

argumentative ryot, our monthly journal forms no doubt a source of inspiration.

Gentlemen: I must again remind you that I am an ex-officio President, and as such am independent of public opinion and cannot therefore be expected to undertake much of the labours and responsibilities which the Union calls for from its members. An onlooker is said to see most of the game and I certainly can qualify—as I do little but look on, and you may take it from me that the Committee have done their best to make your visit a success, and that it will be successful I have little doubt. I will now ask the General Secretary to read the Annual Report.

The report published in the last issue was then read.

---

### Presidential Address.

---

At the conclusion of the reading of the Annual Report the Hon'ble Mr. Barber, delivered the following Presidential Address.

The Director of Agriculture, in asking me to preside at this Conference, has done me a great honour, and moreover I feel that he is honouring the community to which I belong. I own that I felt some diffidence in accepting, but when the Director said:—“Just to show there is some connection between planting and agriculture,”—well, I felt I had to come. Of course I had to ponder on those words of the Director's, and I wondered if they had some hidden meaning. The conclusion I have arrived at is, that the Director has asked me to be here to-day that I may help to prove, in some small way, the sympathy which must and does exist all the world over among men engaged in agriculture, a sympathy which covers every climate, creed and colour. You know how one rejoices to see good crops. This is not only because the crops are good and because a good crop is a sight of joy in itself,

but it is because we can realise to a great extent the work that the raising of that crop has entailed and can sympathise with the hopes and fears experienced before the crop reached a state of maturity or safety. This feeling of sympathy is even stronger when the crop is poor, for everyone must sympathise with labour that has failed to attain the full fruition of its labour, but mixed with this feeling of sympathy, there is one of admiration at the stoutness of heart which admits no failure and which, after repeated set-backs, tackles the immediate job on hand anew. Now, gentlemen, you who are learning here and you who are still learning in the outer world, must realise that the best that can be given you is to help the toiler with the knowledge you have gained. It is certain that the knowledge acquired through centuries, if properly co-ordinated, should go far to mitigate failure in bad seasons and to improve the results of good seasons. The principles that underlie this knowledge and the proper application of these principles are, I take it, what you are learning here. Nowadays one hears a great deal about

#### SCIENCE IN AGRICULTURE.

Its utility is becoming generally recognised, but owing to the notorious conservatism of agriculturists this recognition has been slow. There are still men, all over the world I suppose, who have acquired practical knowledge that has been handed down from father to son, and who still carry on a rule of thumb routine that has been in vogue for years. This rule of thumb routine may be sound enough—it surely is—but it is unreasoning and, therefore, any improvement in the methods so applied must be slow and is a matter of chance. Under certain conditions certain things happen; practice has taught that. Trained investigation, starting with the same knowledge, will prove why such things happen and then research can indicate what may happen, if the conditions be improved upon or modified. Please do not misunderstand me; there is nothing to be said against a farmer who has acquired his know-

ledge in the best of all ways by practical experience. Agriculture is an art rather than a science, and the result to be arrived at is the application of science not in a way that will hinder the artist, but in such a way as will benefit and improve his work. It is quite possible for a man to be a good farmer with little or no book knowledge, and I think we can all imagine a scientist with all the knowledge that books can give to help him being quite at a loss, when faced with the practical routine of the farm. You must bear in mind that science is only

#### AN ASSISTANT TO A PRACTICAL BUSINESS.

To a business that was practical before the word "Science" was invested, and that, therefore, if science is to be of any use to agriculture it must be expounded in a practical manner. One often hears it said that science is not practical. That is not true; it may be true sometimes in regard to scientific advice, but there is nothing more practical than science, sound science, in the true sense of the word. I got that out of a book on agriculture, so it must be true; as a matter of fact we all know it is true, and in following your avocation it will be your duty to prove that truth and to avoid the error of insisting on the truth of an unproved theory. From my own experience I would say that many mistakes are made through running a theory as a practical fact. A theory under practical test may prove a fallacy. Its adoption before it has been fully proved may lead to disappointment. Your training, gentlemen, should teach you to recognise the fallacy and to avoid the disappointment. The painstaking investigation of cause and effect and the careful and laborious work of research will carry you safely past these pitfalls of theory which, if not avoided will lead to your work being held in poor esteem. I am here speaking as an amateur before men who know their business; so I am open to correction if I say that

## ONE OF THE REASONS

that improvements in agricultural methods have been so slow is that reserach has preceded investigation. This, after all, is only natural. The farmer is looking after and improving the resources of Nature, and why should man enquire too closely into the methods of Nature? Only a few of us are really concerned with why we breathe, feel and live. Almost the first agricultural knowledge that was acquired must have been the fact that, given land, seed, and a certain amount of rain, a crop resulted. It is absurd to suppose that the why and the wherefore were inquired into. The next step was taken by the father of irrigation. Some man found the rain did not come when he expected it, so he picked a big leaf and brought some water from the nearest stream. I think he must have been the first person engaged on research work; he had a theory and proved it practically; he was probably looked upon as a crank while he lived, and it may have been fifty years before his neighbours took kindly to the idea of irrigating. In all humility then, you must recognise that your calling is not the basis of agriculture; at best it is only an adjunct called into help by the brain and activity of man. You have got to recognise this, and also remember that those whom you are called upon to teach may know something that you do not know. Once this is realised you will have no difficulty in making your work practical, and once you are sure of this in your own mind, you must impress that fact on the outside world by precept and example. Unfortunately, it is not always easy to prove the value of work in rupees, annas and pies. You may advise a man to fight a pest or to use a manure. That man can very easily reckon what the pest campaign and the manure have cost him in the first instance; what he cannot reckon so accurately is the value of benefit he has derived, and he even may be so pig-headed as to count the cost only and to ignore the benefit. This should not dishearten you. The

## IMPOTANCE OF AGRICULTURE

in this country is so great that you have the satisfaction of knowing that any increase in output of crop, any saving in cost of production, though they may be almost imperceptible in detail, will in the aggregate mean a considerable gain to the country. I feel sure that the history of the Agricultural Department will prove this, and the history of the Department is made up of the work and enterprise of individuals like yourself. I will instance only one money-saving achievement of the Department. I refer to the single seedling planting of paddy. Some one else can tell you what their saving has meant in certain districts. I cannot, but this is an instance of expert knowledge properly applied in agriculture. There is a wide field in front of you, and more remains to be done than has been done already. I should just like to say a word about the calling in life that you have chosen; I think you have chosen wisely. You might have become doctors or lawyers or anything else and won fame and riches in your profession. But the field in any other walk of life is more limited, a doctor's income depends on getting the sick to treat, the income the lawyer enjoys is derived from the foibles and weaknesses of his neighbours. In following your calling you need hurt none, and you can help many. But you will have to meet and overcome difficulties. That is a farmer's lot; it is no life for a shirker or a dreamer. A fool will have no chance in it, for intelligence and thought are necessary, and there is scope for both. A farmer cannot always have everything he wants to make his work easy; he must be thrifty and capable of turning to use anything that is lying about, he must be handy and able to make good makeshifts. Gentlemen, I have taken up enough of your time, but before I sit down I wish to say what pleasure it has given me to be here to-day, and now I think we had better turn to the interesting programme before us.

---