

CHAPTER XIV.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

THE LOCAL BOARDS—The Unions—Receipts of the Boards—Chief items of expenditure. THE TWO MUNICIPALITIES—Bellary Municipality—Improvements effected by it—Ádóni Municipality.

OUTSIDE the two municipalities of Bellary and Ádóni, local affairs are managed by the District Board and the three taluk boards of Ádóni, Bellary and Hospet. The jurisdiction of each of these latter corresponds with that of the Divisional charge of the same name, the Ádóni board controlling affairs in the Ádóni and Alúr taluks, the Bellary board managing Bellary and Rayadrug, and the Hospet board looking after the four western taluks.

There are also nineteen Unions. Under the Ádóni board are those at Alúr, Holalagondi, Kautálam, Kosgi and Yemmiganúru; under the Bellary board those at Hiréhálu, Kanékallu, Kudatini, Kurugódu, Rayadrug and Siruguppa; and under the Hospet board those at Hadagalli, Harpanahalli, Hospet, Kámalápuram, Kampli, Kottúru, Kúdligi and Náráyanadévarakeri. The chief source of their income is the house-tax, which is levied in all of them at the maximum rates permissible under the Local Boards Act. The average assessment per house is slightly over twelve annas per annum.

The incidence per head of the population of the total receipts of all the boards is up to the average for the Presidency as a whole. The chief item in the income¹ of the boards is, as usual, the land-cess, which is levied at the rate of one anna for every rupee of the land assessment and is collected in the ordinary manner. Next follow the receipts from tolls, which are collected at thirteen gates at half the maximum rates admissible, and from the ferries across the various rivers, which latter have already been referred to in Chapter VII. The amount realized by the sale of the right to collect fees at the various weekly markets is usually considerable. The market at Chittavádigi is far the largest in the district, but those at Hospet, Yemmiganúru, Kottúru and Harpanahalli are all of them well attended.

¹ Statistics of income and expenditure are given in the separate Appendix to this volume.

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The chief objects on which Local funds are expended are, as usual, roads, medical institutions and schools. The chronic impecuniosity of the boards has prevented them from always spending the minimum prescribed by Government (half the land-cess plus the net receipts from tolls) on improving communications. The hospitals and dispensaries and the schools of the district have been referred to in Chapters IX and X above.

The only two municipal towns are Bellary and Adóni. Statistics of the income and expenditure in these will be found in the separate Appendix. It has several times (in 1884, 1885 and 1898) been proposed that Hospet, which ranks next to them in size, should be constituted a municipality, but the objections that its suburb Chittavádigi would contribute most of the income while Hospet itself would absorb most of the expenditure, and that the town contains but few citizens qualified to serve as municipal councillors have always prevailed.

Bellary was one of the first mufassal towns in the Presidency to adopt municipal government. Before the passing of the first regular municipal enactment, the Towns Improvement Act of 1865, there was in force an Act (XXVI of 1850) which permitted the inhabitants of any town, with the sanction of Government, to constitute the place a municipality and to tax themselves for its improvement. Even though Government promised to contribute a sum equal to the amount raised by taxation the people in general showed little anxiety to avail themselves of the benefits of this self-denying ordinance and it was almost a dead letter. In 1861, however, the Cantonment Joint-Magistrate of Bellary forwarded to Government a petition from "the respectable native inhabitants residing within military limits" praying for the application of the Act to that area. The petition was declared to be a "free and spontaneous act" showing a "desire for self-dependence," and in 1863 the Act was introduced accordingly into "the Cowl bazaar portion of the cantonment." Almost simultaneously "the civil pettas" were similarly brought separately within it. The proposal to govern both areas by means of one council was opposed by the military authorities on the ground that they did not wish their buildings to be interfered with by outsiders and by the people of the civil pettas from a fear that the taxes levied from them would go to the improvement of the cantonment roads. Apparently, however, little or no real action followed the introduction of the Act and municipal government proper dates from 1867, the year the Towns Improvement Act was brought into force into the town. In introducing it, Government did away with the dual control which had formerly existed, and the council was given authority

over both the cantonment and the civil station. The cantonment has recently (1904) been again separated from the municipality. The boundary between the two is shown in the map of the town in this volume.

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The privilege of electing a proportion (one-half) of its members was conferred on the council in 1877. It has elected its own chairman since 1885. The incidence per head of the population of the municipal taxation is just equal to the average for the whole Presidency. In October 1886 the bazaar-men were dissatisfied with the municipality and its taxation, went on strike and shut their shops for a short time, but no other instance of open obstruction is on record.

The council has attended in the usual manner to the sanitation and lighting of the town and has maintained the schools and medical institutions referred to later, but otherwise it can point to few notable improvements as the fruit of its forty years of rule. In 1872 the causeway from the south gate of the fort to Cowl bazaar was built at a cost of some Rs. 5,000 and the Mainwaring tank has been revetted with stone. But the town is still without a regular water-supply or any system of drainage. Its high school is located in an unsuitable building and its hospital in one which was presented to it. A market was indeed built in Cowl bazaar in 1874 at a cost of Rs. 14,000, but the market-people have persistently declined to use it, even when the stalls were offered to them gratis, and part of the building is now occupied by the Cowl bazaar dispensary and utilised for other municipal purposes, while the rest of it has fallen down.

Improve-
ments
effected
by it.

The various attempts which have been made to improve the water-supply of Bellary are referred to in the account of the town in Chapter XV (pp. 223-4).

Ádóni, like Bellary, was one of the few towns in the Presidency which voluntarily applied to be constituted a municipality under Act XXVI of 1850. The Act was introduced there in May 1865 but before the new council could do any real work the Towns Improvement Act of the same year was passed. This was extended to Ádóni in 1867, the same year in which it had been introduced in Bellary. The town has been allowed to elect the usual proportion of the members of its council since 1899, and since 1885 the council has elected its own chairman. Besides maintaining educational and medical institutions and attending to the conservancy of the town, the council has carried out the water-supply scheme mentioned in the account of Ádóni in Chapter XV (p. 200) and built, at a cost of Rs. 10,000, a Jubilee market.

Ádóni
Municipality.