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The Board of Agriculture in India.

The eighth meeting of the Board of Agriculture in India was held at the Agricultural College, Coimbatore, from 8th to 13th December 1913, under the presidency of Mr. J. McKenna, I. C. S., acting Agricultural Adviser to the Government of India. A preliminary meeting of the Deputy Directors of Agriculture from the various provinces was held on 5th and 6th instant, to discuss the kind of Agricultural education needed for Indian subordinates. The Hon'ble Sir J. N. Atkinson, I.C.S., K.C.S.I., Senior Member of H. E. the Governor's Council opened the Conference with a welcome address to the members and visitors and Mr. McKenna, the President, gave a connected review of the progress of Agriculture in India since the inauguration of the departments of agriculture in general, and since the date of the last meeting in 1911 at Pusa. The subjects for consideration were referred to a number of sub-committees and the recommendations of the sub-committees were considered in detail, and adopted, after discussion and modification, by the Board.

The proceedings were closed, with a valuable address by the Hon'ble Sir Robert Carlyle, Revenue Member of H. E. the Viceroy's Council.

The subjects considered by the Board comprised, among others, the following :—

1. The programmes of the Imperial and Provincial Departments.
2. The introduction of improvements into Indian Agriculture by the work of the Agricultural Departments.
3. Cattle breeding and Food and Fodder supply, and the best means of investigating the relative feeding values of Indian cattle foods.
4. How the energies of the Veterinary Department can be utilised for dissemination of preventives against cattle disease and the introduction of prophylactic measures.
5. The Indian Sugar Industry.
6. Rice and its cultivation considered from the agricultural, botanical, chemical and entomological points of view.
7. Agricultural Education.
8. Soil denudation, drainage and conservation of soil moisture.
9. Fruit culture and
10. Dairy.

Owing to the small limits of our Journal, we wish to leave the consideration of these subjects to our next issue and shall be satisfied with reproducing in the current issue, the important speeches made by the Hon'ble Sir J. N. Atkinson, Mr. McKenna and the Hon'ble Sir Robert Carlyle.

WELCOME TO DELEGATES.

SIR JOHN ATKINSON'S SPEECH.

The Hon'ble Sir John Atkinson, in the course of a brief address to the delegates, desired, on behalf of the Madras Government, to offer a very hearty welcome to all who had assembled there, some of them from distant parts. He himself was there in the dual capacity of host and guest, and his words of welcome must, therefore, be coupled with cordial thanks to those by whose labours that meeting, fraught with such great possibilities for good,

had been arranged. He continued :—“ The selection of Coimbatore as the scene of your labours is, I think, an altogether happy one. No other spot could have been chosen with equal facilities for observing the more remarkable systems of South Indian agriculture. In the Coimbatore District, where nature has been somewhat niggard of her favours, cultivation is intensive to a degree unknown elsewhere in the Presidency. Dry, wet and garden crops, to use Madras terms, illustrate the results that flow from the combination of intelligent experience with unflagging industry. And if these methods and results may be observed within a mile or two of where we sit to-day, no greatly extended journey is needed to bring you in sight of the totally distinct cultivation of the West Coast, or of the highly specialised processes in vogue on the planters' estates. But it is not only its central situation that makes the choice of Coimbatore for your meeting a peculiarly happy one ; the opportunity is also afforded you of studying the work of our Agricultural College and Department, of which we Madrasees are, I think, justly proud.

In Madras there has been an Agricultural College and Experimental Farm in existence since 1868. I am not going to indulge in the history of that venture, though it turned out some good men and did some useful work. It also provided much experience. But a comparison of the old Administration Reports with those of recent years brings out some important differences. In earlier days, the Reports referred chiefly to the introduction of exotics and to work on lines such as viticulture and other plantations, useful in themselves, but which did not affect directly the occupations of the bulk of the cultivating classes. The hobby of the moment changed every few years. The District staff at the disposal of the Department was small, and there is little or no reference in those Reports to the adoption of improvements by the ryots. But since 1907-08 the Reports refer chiefly to paddy, cotton, and sugarcane, three crops which represent 40 per cent of the total cultivated area of the Presidency, and in every Report, reference to the adoption of new methods and to the sale of better seed occupy continually more and more space. The methods and

programme of work in this Presidency will come in review before you, and I would not dream of attempting any comparison of the work done in the various Provinces. Even if I wished to do so, I could not, and I have no desire to make the attempt.

But although the Madras Agricultural Department has not achieved everything in a moment, it has shown that scepticism with which its development was viewed in some quarters in 1905-06 was unfounded and needless. Better types of cane have supplanted older and worse varieties in Godavery, South Canara and South Arcot. Eight years ago pure Karungani cotton was only obtainable in a few villages of Tinnevely. Now, thanks to the system of seed farms, there are in that District more than 50,000 acres under that variety. In Kurnool, round Nandyal, the mixture of the crops in the field was still worse, but the Manager of the mills which use Nandyal cotton most largely, has recently commented upon the steady improvement in quality of the cotton from that neighbourhood. Thanks largely to vernacular papers, to the work of the Associations and to constant touring, single seedling and economic transplantation of paddy are spreading rapidly, though at present very far from being universally adopted. The annual value of the savings in this Presidency due to this method may ultimately be reckoned in crores of rupees. These results, compared with the results from the efforts of twenty and thirty years ago, justify, to my mind, the soundness of the recommendations made by your Board at the Meeting at Pusa in 1908, that attention should be devoted rather to the investigation of the cultivators' actual wants, than to the recommendation of unfamiliar and untried methods, and that the concentration of work was of the first importance. This subject, I am glad to see, is again before the Board, and it will be approached with longer and more detailed experience than was possible in 1908. I do not propose to go through all the subjects you have down for discussion. That is for the President. A cattle survey has been completed in this Presidency, and the papers are before the Government.

As to education, I understand that whilst there is no lack of applicants for admission to this College, and whilst students leave

the College with a satisfactory equipment of knowledge, the numbers passing through the College are insufficient. It seems doubtful whether all require the same training. If you are drawn into an attractive, but difficult field of vernacular education, I would only say that it is necessary to keep local conditions well in mind. This subject of education ought to be approached with greater confidence than on earlier occasions, on account of the experience you possess.

Dairying is a wide and difficult problem. An inquiry into the methods of dairying in Madras city elicited the reply from one dairy man that "he bought his milk from the milkmaids of Madras and worked it up on scientific principles". I do not like to try to imagine what strange process was necessary after "the milkmaids of Madras" had finished with the milk. Local officers will, I am sure, be very glad to show you anything of their work here or in the District, or of local agricultural practices, and would be very pleased after the meetings are over to take any of you who may so desire it to any of the local farms. The Planters' Association has very kindly offered to show you some South Indian estates, if any care to see them, of tea, coffee or rubber.

I hope to have the pleasure of seeing many of you personally during the course of this week and meanwhile trust that you will find your discussions both pleasant and profitable." (*Cheers*).

Progress of Agriculture in India A—Review

MR. J. MCKENNA.

Mr. J. McKenna, I. C. S., Officiating Agricultural Adviser to the Government of India, in his opening speech, welcomed the many members and visitors.

He said :—"My first duty is the pleasing one of expressing our thanks to the Government of Madras for so kindly extending their hospitality to us, and to the Hon'ble Sir John Atkinson, for the gracious terms in which he has proffered that hospitality. My next is to express what I am sure is the general regret that H. E. the Governor is unavoidably unable to be present at any of the