

Trichinopoly," with the help of specimens gathered in the locality.

Although not connected with Agriculture, a description of the work of the Science Congress will be incomplete without a reference to Mr. C. V. Raman who presided over the Physics section and delivered the Sir Subramania Aiyar University Lecture on his original researches in Acoustics.

The visit to the newly established Madras Water Works under the superintendence of Mr. J. W. Maddely, the hospitality of His Excellency the Governor at the garden party at the Government House and the final meeting and leave taking in the spacious Bungalow of Surgeon General Bannerman, brought the scientists into closer touch than the learned papers and discussions would have done by themselves; and many is the friendship which has been formed between co-workers in different parts of the country.

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### **A New Rice Pest.**

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The old proverb 'There is many a slip between the cup and the lip' comes home to none so truly and painfully truly as to the poor cultivator. One rain too little, one rain too much, one contrary wind when the ears are filling, a disease to the plant as it grows, an unwelcome shower when the harvest is ripe for the sickle, all or any of these is enough to dash down the cup of prosperity. The inevitable natural agencies being left aside, attempts are now being made to prevent or remedy the diseases prevalent, with some success. There are as many diseases in the

plant world as there are in the animal kingdom. The agents that cause the malady range from the minute organisms to highly developed ones. Of the many insect pests that attack the rice plant the stem borer (*Schoenobius Bipunctifer*) is said to be responsible for the decrease of about ten per cent in the yield every year. To make matters worse, a disease, locally called 'Thandethu' or 'Anaikkombu,' has assumed serious proportions and mercilessly attacks the rice plant. The ever superstitious ryot is ready to attribute this to the wrath of the village goddess and runs for rescue to the village poosari (priest) who pretends to know the method to charm away the disease. Some ascribe it to thunderstorms or to the cloudy sky or to westerly winds, over all of which man has no control. Some of the remedial measures suggested are the application of neem cake, groundnut cake, pig dung and so on. The result, however, is not altogether satisfactory.

My recent observations in the fields may be stated in the Journal. When such plants are taken and carefully dissected, one finds a small reddish brown maggot, with a somewhat black streak along the dorsal side, feeding on the growing tip. The petiole, appearing, as it does, like a very fine tube with the leaf base constricted at the top, serves as a chamber for the maggot. As the plant grows, the maggot grows into a bright reddish larva inside the elongating chamber. The larva pupates in a case which looks like a cluster of eggs overlapping each other. The pupa case is generally found near the upper constriction whence it escapes outside as a fly by eating up a hole on the side of the chamber. The part being weakened at the hole breaks and the leaf blade falls down. Now the affected part presents to view a white or pink hollow tube, according as the crop is of the long or short duration variety. It is on account of

this white tusklike projection ryots call the disease "Anaikombu" or 'Ivory disease.' The growing part being thus affected, branches shoot from the node next below. A badly affected plant with leafy branches looks like Varagu (*Paspalum Scrobiculatum*), of course, with no earheads.

The impudent fly is more or less musquitolike in appearance with a pair of antennae or feelers, each about a fourth part of an inch in length. The abdomen is pale white and pointed towards the anal end. This lays eggs singly on plants.

Fortunately the insect is not left unchecked to work havoc in the fields. A very small fly known as a chalcid, less than a pinhead in size, parasitises the maggot by laying its eggs on its body. The larvae hatching from the eggs feed on the non-vital organs of the maggot inside till it finishes up its pupa case. Now the chalcid larvae feed on the vital organs and finally, after eating up the maggot, pupate in the same case. Out of this, a number of chalcid flies come out to do the beneficial work. Yet these useful insects which appear rather late in the season cannot prevent the heavy loss which occurs to an appreciable extent. Long duration Samba is found to withstand to some degree while the short duration varieties suffer most.

K. R. SANKAR,

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### **Cultivation of Colocasia (Chemboo) as practised in South Malabar.**

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*Varieties:*—There are three varieties:—1 Ordinary (Sadharana) 2 Notti and 3 Kizakkan. Leaves and leaf stalks of No. 2 are bigger than No. 1. No. 3 is the biggest, the tuber of which is stout and is 6 inches to 2 feet in length; the colour of the tuber