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Editorial.

Educational Reform. For the last few years there has been an insistant cry for a radical change in the system of elementary and secondary education in this country. Everybody seems to realize that the existing system does not satisfy the needs of the taught, but few, if any, are in a position to give concrete suggestions for framing a workable scheme connecting the various links in the chain. The proposals which have been recently placed before the public in a Madras Government communique should therefore strike those interested in the matter as something original if not interesting, at least as far as this presidency is concerned. We do not propose to discuss the proposals in any detail at present but would like to touch on one or two points directly concerning the agricultural aspect—if we may say so—of the suggested reforms.

One of the chief factors, which has acted as a drag on our propaganda work is most certainly the illiteracy of the farmer—we do not mean the *Mirasdar* or mere landowner but the actual cultivator—with whom our propaganda officers have to deal. During all these sixty and odd years since agricultural education on western lines was instituted in this presidency we have been attempting to manufacture a class of farmers from out of the educated landed gentry who have, neither by tradition nor inclination anything in common with the 'man behind the plough,' and with what result? Our chief aim, viz., to induce the educated people to take up private farming has so far remained unrealized. This has perhaps been the experience in other countries as well so far as collegiate education in agriculture is concerned. These colleges have produced men qualified more for manning the departments of agriculture, as research officers or propagandists. But what about the short courses modelled on lines common in the West where men, women and boys actually engaged in farming take the fullest advantage of these institutions. Why are not these, started a few years back, in some of the farms in our Presidency not taken better advantage of by the farming classes than at present? Why were the vernacular agricultural middle schools not a success?

The answer is that the training which was intended for the benefit of the agriculturists could not be availed of by them because they had not had even a very rudimentary training in the so called three R's. On the other hand in the West where we have copied these systems from, compulsory primary education, without wastage before the minimum school-going age is reached, has created a class of farmers who are capable of taking advantage of the various opportunities offered to the educated farmer for improving his lot. Look at the large number of agricultural journals published for the benefit of the farmers—not too technical but concerning more about the day to day routine of farming life, on livestock and crops, containing pages after pages of questions and answers from actual farmers, regarding their difficulties and how they were in actual practice surmounted etc. etc. And where are we, still in the days of magic lanterns and coloured posters!! If only the agricultural classes had the necessary elementary education we are sure things would have been very different from what they are now. We do not confine this remark to agricultural improvements alone. It is therefore none too early for the authorities concerned to launch upon a bold policy of primary and secondary education on or similar lines indicated in the Government memorandum.

We have not got the details of the new Intermediate course suggested in the reformed scheme. But some modifications may perhaps have to be made in the present B. Sc. Ag. course in consequence, if and when the reform comes. It is now over sixteen years since the degree course was instituted in this college and it would be well to consider whether all is well with the present state of affairs. Changes in the syllabus, in examination etc., were brought about more than once during the last few years. We are however of opinion that the whole course could be modified with advantage still further. At present the course extends for three years. The standard of "Pure sciences" is certainly high and could any day compare most favourably with that in the other colleges in India or elsewhere; but as far as application or utility in after life, of the present course of study is concerned we are sure there could be improvement. With this in view and in accordance with the system followed in similar institutions in India and elsewhere we would suggest that the general course may be made complete in itself within two years with another year's specialisation in any two subjects, the degree to be conferred as at present at the end of three years. We are led to think that undue stress is laid and more than necessary time is allotted to subjects like Veterinary Science and Zoology. One year should be enough for learning first-aid in the former and getting a working knowledge of insect pests and their habits and anything more is not to be expected from an all round agricultural man regarding these subsidiary sciences. The syllabus may perhaps be on the same lines as for the L. Ag.

course in vogue prior to 1914 with the modification of specialising on any two of the following:— Horticulture, Dairying, Farm Management and Economics, Agricultural propaganda, Plant pathology, Agricultural Entomology, Agricultural Chemistry, Agricultural Bacteriology, Soil Physics, Agricultural Botany, Genetics, Agricultural Engineering, etc.

The final university product with this modified course of training will, we are sure, be very much better equipped for the work of a demonstrator, research worker or even a private farmer than the present graduates who get a general training in everything with no chance of specialising in any particular branch. The present day tendency is for specialisation whether in purely literary, scientific or professional education and it is high time that our college also provides facilities for our graduates to specialise in their favourite subjects thus enabling them to give the finishing touch to their scholastic career here alone instead of having to go elsewhere for the purpose as some of our men are now forced to do.

We dare say everybody interested in the matter would admit that there is a necessity for a change in our college curriculum on more or less the above lines and in view of the impending changes in the arts courses from primary up to the college classes we invite the earnest attention of all concerned to our suggestions. We have only just drawn a faint outline of the picture leaving it to the experts to fill in the details.