils which are supposed to cause suffering and misery to people who have the misfortune of having incurred their displeasure. Sometimes the aid of the devils is invoked by ignorant people to get their worldly objects fulfilled or for purposes of revenge. Fortunately such practises are becoming things of the past in the wake of higher culture and knowledge and faith in an all-pervading God, the divine ruler represented in various forms in the temples and worshiped with offerings of flowers and fruits for the salvation of the soul.

The New Age—We have received the opening issue of "The New Age", an organ of the Akbar Ashram—Karachi. The main purpose of the new journal is stated to be to provide a channel for creative religion, cultural and social thought. The journal will interpret the spirit of the New Age and seek to spread the message of Unity. The magazine will endeavour to mirror the thoughts, hopes and aspirations of the younger generation and should therefore appeal to young men and women. The matter presented in the opening issue is varied interesting, and well written. We heartily extend our welcome to our young contemporary and wish it the cess and long life. The annual subscription is Rs. 3.

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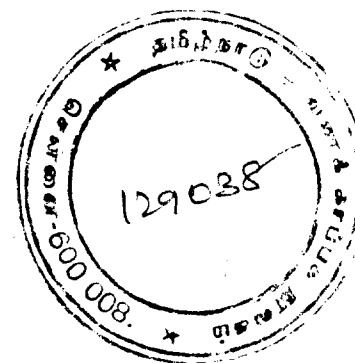
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