

1890.

With this number we begin our Jubilee Year, or the fiftieth year of the history of the "Morning Star." It has had a somewhat chequered career, varying greatly in its size, number of subscribers, general character, editors, etc. It was started as a periodical for general information but with a special religious character as published by the American Mission. It still stands as substantially a Mission paper, although the Tamil pages are edited by Mr. Arnold, and the English pages are supplied in part by several contributors. For one year, while it was edited by Messrs. Arnold and Asbury, the size was doubled and the edition increased, and endeavors were made to make it more interesting, but the income was not increased sufficiently to meet the increased expense. On several other occasions clouds have dimmed the brightness of our Star, but it has kept on its way, and we hope has been true to its name, not only giving light but also the promise of a brighter day. The old saying is that the times change and we change with them. In these times a newspaper holds a different office from that which it occupied 50 years ago. This is true in any land and is especially true in Jaffna. There are now at least a half dozen sheets competing for the privilege of keeping Jaffnese supplied with news. A newspaper in order to be successful must meet the popular taste, to some extent at least, and in order to be the most useful it must to some extent control the popular taste. Each paper combines these two objects of meeting the popular taste and controlling it, according to the ability with which it is edited, and the object it has in view. A Mission paper makes the second point of the most importance, and only cares for success in order to influence for good. Yet in order that it may do good it is necessary that it be attractive and that it give both what the public wants and in a form more or less pleasing to the public. This we aim at, and believe we have succeeded to some degree. A subscription list is a good feeler of the public pulse, and we have good reason to feel that our course is acceptable to the public. But, as we said, the times are changing, and a paper which appears only twice a month cannot give very fresh news. It is for this reason that in our English pages we have not attempted to give very much of foreign items, and telegrams, because we are aware that many of our English speaking readers have such news from other sources. It has been suggested that we celebrate our Jubilee by making the paper a Weekly. If this were done we could properly give more of general news. But it is a question whether our patrons would like the change well enough to pay the extra cost. If the circulation were somewhat increased we could send out a Weekly for Rs. 2. or so per year. We would be glad to hear from our subscribers as to the desirability of such a change. We have been asked to give room for Y. M. C. A. news from time to time, and we gladly do this, recognizing the fact that the future of Jaffna is in the hands of the young men of the present.

We will not presume to predict much for the new year. The outlook is encouraging. Cholera has apparently been banished. The year of least rainfall has passed, and there will be more of this benediction of the skies, though less than the average. The year opens with special

activity in the solar orb, the ruler of our system, which promises well for activity in this small dependency called the earth. A large pearl fishery is promised which will give work to feed many hungry mouths, and, we may hope, will bring so abundant a harvest of the sea as to ensure the speedy construction of the Northern Railway. A new Governor comes in May or June, and, although Sir Arthur Gordon has ruled well and done much for the interests of the Colony, the people naturally expect more from a new man. What is known of Sir Arthur Havelock is favourable, and many are hoping that he will encourage the Railway.

The four Missionaries give Jaffna a short visit in the first week. Let us hope that this stimulus to the Week of Prayer may make it a week of blessing, and a year of special advance in spiritual matters. There is also hope of the noted Evangelist Rev. B. Fay Mills coming to Jaffna during the year.

Dr. Marston is ready to begin his work with the new year, but the house is waiting for the roof tiles which are expected in a few days, and he prefers to remain where he is until the house is ready, rather than move so often. The funds for his support have not yet been secured, but it is hoped that satisfactory arrangements will be made very soon.

PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

We have received with other public documents the Report of the Director of Public Instruction for 1888. He reports an increase of 20 aided schools and 1503 boys and 1902 girls, making a total of 919 schools with 46,322 boys and 20,078 girls. The total in all schools is 131,171, an increase of over 10,000 during the year. Yet the number presented for examination is much less than half of whole. The proportion of the population in school improves every year. It is now 1 in 21, while the Northern Province leads with 1 in 12. The Director thinks something must be done to prevent teachers keeping back unprepared pupils in order to get a good percentage. In Government Schools a sliding scale is employed, giving higher rates where the number of pupils is greater. But as the new English Code makes more radical changes those will first be considered. That Code awards a "general grant" upon the report of the Inspector, all the children being required to be present, and if it is found that the school is not efficiently conducted it gets no grant at all a second year. We need to have this system explained more fully before we can intelligently judge it, but it strikes us as putting more irresponsible power in the hands of the Inspectors. Such power is always liable to abuse even by the best of men, and the safest way is to make every one responsible to some tribunal for his actions. The present system is developing this too much, as it seems to us. It is no doubt very annoying to Inspectors to have their work called into question by Managers and Teachers. But to have examinations of which neither the teacher nor the manager knows the questions and answers, naturally engenders in their minds a suspicion of unfairness especially when those who were considered well prepared fail in the examination.

