

Fig. 16

Suffra College Prize Giving. The annual prize speaking and prize giving took place on Wednesday evening the 5th inst. Sir William G. Barlett, President of the Board of Directors, took the Chair. One hundred and fifty were present. The hall was filled with an attentive audience of educated and representative men. After the Principal's report was read, giving the general results of the past year's work, the prize speaking was listened to. All the speakers acquitted themselves exceedingly. The judges of award were, Rev. B. Scott, M. A., James V. Small Esq., and S. T. Arakel, Esq. The first prize in the oration class was won by G. C. Bartlett, the second by Edwin H. Joseph, and the Junior F. A. Class D. S. Velupillai carried off the third prize and P. Jeendunam the second. Then followed the reading of "Asbury Prize" Essay by J. H. R. Joseph, and the "Howlands Prize" Oration by Ephraim Joseph. The prizes were distributed to the winners by Sir William G. Barlett as follows. The "Hunt Prize" for Psychology in the B. A. Class, M. T. Kanagasagal, the Drieburg Prize in English in the Senior B. A. Class, J. H. R. Joseph, the "Sherman Prize" in Latin in the same class, D. S. Nicholas; in the Junior F. A. Class, for gaining a first class in the Calcutta Entrance, H. Housington and S. Somandram; the "Vatlingham Mude Prize" for English and the "Doctor's Prize" for Latin were both taken by H. Housington; in the Entrance class, the "Hastings Prize" for Scripture, first prize S. Ponniah, second prize, T. Somandram; for Arithmetic and Algebra, first S. Naganathan, second G. C. Bartlett for Tamil Declaration first H. Housington, second S. Somandram; in the Preparatory Class the "Bredington Prize" for Scripture, first S. Chelvaraj, second S. Naganathan, third S. Chelvaraj, first V. Murugesan, second A. Chinnappa.

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PLANCHETTE.

This game is of French origin. As the name indicates it is a "little board," generally heart shaped, seven or eight inches long and about as wide in its broadest part. It is supported on two little wheels and a peg with a piece of pencil attached at the third point. As played in America and England Planchette is placed upon a sheet of paper on a table. Two or three persons place their hands upon it and then questions are asked by those standing around, to which Planchette with more or less difficulty gives replies. Twenty or thirty years ago when the writer of this article was a boy, it was a very common form of amusement for young people to have a Planchette board at an evening entertainment and to ask simple questions such as, "Shall I ever visit a foreign country?" "Will it rain tomorrow?" "Shall I ever become a rich man?" &c. &c.

Sometimes the questions would be of a more serious nature, revealing the innate desire of every son and daughter of Adam to penetrate into hidden mysteries. Often the questions would take a sentimental turn, and "Shall I ever marry?" "Will my wife be pretty?" &c. &c. would be asked. All of these questions, it will be seen, can be answered by a "yes" or a "no." Even when Planchette was bold enough to attempt any longer answer, it rarely indulged in more than two or three words, the deciphering of which was a work of time and was generally unsatisfactory. Its answers were often like the Delphic oracles, of double meaning. Very frequently Planchette would not write at all, and then it was said that the persons manipulating the board, were not the right persons—they were too skeptical, for example, or lacked magnetism. Others would take their places. Experiments were made with various combinations, such as a dark person with a person of lighter color, or a quick tempered man with one who was seldom ruffled. &c. &c.

Planchette ran a quick course in America. Persons soon got tired of it, and threw it aside. The Spiritualists maintained that the board was worked by the spirits of the unseen world but whether they still have recourse to it or not, is unknown to the writer. While the rage lasted, it afforded a good deal of amusement, but it soon had to give way to other more novel toys and games.

Planchette has at last come to India. Here it has met with a very different reception. It is quite characteristic of a people so bound in ignorance and superstition as the masses of the Hindus are, that they should jump to the conclusion that the mysteriously moving board was controlled by the spirits of the other world. And it is just as characteristic of slow-moving, conservative India that it should take up a thing years after it was discarded by a civilized country and when its very existence was almost forgotten. The learned Swamy discoursing in America and England on the acuteness and subtlety of the average Hindoo mind, would do well to avoid all reference to this French invention of 30 years ago, which is clamouring for recognition as a deity in the land of the occult science.

