

## THE MADRAS AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT EXHIBITION MOTOR VANS.\*

**I**N order to aid in their propaganda work, the Madras Agricultural Department has put on the road a travelling motor exhibition. This was considered likely to prove of more use than an exhibition train, such as that used in the Punjab, for the reason that in South India railways are comparatively few and they do not always pass through the densely populated districts. Moreover, it is only at big towns and centres that facilities exist for halting a big train in a siding without dislocating the traffic. It was, therefore, decided to try the experiment of a motor exhibition van which could be taken from village to village in the interior of the districts and brought to the very doors of the ryots.

The first unit, which is of an experimental nature, consists of a van with a Graham Bros. 1½-ton chassis with a 137-inch wheelbase and a 4-cylinder 24 h.p. engine. On this chassis is mounted a body divided into two main parts. The front portion consists of the driver's cab capable of carrying the driver and two passengers. The rear portion is a compartment divided into three sections. The central section is utilized for general storage and carries ploughs, implements, sprayers, and big samples. Movable shelves can be fitted wherever required and these shelves can be converted into tables and benches when an exhibition is being given. The sides of the van are divided lengthways into two portions. The lower portion on either side folds down into a horizontal position to form a display counter. The upper portion folds up out of the way and forms a shelter to the counter. When these sides are opened up they expose on either side of the van a series of shelves for the display of exhibits. To protect these and keep them from shifting when the van is in motion light wood detachable panels are fitted in front of them. These panels fit into slots on the roof of the van and have hooked supports behind to hold them in place and here they serve as a screen on which posters, etc., can be displayed.

In addition to this there is a caravan in which the assistants in charge of the exhibition can travel and live. The chassis of this is a Graham Bros. model IC with a 137-inch wheelbase and a 4-cylinder 24 h.p. engine on which is mounted a body divided into three sections. The front section consists of two parts, a driver's seat and, on the off side, a compartment to carry a magic lantern. This lantern can project through a hole to the left of the windscreen or sideways and it is operated from the driver's seat. It is worked from a special battery charged from the motor engine. The sheet is fixed to a small railing running round the rear end of the exhibition car.

The second compartment consists of a seat capable of carrying four persons in comfort with doors on either side. The rear portion consists on the rear side of two sleeping berths. The lower one is a permanent fixture underneath which are cupboards for clothing, etc. The upper can be folded out of the way. On the off side is a fold-in table and two chairs. Behind the forward chair is a large cupboard for books, etc. Three drop glass windows are provided on the off side and two at the rear and either side of the door. A luggage rail runs the whole way along the roof on which tents, etc., can be stored.

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\* By R. D. Anstead, C.I.E., M.A., Director of Agriculture, Madras, in *The Agricultural Journal of India*, Vol. XXIV, Part III, May 1929.

The cost of these vans was approximately Rs. 8,000 and Rs. 6,500, respectively.

As regards the exhibits which the vans carry these cover the whole range of the department's work. Each is fitted up in a small showcase with a glass front which fits into its own section and these can be changed at will depending upon the locality visited and the nature of the exhibition it is desired to give. A large number of posters are carried and these are displayed on boards on the roof and are attached to the front of the counters. Tables and benches are formed of the shelves in the centre of the van and these are arranged round it to display other samples, etc. The whole, therefore, spreads out into an extensive display and it takes approximately an hour to get it ready or pack it all up ready to move on as the case may be.

Ploughing demonstrations, etc. are given at the same time and in the evening lectures are delivered with the aid of the lantern. The caravan goes ahead and chooses a suitable site and makes the necessary arrangements, advertises the coming of the exhibition, and so on, and in due course the big van arrives and the display is spread out. Halts of one to three or four days are made depending on the size of the place visited and the occasion. Local fairs and festivals are attended and the utmost use is made of all *shandais*, conferences, and gatherings of all sorts. Two assistants at least accompany the vans and of course there is a reliable driver for each.

The actual running cost, including the pay of the driver is estimated at six annas a mile, and 15 per cent. depreciation has been allowed.

This unit is looked on as experimental and it will be improved on in future models as experience is gained. Future vans will probably be made lighter for instance, but on the whole the unit has proved very satisfactory indeed, and it has met with a great welcome and response from the cultivators and it is in constant demand.

It was due to the initiative and keenness of His Excellency Lord Goschen, the Governor of Madras, that this van was obtained, and at his suggestion it was exhibited on the Government House lawns during the garden party Their Excellencies gave to the members of the Indian Science Congress in December. There it was the centre of attraction during the course of the afternoon and His Excellency himself aided the demonstrator in charge in explaining it and the exhibits which it contained and showed himself a keen and well-informed exponent of the art and science of agriculture in South India.