

## CHAPTER VII.

### HABITS AND CUSTOMS.

*General appearance of the People—Their food ; their dwellings—  
General condition.*

THE ordinary ryots of the district who may be taken as representing the greater part of the population are short, but sturdily built, dark in colour, about 5 feet 5 inches in height, with a stolid and not very intellectual expression. They are taller than the inhabitants of more southerly districts and not so black. On the whole, they are a quiet and well-disposed set of men. The dress of the Canarese ryots is sufficient to distinguish them from their neighbours. They wear short trousers reaching from their haunch to the knee girt in by a band of white cotton, the ends of which fall loosely. The Mahrattas wear the "cheddi," which fits closely to the hips and thighs. Mussalmans have long trousers, and all the working classes of Telingas and Aravas wear the "dhóvati," a long loose white scarf wrapped round the legs and loins. On grand occasions the Canarese ryots appear in a garment not at all unlike the "Smock" of an English rustic with the waist just below the armpits. Most classes wear a loose upper cloth which is either folded round the waist, or thrown over the head, or worn like a plaid. The women are dressed in a "chíra"—a piece of cloth usually blue, red or white in colour, which they fold gracefully round the body. Most respectable women wear the "raviké" (Canarese, Kupasa) or short tight jacket covering the bust to the middle of the back.

The usual food of the labouring classes is cholum and ragi, and they have three meals daily. The midday and evening meals are hot, and what remains of the latter is eaten cold the following morning. Brahmins and strangers from the south eat rice, the latter finding the hard cholum grain indigestible. The houses are usually built of stone or mud and generally have flat mud roofs, and sometimes a thatch roof may be seen. The larger houses are built in the form of a square with an open quadrangle in the centre. Cattle are frequently kept in the house or in an adjoining yard. Grain heaps and agricultural implements are also kept about the house. The smaller houses consist of two or three rooms, opening one into the

other. All are badly lighted and ill-ventilated. Windows there are none. All the light and air finds its way through a hole in the flat roof, partially covered by a tile or a broken chatty. Some of the houses boast of rude rough cots or charpoys, but the commoner plan is for a part of the floor to be raised on which mats or cumblies are spread at night. Many villages in the district were originally built within the walls of square forts with bastions at the corners, but these forts have in time been dismantled and the stones removed for other purposes, and little now remains but the crumbling mud walls. Even these too have been often been levelled and the earth used to fill up the moat which is generally a receptacle for rubbish and filth of all kinds ; at the same time increasing the access of fresh air to the enclosed villages. There is nothing pleasing in the aspect of a Bellary village. The trees which in more favoured districts give shade and add to the picturesqueness of the scene are, as a rule, wanting.

The houses are built with no attempt at regularity, while all around manure heaps decaying poison the air, and prickly-pear spreads everywhere unchecked. The larger villages and the towns are however beginning to improve vastly. In Bellary, Gooty and Adoni many of the houses have now two stories, and are furnished more or less with chairs and tables after the European fashion.

**General Condition.**—Speaking generally, the bulk of Bellary cultivators make enough to enable them to live in comfort, according to their own idea of what constitutes comfort. The steady rise in prices has greatly benefited them, and some made very large fortunes by cotton during the American war. The agricultural labourers are still very generally paid in kind, and therefore the increase in the price of food does not materially affect their position. Payment in money is very rare, and where it obtains the rates of hire have been more than doubled in the last few years. Grain wages also have in some instances risen, (though not in the same ratio as money payment,) in consequence of the greater demand in labour. The condition of the agricultural labourer has not deteriorated, but generally has improved coincidentally with high prices, and this is no less the case with other classes of labourers whose wages have fully kept pace with the enhanced price of food, being in some cases doubled or even trebled. The rise in price of food weighs with most severity on the low-paid official classes whose small salaries hardly suffice to procure necessaries.