

THE LATE DEAN BAKER.

BY A STANFORDIAN.

The world of science in general and Asia in particular have suffered a grievous loss through the premature death of Professor C. F. Baker on July 22.

Among the very few Europeans and Americans who came to the Orient and stimulated the progress of scientific agriculture and made substantial contributions to the development of Biology through original researches in Tropical Asia during the last two decades, no other name stands higher or occupies a more conspicuous place. No tribute therefore from fellow workers in the same field will be too great to this soul.

Born of a virile stock of pioneers from Wisconsin, C. F. Baker early showed his genius and remarkable abilities and had a record of good work even before graduation; later he served in different parts of the United States of America, West Indies and South America. Subsequently he was offered the Professorship of Agronomy in the College of Agriculture at Los Bonos, Philippine Islands in 1912. His qualifications for the post were succinctly summed up in the pages of the "*Monthly Bulletin of California*" by Professor A. J. Cook and Dr. Jordon who used these pregnant words:—"There are few, if any, men who have a wider knowledge of tropical crops and perhaps none who can combine the requisite general training for the Chair of Agronomy with as wide a variety of experience with tropical agriculture and economic conditions."

On the retirement of Dr. H. Copeland, Baker became head of the college and the *Philippine Agriculturist* of October 1917 welcomed the new Dean as one who had behind him an experience of about a quarter of a century in tropical agronomy by his long residence, by work along this line in many of the more important agricultural countries of Tropical America and later in the Philippines and Singapore, and though officially designated an agronomist, as one well recognised in the scientific world as an Entomologist, Zoologist, Mycologist and Botanist.

His personality, his indefatigable work and the ideals he set before himself infused new life and infected the whole atmosphere of the college and Philippine agriculture. Rapid changes took place. From a humble beginning of a faculty of 5 members, 15 students, 20 buildings and 200 acres of wild land, the college rose till in 1920 it attained the rank of an institution which could boast of a faculty of 88 members, 800 students, 61 buildings and 1000 acres of improved land. Nevertheless, Dean Baker felt that brick and mortar, number of hands, callbells and redtape which might count for progress and efficiency elsewhere would not do in the Philippines and that men employed at the college were not to run into a narrow rut, to watch the clock, or periodically to expect increasing remuneration, status and privileges but to build a college at any cost of effort or sacrifice.

The persistent habit of hard work he had early acquired was so contagious that even the slothful pupil brought under the spell of his untiring application often developed into a hard student.

As a scientific investigator, and a well known collector of specimens, he stands supreme. His spirit of co-operation in science is evinced in the letter published in the October (1925) number of this journal.

The broad outlook, the clear grasp of fundamental principles and the sympathy he exhibited in understanding local problems of agriculture find reflected in the bunch of pupils he trained to take his place and in his countless articles in the Philippine and foreign press. The remarkable editorials he wrote in the *Philippine Agriculturist* and the numerous contributions to the *Philippine Journal of Science* and to the *Philippine Agricultural Review* show his originality and versatility. 'The Stone Rejected', 'Save and Have', 'Science and the Common Farmer', 'Man Power', 'What is practical in agriculture' will endure through time. Some scientific researches of his furnish are a few landmarks for intrepid explorers in the ever-widening domain of Biology to glimpse.

The lists that have been appearing in recent numbers of the *Philippine Agriculturist* of gifts he made of his collections, books and other property to institutions in America and elsewhere and the pecuniary help he gave to struggling Scientists in post war times reveal the largeness of heart and indefatigable industry

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which distinguished this rare scientist who exemplified in himself the truth of his own saying—"the man is the key to the situation."

Dr. Baker was a true "Pandit" as defined in the 'Gita' or the 'Song Celestial'—"Yasya Sarve Samarambha Kama Sangalpavargitha, Gnanagnidagdha Karmanam Thamahuhu Panditham Budhaha."

which translated means one who is free from selfishness in all his undertakings and who performs all acts with an intent to keep aglow the sacred fire of knowledge, him sages call a Pandit.

Dr. Baker was not one of that species of geniuses that when transplanted out of their native heath become impotent in the realm of achievement.

His life history is the history of the Philippine College and his is a shining example to many a somnolent institution in other countries of Asia.

The present affluent condition of the Los Bonos College of Agriculture and the lasting gratitude of the Philippine farmer will always remain fitting monuments to the ceaseless labors and discriminative genius of Dean Baker. May his soul rest in peace!

The only plea if any were needed for this lengthy note of appreciation of Dean Baker is the zeal he evinced, the prodigious amount of work he did both in the field of agriculture and pure science, and the sacrifice he has made as a foreigner by giving up his life in the unselfish cause of improving the lot of an Asiatic nation. How we wish we toiled like Baker and in company of Bakers which species is getting rarer.

The acquaintance which the writer made with Dr. Baker seven years ago which grew into friendship revealed the immense potentialities for good which men of Dr. Baker's stamp possess and the good they do in whatever climes chance may throw them. This is an additional reason for the note.