How do you explain the working of Planchette? It is due partly to animal magnetism, and partly to the recognized, but only partially explained, influence of one mind over another. It goes without dispute that we are surrounded by mystery on every side. Life itself is a mystery. There is that in mind which the most learned scientist has failed as yet to satisfactorily explain. Mind has an influence over mind which it is hard to understand. Thought reading (of which an exhibition was given some months ago in Colombo) is wonderful. Our thoughts cannot be bound, but travel unrestrained by time or space over lands and seas the world over. But in this our hard and practical age, science is making wonderful discoveries. With rusty hand it is tearing aside the veil of mystery shrouding so much of what we know, and laying bare to vulgar gaze hidden secrets. It is claimed that the working of mind can be actually seen, and are long much of what has always seemed wonderful and unthinkably will be explained. In the meantime it is well for us to acknowledge the existence of what we fail to understand, while avoiding the mistake of the superstitious mind of attributing every thing not easily understood to supernatural agencies. But as to worshipping Planchette, it is simply absurd and can be only the part of a very ignorant and superstitious mind. God alone is to be worshipped and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN TAMIL.

At the examination of the Telipally Training school last week the Principal made the remark that parents were not willing to send their cleverest boys to study Tamil. If a boy was stupid and could not do well in English, or if he was poor and unable to get help from others, he might be sent to the Training and kindred schools though even then a little English was desirable. In other words English instruction was demanded for both boys and girls and very often to the utter neglect of the vernacular. What does it all mean?

When Dr. Hastings was Principal of the Jaffra College he encouraged the study of the vernacular believing that no student receiving an education in English should neglect his own mother tongue. At one time it was proposed to introduce Sanscrit into the curriculum of the College, in order that it might act as an incentive to those who were studying Tamil, to carry on their studies in the vernacular still higher. Last year at the Prize giving at Batticotta. Sir William in distributing the prizes took special pains to congratulate the student who had taken the Tamil prize commending him for having acquired a knowledge of his own language.

We have here then an approval of the study of the vernacular, by Europeans well fitted to express an opinion; and a dislike on the part of the people themselves to allow their children to get a purely vernacular instruction. Why is this so? Perhaps the money question has more to do with it than any other. Lads who have a smattering of English are much more likely to get a lucrative position than those who have no knowledge of the foreigner's tongue. This undoubtedly is a very strong motive for neglecting the vernacular and there is some reason too for the plea that one must make a living. But it seems a pity that parents can not see what an immense advantage it gives a boy to be well grounded in the vernacular as well as to have a fair knowledge of English. We have no word to say against English education. It is to be commended and encouraged and made much of; but the lad who first of all gets a good knowledge of his own tongue and then gets a working knowledge of English is bound to make a success of his education. He has a broader foundation; a better command over the people, and is looked up to and respected more, other things being equal, than the man who has only a knowledge of English.

Again, Tamil in itself is a language worthy of cultivation. It is an ancient language, a well constructed and an expressive language, and one that will bear study. But the masters of Tamil are very few. Here then is a field for the ambitious Jaffra student—if he wishes to make himself a name to be handed down to posterity.

But to go back to the subject of Training schools—why should not a lad take a thorough education in the vernacular at a Training school including three or four stages in English, and then go on to a higher English school, when he is more mature and when his mind has been more or less disciplined and trained to study? What is the serious objection to this plan? Why is it not feasible?

It may be said in reply that the earlier a child commences his English study, the better it will be for him as an English student. This of course is true at least to a certain extent. And if the aim of the boy is to repudiate his own native tongue and to become practically an Englishman in dress and customs as well, the sooner he commences English study the better for his purpose. But this is a practical acknowledgment that his own language and his own country are not worthy of consideration. Ceylon will never become a second England in language and customs, and it is foolish to work for this end rather let the aim of every patriotic son and daughter of Ceylon be to purify and enrich the vernacular languages and to make such improvements in dress and customs as will be suited to a country lying in the tropics. Ceylon for the Ceylonese should be their watchword and when the time comes, as it will some day, our island will be self-governed and take its place among the nations of Asia.

REPORT OF POST AND TELEGRAPH.

A copy of this report, written by Mr. F. W. Vane Acland Post Master General, has reached us from which we call the following facts which we think will be of interest to our readers.