It is highly desirable that the Government by its methods should avoid any semblance of neglect to encourage education, or of a desire to make the grant as low as possible. We do not say this is so. But the appearances are such that it is a strong argument that some think so.

We note that the Gilchrist Scholarship will be awarded in Ceylon every third year enabling the successful student to study engineering science in Europe. The Director is pleased at this, and yet would have preferred competition with India, in which on an average, Ceylon has been successful against her big sister, India, in alternate years."

There is an interesting report on the progress of improved agriculture giving the results of experiments with improved ploughs and with "planted out" paddy, both by agricultural instructors and (what is more important) by villagers. Either of these improvements increases the outturn and reduces the expense, thus much increasing the profits. We would like to see brought out more clearly a fact which was proved at Madras, and which is of special importance to Jaffna farmers, who cannot irrigate from streams and that is, that the use of the improved plough prevents so great loss when the rainfall is deficient.

Local and General.

—MADRAS UNIVERSITY. The numbers registered for the Examinations of this University show a slight falling off in comparison with the figures for 1888. The following are the figures:

	1888	1889.
Matriculation	7,433	7,165
First in Arts	2,018	2,008
B. A. (Language Branch)	576	527

Journal of Education.

—PERJURY IN JAFFNA.—In spite of the efforts made by the judicial authorities to check this crying evil of the day, perjurers, far from giving up their profession or habit, only seem to fortify themselves against the attacks of justice. There is reason to believe that more perjurers are to be found in Jaffna than in any other town in Ceylon. The indifferent way in which some regard telling a lie or two in the witness-box or modifying or giving colour to an actual fact to benefit their "own side" would impress a stranger, unacquainted with the Tamil literature, with the idea that morality was at a low ebb among the Tamils. The sweet moral poems of "Avai" who says that "Thistles will grow, ant hills will rise (signs of desolation and decay) and the goddess of misfortune will ever reside, in the very dwelling house of those, who knowingly give false evidence" indicate the high sense of honor which characterized our ancestors. Certainly the detection and punishment of perjurers, will alone bring about an effectual check. The policy adopted by Mr. Justice Dias in summarily bringing a perjurer to conviction is more than commendable. We hope all our judicial functionaries will follow this excellent example.

—FISH CULTURE. We have before advocated this for the Jaffna lagoons and shallow seas. Now the Government Agent of the Central Province, Mr. LeMesurier is pushing it for fresh water ponds. He says that Ceylon imports about a million rupees worth of dried fish, which costs so much as to be a luxury, when it ought to be an "article of daily consumption by the poorest. A fish diet is one of the most nutritious as it is one of the pleasantest; and, given an abundance of fish in every village, we should seldom hear of famine or want again. In nitrogenous alimentary matter fish is a little more than two and a half times as rich as rice or, in other words, will serve in this respect to support two and a half times as many human beings:—fish and rice are good complements of each other, the one being rich in what the other is poor." To illustrate the ease with which ponds might be stocked he quotes from a report of an experiment by Mr. Thomas in Tanjore. There was a pond of three to five acres near his house, and having had it cleaned out for sanitary purposes, he put in two lbs. of young fish costing two annas, or with bringing, two rupees. He prohibited fishing for 18 months. But after that 4000 lb. of good fish were taken out the first year, and subsequently much more, and all this with no expense except the first Rs. 2. He adds, "what a splendid addition to their food and store in time of need such a pond would be in a native village. If Government would only vote a small sum yearly in aid of the undertaking, a beginning could soon be made." Jaffna has a few ponds that do not dry up, where the experiment could be tried, but the best places are in the Vanny.