

AN AGRICULTURAL EXCURSION IN TAMIL LAND AND MALABAR.

The second-year students of the Coimbatore Agricultural College went out on an agricultural tour in the Tamil districts and in the Travancore and Cochin States. The tour started with a visit to the Aduthurai Paddybreeding Station in the Tanjore district on the 4th January and was projected as far south as Nagercoil and the return to headquarters on the 18th was through the States, touching important places, the last being Trichur in the Cochin territory. The route taken gave ample scope for study of some of the most important and interesting tracts of South India apart from the great delight one may experience in passing through the famous cities and pleasure resorts in Southern India.

Traversing the beautiful paddy fields interspersed with plantations and coconut groves in the Cauvery delta, the train steams up south beyond Trichinopoly, through vast undulated dry tracts poorly cultivated with chains of hills covered with thick jungles. Passing Dindigul under the Sirumalai hills famous for its plantations, it descends into the fertile Periyar valley, the broad sheets of paddy fields once again coming into view. Leaving Madura and quickly gliding over a light red soil tract of average fertility up to about Thirumangalam, the train plunges into the reputed black soil area of the south covering large portions of west Ramnad and north Tinnevely districts. When the train leaves Manyachi, we pass the black soil area and enter again into the borders of the rich Thambiraparani valley. From Tinnevely the bus takes us over rather uninteresting country studded with tanks and palmyra palms in their hundreds and thousands. The cultivation is poor except under tanks and wells and the scene changes to one of pleasing paddy fields only on the approach to Nagercoil. From here the typical red soil area of the West Coast commences. The drive from Nagercoil to Trivandrum is through picturesque country winding over low hills and broad valleys which are thick with groves of coconuts, areca, jack, mangoes and plantains nodding over innumerable tapioca plots. The vegetation is typical of a tract receiving heavy rainfall. Quilon, a busy town stands in the southermost point of the back water system, with

Alleppey in the centre and Ernakulam, the San Francisco of South India at the head. Beyond Ernakulam the country gets more undulated, the Ghats being much nearer the sea than in the Travancore State where it is about 40 to 50 miles. In typical Malabar country noted for bananas and surrounded by beautiful gardens of jack and mangoes is Trichur, the last place of visit. From here upto the limits of the Palghat gap the scene consists of fine paddy fields, gardens and thick ever green forests on the slopes of hills. From the eastern limits of the Palghat gap on the Coimbatore border commences the poor dry area of this district, the change from a place like Malabar to one of low rainfall is marked.

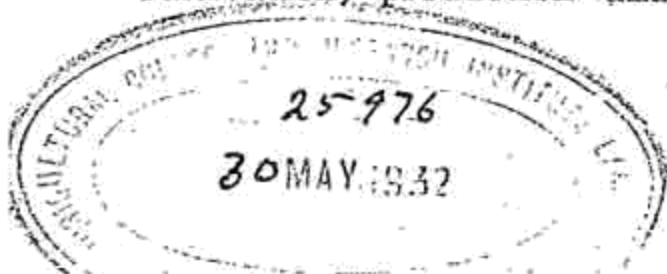
To give some details of the visits and study in each place of halt.—At Auduturai, the centre of the delta paddy tract, the Assistant Paddy Specialist gave full information regarding the methods of selection and breeding of paddy plants. Several of the Aduturai varieties as well as the some of the manurial and cultural trials were observed in the field. Some details about the cultivation of paddy in the delta, season, varieties etc., were also gathered from ryots. At Trichinopoly the Grand Anicut was visited. It is situated at the eastern extremity of the Srirangam island, about 12 miles from Trichinopoly town. This Anicut prevents the natural flow of the Cauvery water into the Coleroon, thus diverting it into the Cauvery and the Vennar rivers which ramify further east into a number of canals for irrigation purposes. At Madura the Municipal Sewage Farm in which sewage water is used to irrigate about 100 acres of various crops, as also the fruit garden of Mr. Abbas Ali Khan were visited. After a flying visit to the demonstration plots of the Department, the party left for Koilpatti, the next place of halt. Here the selections made in the Karunganny cotton for the Tinnevely tract and the methods followed to improve the same were studied. Seed—farms and ryots' fields adjoining the station were visited and enquiries made regarding local cultivation. The stay at Koilpatti was pleasant and profitable. At Tinnevely paddy cultivation under the Thambiraparani river and some demonstration plots were studied. Here the party were the guests of M. R. Ry. Sadhu Ganapati Pantulu Garu.

