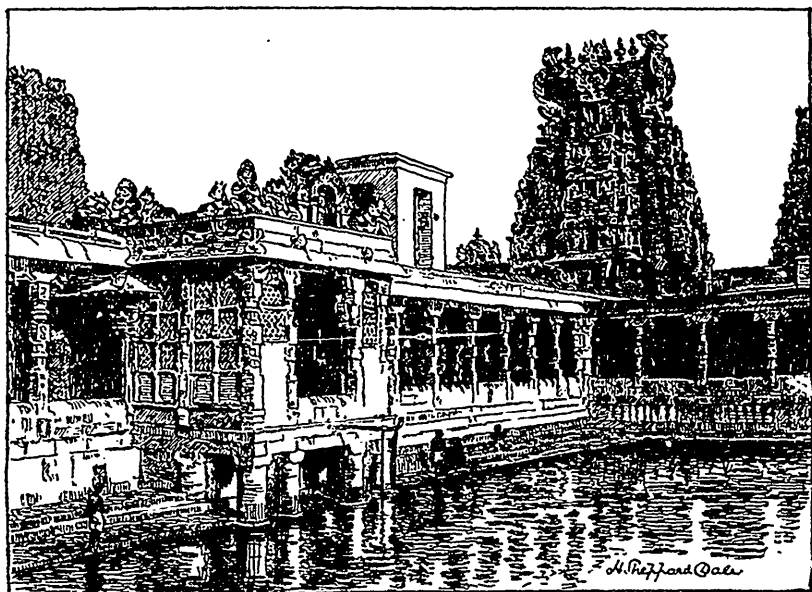


foliage between, which may be viewed from any coign of 'vantage, is at once an unequalled, impressive, and intensely picturesque sight.

The details of the temple are full of interest. The Hall of One Thousand Columns, all of which are granite monoliths, stands in a magnificent courtyard, a mass of elaborate sculptured decoration.

Madura is the chief town of the district, with a population of 74,000, mostly Hindus. From time immemorial it has been the political and religious capital of the extreme south of India. The great temple of Madura is rendered doubly holy by being one of



TANK, MADURA TEMPLE.

the chosen residences of Siva. It forms a parallelogram 282 yards by 248. It presents all the usual characteristics of a fine Dravidian temple. The thousand-pillared hall was built by Arya Nayak, about 1550. The tank is surrounded by arcades, and is singularly beautiful. The whole interior of this marvellous temple is one mass of superb carving. There are some curious frescoes in the arcades round the tank, some of which are very objectionable. It is said that this temple cost four millions sterling; not an excessive estimate, considering the elaborateness and quantity of the sculpture, and that it is executed in the hardest granite.

In 1606 Robert de Nobilis came to Madura, adopted the life, diet and dress of a religious devotee. He founded the flourishing