

BELLARY: ITS CLIMATE AND POSSIBILITIES.

BY LIEUT.-COL. H. K. ALLPORT, BELLARY.

BELLARY is a considerable civil and military station near the large native town of the same name. It is connected with Guntakal by the Hubli-Bezwada section of the Southern Maratta Railway, and easy to reach from Bombay (twenty-four hours) or Madras (fifteen hours). It is situated on the Deccan plateau, 1,500 feet above sea-level. This circumstance and its proximity to the Sandur hills, about twenty miles away towards the west, determine the local climate. Few agree as to the advan-



tages or disadvantages of the place. It is popularly supposed to be one of the hottest stations in South India, and a forsaken hole to boot. The winter's experience is, however, favourable, and the discerning reader may make due allowance for this bias. The climate has been compared to that of Secunderabad, but it is a little hotter. It may conveniently be divided into the cool weather—not cold—from November to February, the hot weather from March to June, and the monsoon season from July to October. Although the temperature during each of the above periods are relatively high, the effect of heat on one's health and the sensation of heat are less than at places where the actual temperatures are lower. This

is owing to the comparative long cool portion of the day and the constant breeze. Even in the hottest weather the nights are cool, and one can always count on a refreshing sleep either under the stars in the open, or under a punkah. The cool weather is always pleasant, and English summer clothing can be worn; at night especially, warm covering is necessary. It begins to get hot in March; April, May, and part of June are very hot, the thermometer registering over 100° F. during the day, but even then refreshing nights usually follow. About the middle of June the S.W. monsoon bursts with the usual accompaniments; but later the wet clears off, the rain-clouds being stopped by the Sandur range of hills, and most pleasant weather with cool breezes and cloudy skies is the rule until the N.E. monsoon begins to blow again in October. So much for the climate.

After climate one's house is important. Houses are few, and many bad. The writer occupies one of the best, and hopes to pass it on to his successor. Our people do not always keep this in view, and so we lose good bungalows that with a little management might be passed on and kept as R.A.M.C. houses, one officer succeeding another in occupation. There is an interesting old bungalow at one time occupied by the Duke of Wellington; but its situation is unfortunate, as it suffers from the radiated heat from the fort rock.

Good food can be obtained. Fresh sea fish and ice are brought daily by rail from Madras. There are good shops for stores, which may also be had from the Army and Navy Co-operative Society, Bombay, or from Madras. A cook is important; there are a few good ones. The kitchen and cooking require supervision; butter, not ghee, should be used in cooking. Good bread is obtainable, and the R.F.A. dairy supplies clean wholesome cream and butter.

There are, as everywhere, two classes of servants—good and bad. The writer's experience has been most favourable.

Game is plentiful near the station and in the surrounding district. Snipe, duck, partridges and quail may be picked up in an afternoon walk with a gun. There is better shooting to be had along the line towards Hospet, including black buck, leopard, and pig. The jungle close to Bellary is very difficult on account of the growth of prickly pear; but three days'

station leave, and a short run by rail, will bring one into good shooting grounds. A camp bed and well-fitting mosquito curtains ought to be carried on those expeditions, as malaria is prevalent and virulent, especially during the shooting season.

Socially the place can be made very pleasant. There is a fairly good club where people meet in the afternoon, and occasionally in the evenings for dances or dinners. There are also tennis courts, a race-course, polo ground, and golf links. Bellary is not considered a "pretty" place, but it has a great deal of character. The ground is slightly undulating, and broken by masses of red rock; the whole is dominated by the immense isolated mass of the fort rock rising to about 450 feet above the plain, and capped by Hyder Ali's fort. The citadel is not occupied, but the lower fort at the base of the rock is guarded by a British guard, and contains many Government buildings. The writer considers Bellary one of the most picturesque places he has seen in India, if the searcher after the picturesque be content to look for it among the people and the streets of the bazaars; here, as elsewhere, this characteristic is hidden beneath the obvious. It is intensely eastern, and there is always the good-humoured ragged crowd, with beautifully dressed women sometimes to be seen; for the better class Hindus are not *pendah*, and their women can walk abroad, especially on feast days, and in the quieter streets. The present garrison is a wing of British Infantry, one Battery R.F.A., a Native Cavalry, and a Native Infantry regiment. The station is in the Belgaum district, and is under the command of a Colonel on the Staff. The station hospital is a fine double-storied building and is equipped for seventy-two beds. Hot weather dress, khaki and white, is worn all the year round. There is a good deal of sickness among the British troops; a large proportion, however, is due to causes that would be preventable if the men themselves assisted the efforts of the authorities. A few cases of enteric occur, and malaria is prevalent after the autumnal rains. Thirty-five miles away is the small hill sanatorium of Ramandroog, where there is accommodation for about eighty men. There are a few private bungalows, but they are in bad repair. If a thorough change of climate is necessary the Nilgiri hills offer a choice of stations and are not very difficult to reach.