

The commissioners observe that 'the whole of the normal requirements of the staff should be met from India within a reasonable period of time.' We are glad of this for we have always held that sooner or later we should be fit for any post in the Department. We are an old agricultural race and if Heredity does not belie us we are sure to have the agricultural instinct somewhere in our blood.

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We regret to have allowed an error to creep in in the article "Some experiments in Manganallur Agricultural Station" in our January issue. The writer wishes us to correct that Calcium Cyanamide is not yet being manufactured in India, though proposals are on foot to start the industry.

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### Tribulus—the thorny weed.

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*Tribulus terrestris*, Linn. known in Tamil as *Neringi*, in Telugu as *Palleru*, and in Canarese as *Neggina mullu*, is, it is to be trusted, a familiar acquaintance to most. To refuse to recognise it is almost tantamount to a confession to a non-out-door life. Around Coimbatore there seem to be two main races of this plant. One with thick fleshy stems and branches, large silver-grey hairy leaves, stout fruits bearing rather short thorns; and the other with long thin branches carrying small dark green smooth leaves and rather thin fruits with long sharp thorns. The fact that these two may often be seen growing side by side precludes the idea that they are simply variations due to differences in the nature of the soil. The fruits when dry divide into about 8 parts each carrying a thorn, and get distributed mainly by adhering to the feet of men and cattle. They are most

abundant by the beginning of the dry season in January. When the rains commence, these seeds germinate and young plants grow up which are soft to the touch and present an innocent appearance and are even positively handsome when the flowers appear. If one wishes to rid a field of this weed, it is just this time that he should take action. A fairly large iron nail or a small screw-driver is the only instrument that is needed. A day after a good shower, the ground will be soft and moist and with the aid of the nail, the soil around the base of the plant can be cleared, and the plant easily pulled out. It is essential that the tap root should not be cut near the collar, as in that case the plant sprouts again more vigorously than before. Hence the usual method adopted of employing women-coolies to remove the weed with hand-hoes is not efficient, though it is easier and quicker. In case fruits are already formed, the plant must be carefully removed and buried in a pit.

The precincts of the Officers' club at the Agricultural College, Coimbatore, as well as the open *maidan* to the south and east, were badly infested with this thorn. This caused much inconvenience to the members but the worst sufferers, by far, were the picker-boys, who had perforce to stumble into the thick of it for picking the tennis balls out. Last year an attempt was made as an experiment to fight this weed. The club boys and the pickers were instructed, especially on wet days, when they had no other work, to search for these plants and pull them out. When there was leisure the writer also personally attended to this work. As usual, in all campaigns, the work was not so simple as it seemed. In the region of Mythology one hears of drops of blood issuing from the body of a slain demon as having been capable of raising each a fresh horde of demons. It was an experience of a somewhat similar sort that confronted us. For every plant that had been pulled out, several more were, to the dismay of the writer, noticed to have sprung up, when

examined about a fortnight later. Of course this only meant that some of the very young seedlings had been overlooked and that some more of the thorns lying on the surface of the soil had sprouted. It only led to a more decided and repeated effort. The plants were on the whole picked out, off and on about 5 or 6 times during the year. The results have not been as satisfactory as they might have been if conducted on more organised lines. Yet it is a fact that the thorns around the building and in the adjoining maidan have considerably been lessened and the pickers do not now draw long faces in picking tennis balls.

Just as the look of a clean whitewashed wall is marred by bills stuck on by haphazard advertisers, in a very similar way is the beauty of any play ground or open maidan impaired by the tree growth of this weed. In as much as it can be readily removed with some little trouble, it would not reflect much credit on the body of persons using the ground or the *maidan*, if this weed were allowed to grow unchecked.

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### Farmers and Improvements.\*

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The country of Alangudi is a low lying plain of gravelly laterite soil with a water-level high enough to make direct flow irrigation from wells possible. As such the dry lands are being converted into wet wherever possible by lowering their levels and bunding. Thus the existence of such surface springs has given rise to the increasing of the *ayakat* of several tanks and ponds which in ordinary seasons would hardly contain water to irrigate half the area at the most. Paddy was grown successfully in good seasons on such lands called *achakattu*. But of late the rains have not been certain, timely and sufficient. Thus failure of Paddy in *achukattu* lands, mostly rainfed, was frequent.

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\*Based on experiences in dealing with them in the Alangudi Taluk of the State of Pudukotah.