The total expenditure for the year was Rs. 818,177.76 which includes the cost of a new cable between Manar and Pamban. As the Post Master General says this should

not be included in the annual expenditure. Deducting therefore the cost of the new, and repair of the old, cables we have for total expenditure Rs. 758,475.35, which is Rs. 33,185.82 above the receipts. With the abatement of the Fianking minute it is expected that the receipts will hereafter nearly, if not quite, meet the expenditures. The number of Post Offices has increased to 138. Of these 11 are in the Jaffra peninsula. The number of miles travelled daily by the various coaches in conveying the mails is 1524. Much has been done to improve this branch of the postal business. The event of the year has been the completion of the new Post Office at Colombo. "The preparation of plans and the control of the work of construction were entrusted to Mr. B. F. Timolin E. R. L. B. A. of the Public Works Department of the Colony and reflect the greatest credit on that talented official. The building which is lighted throughout by electricity, and is furnished with all the most modern appliances, is the most imposing edifice in Colombo, and in I believe, equal to any other General Post office in the Far East in respect both of accommodation and architectural appearance. The total cost of the building, including expenditure on account of electric light apparatus was Rs. 372,901.65."

The amount of foreign mail sent out may be gathered by the following figures. Nearly 8,600 lbs of letters and postal cards were sent to London by the different lines of steamers and between 25 and 24 thousand lbs of other articles. A little over half of this was taken by the P. and O. steamers and more than a quarter of the whole by the Orient line of steamers. The balance was taken by other lines.

Ceylon now prints all its post cards, letter cards, newspaper wrappers and stamped envelopes, thus gaining a good round sum to the department.

Of the reply letter cards which were introduced in 1894 the Post Master General says "they have not come into use so generally as was anticipated, but their utility may be more fully appreciated when the public become more accustomed to them." A new post card has been issued in the past few weeks which for beauty of design and finish will compare favourably with any postcard of any country on the face of the globe. Another, and smaller, size of the local stamped envelope would be very greatly appreciated by the public, and the introduction of a similar envelope would be a boon to those who have much correspondence to carry on with the countries of Europe and America.

Turning now to the Post Office in the Jaffra peninsula we note that as far as amount of revenue goes, and the present amount of business also, Jaffra town stands first, with Pt. Pedro second and Jaffra Kerevelam third. Then follow in order of importance, Batticotta, Sittampaya and Kankesanthurai. These six offices report an excess of receipts over expenditures of about Rs. 12,721. The other five post offices in the peninsula are all small, and the expenditures exceed the receipts by about Rs. 1218. This makes a net gain for the peninsula of over Rs. 11,500 which goes to the support of Post Offices in other parts of the island. This, we think, is a very good result, in view of the fact that a new and splendid Post Office building is now being erected at Jaffra town.

Correspondence.

The Editor, "Morning Star," Jaffra.

Dear Sir,

The difficulties of the Jaffra young men in the Native States of the Straits Settlements in account having brought them to place at a distance of 1,500 miles from their homes are indeed insurmountable. The average salary is \$25 per mensem, out of which \$3 goes to engage a house, \$2 a servant, \$12 for his daily food \$2 for his clothing, \$3 for the Dhoby and Barber and \$2 meets very scantily the contingent expenses leaving behind only one dollar. This one mighty dollar is the only solace to the man and it is this one little thing which brings him fore and friends and which accompanies him in all his wanderings.

The wages of the man besides meeting the above necessities of life has to undergo various other deductions such as charity, subscriptions to the different societies and clubs and chiefly to satisfy the culties in common from Jaffra under different works. This does not go under the head of charity, for charity is something done out of the willing use of the mind.

Every steamer from Colombo and Negapatnam brings in dozens almost all of whom go to the poor man for financial aid. One asks him for pecuniary help under the pretence of being a friend to his father or grand-father, another with the pretence of living close by to his house, a third, of being a relative, a fourth, pleads that he is stricken with poverty, a fifth, wants to build a Madras, a sixth, is collecting funds for a school, a seventh, wishes to erect a Church &c. &c.

Every day the man in these distant regions comes across with at least one of them, and once I had a dozen of them who by chance had come to me at one time.

What would be left for the poor man for his subsistence and for the support of those depending directly on him? A sufferer.

NEWS FROM THE WIDE WORLD.

Greece. The revolt is extending in Eastern Crete, and Grecian sympathisers are constantly landing arms and munitions for the rebels. Complications between Greece and Turkey are much feared.

Africa. The rebellion in Matabeland and Mashonaland has not been repressed as yet and the feeling prevails that the time has come for the British to intervene.

Madagascar. Troubles have broken out in this little country, and the situation is considered grave.

England. The Jameson trial has been concluded. The jury returned a verdict of guilty and Dr. Jameson was sentenced to 15 months without hard labour. Four others received somewhat lighter sentences.

Lord Wolton in his evidence before the Royal Commission on Indian Civil and Military Expenditure made some disparaging remarks concerning the Indian troops which have roused great indignation in military circles in India.

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