From Nagercoil the tour in the States started. Mr. Parameswaram Pillai, the Assistant Director of Agriculture

in the Travancore State met and accompanied the party as far as Alleppey, the northern border. At Nagercoil the paddy and the fruit farms were visited, the latter being about a mile from Cape Comorin. Opportunity was availed of by most to have an enjoyable sea bath at the meeting place of the seas, and visit the famous shrine of Kanyakumari. The same evening the party reached Trivandrum after a very delightful journey. At the capital of the State the visits were made to the Zoological gardens and the State Cattle Farm situated on a hill about five miles north of the city and commanding a beautiful view of the surrounding country. The cows are mainly of the Scindhi breed and there is also a Dairy attached to the the Farm. The milk is conveyed in jutkas and supplied to customers in the city. Quilon is practically the headquarters of the Department of Agriculture in Travancore, and the Research Laboratories are located in a delightful spot overlooking the deep 'Ashtamudi kayal' or the meeting place of eight back waters. The Research staff took great pains to explain at length the results achieved and experiments that are being conducted in their several sections. Here the party were entertained at an enjoyable dinner by Dr. Sundaram who spared no pains in looking after the comforts of the staff and the students. From Quilon to Alleppey the route is through level country every inch being covered by coconut topes. For several miles before reaching Alleppey the road runs straight through the sandy beach. At Alleppey a busy trading centre, the state Coconut Farm was visited. It was interesting to study the manurial trials on the palms in a typically sandy soil. In these tracts this palm seems to thrive even without any manure, the soil, the climate and the rain-fall, all favouring its quick growth. One has only to travel along the back waters in a boat, say from Alleppey to Ernakulam, to get an idea of the magnitude of the coconut plantations. As far as the eye can reach it is a sea of coconuts for miles and miles fringing the edges of the waters. Great credit is due to Mr. Parameswaram Pillai and to the other officers of the Travancore Department of Agriculture who were responsible for the uniformly kind treatment meted out to the party at different places of visit.

The City of Ernakulam is situated on the eastern shores of a big lagoon while 3 miles across on the opposite

side is the Cochin Town. The lagoon and the entrance to this from the sea are deepened to form the Cochin harbour which when completed will be one of the best natural harbours. As may be surmised the coconut palm is responsible for some of the noted industries in the West Coast, the coconut fibre and oil extraction industries are two of them. The fibre made from the husk is twisted into ropes which again are used for making mattings, door mats etc., and these are very largely exported to Europe and America. The factory of Messrs. William Goodacre and Sons, was visited to study the manufacture of various kinds of door mats and carpets from wool. The famous Tata's Cocogem Factory where pure deodorised coconut oil is prepared was next visited. Ernakulam is connected by a railway branch joining the main line at Shoranur. Trichur lies midway. The Cochin state farm is located about three miles from Trichur town. One of the largest Government farms in India, it covers an area of about 500 acres of typical laterite soil growing almost all kinds of crops and fruit trees. There are beautiful avenues of Jack and Mango trees and extensive areas under Bananas. Varietal, cultural and manurial trials on Paddy and Plantains were well worth a study. Pine apples, graft-mangoes, oranges, guavas and different varieties of plantains are also grown in large plots. While at this place 'Kole' cultivation of paddy, which is peculiar to the West Coast was studied. During the monsoon low areas become waterlogged, often with as much as 6 to 8 feet of water. In December the operation of draining out this water with the local wheel and by machine-driven pumps, starts. Lands which are 'opened up' in this manner are sown with paddy. The utilisation of big power driven pumps is more commonly observed nowadays and primitive wooden wheel is used occasionally for baling out small quantities of water from the plots up into the drain channel. On their return from the Kole cultivation area party visited Mr. Marar's Rubber plantation. This was a typical private farm visited during the tour. Mr. Marar had kindly made arrangements to demonstrate the manufacture of sheet rubber from the latex. An old agricultural Student of Saidapet he took great interest in giving, in a lucid way, an account of the cultivation, production and marketing of rubber. The



party were then entertained to tea on a most lavish scale in his charming residence, which commands a panoramic view of Kole cultivation and the surrounding country.

The Superintendent and the staff of the Cochin Department of Agriculture had made elaborate arrangements for the party during their stay at Ernakulam and Trichur. At the latter place they were also kind enough to entertain the visitors at a grand evening party in the new Botanical gardens. Nearly half a dozen dishes made out of different plantain varieties were a conspicuous feature. The success of the tour in Travancore and Cochin was entirely due to the efforts of the officers of the State Department who spared no pains to make the trip as instructive and enjoyable as possible.

One other noteworthy feature of this tour was the successes achieved in the field of sports. The pleasurable and lively aspects of the tour were not a little enhanced by the several matches that were arranged at Trichy, Madura and Tinnevely. At the first place, a Hockey Match was played against the St. Joseph's College team and in a field that was far from satisfactory in many respects, the visitors found themselves in fine form and had an easy win. Another contest in Badminton, the next morning, against a sturdy local team also proved the superiority of the visitors. At Madura the strong Town Hockey Team narrowly escaped a defeat. In spite of the handicap of bad pitch, new sticks and the like, the visitors played a fine game and easily held their own, though the game ended in a draw. Mr. Vital Rao of the staff played in the team with enthusiasm but could not get his old game, being long out of touch and is perhaps too old for a vigorous game. At Tinnevely the St. Xavier's College team fared no better in football than that in Trichy in the game of Hockey. The field was good but full of the troublesome *Tribulus terrestris*. Student Mani easily showed himself out to be the best in both the games. The students deserve to be congratulated on their fine performances. That a single class was able to muster a team, that could hold its own against reputed teams in several places, is in itself a fact worthy of note and a matter of great satisfaction and credit to the College and to the members of the second year class.