

THE JOURNAL
OF
The Madras Agricultural Students'
Union.

Vol. V.

August 1917.

No. 8.

As promised in the July issue we have great pleasure in presenting to our readers this, the Conference and August number of our Journal in which will be Editorial. found all the papers read at the Conference together with the main features of the discussions which followed the papers. Other details in connection with the College Day and Conference are published as appendices :—

The Conference.

The first session of the Conference began its sitting on July the 15th at 8 A. M. with the Hon'ble Sir A. G. Cardew, K. C. S. I., I. C. S., in the chair.

This was attended by a large number of visitors, among those present being Mr. N. Macmicheal, Mr. F. R. Hemingway, Mr. G. A. D. Stuart, Mr. H. C. Sampson, Mr. R. Thomas, Mr. F. Newland, Mr. R. D. Arsted, Mr. F. R. Parnell, Rao Bahadur T. S. Balakrishna Iyer, Mr. M. S. Mascarenhas, Mr. T. A.

Ramalingam Chettiar, Mr. V. S. Aswatha Iyer, Mr. K. Narayana Sastri, Mr. Velliyangiri Gowder, and Mr. Vengayil K. Krishnan Nayanar.

The proceedings commenced with the following welcome address from Mr. R. C. Wood the President of the Union :—

“ When I realised that I was again due to make a welcome address,—and the number of such past addresses, I have had the honour of making, is mounting up—I took the most natural step, namely, to look up my last year’s address and see what I had said there. I found to my distress that it had not been printed. It was perhaps considered not worth it (laughter). But after all gentlemen, what is the harm of repetition. Even if one could find fresh phrases each year, one’s sentiments would be the same,—One of welcome to all our visitors coupled with pleasure at the sight of so many old friends. It is indeed a liberal policy which permits so many old students, to meet here each year—partly for the direct benefit of the Conferences and meetings, that are to be held, but partly and, perhaps quite as much for the benefit of the informal discussions and private talks which take place between all. Though a small Department we are, thanks largely to those who control our destinies, a rapidly expanding one, and the necessity for keeping us united is great and greater every year, and I am glad and proud to think that it is on Coimbatore and this Agricultural College that such a feeling of unity is based.

The year’s report is in your hands, and all, whether members or not, can judge of the success which has up to now, attended our efforts. One of the most important subjects which will be discussed at the session this afternoon, is a consideration of the objects on which the funds of the Union can be usefully spent. I am one of those who think that our best reserves are in the good-will of our friends and the consciousness of good work to our credit, rather than in funds lying idle in the Bank, and I have

little doubt, that to a greater or less extent that will be found to be the general opinion of the majority.

I will keep you no longer, but must remind the Union of the debt that they owe to Sir Alexander Gordon Cardew, K. C. S. I., for his kindness in attending our College Day celebrations. We much regret that his many duties do not permit of his being here for our second day's Conference. Finally I can only assure you all that I voice the opinion of the Estate, when I tell you that we have looked forward to this day, and prepared for it, with much pleasure. In the name of the Students' Union, I bid you warm welcome. (*Cheers*).

The General Secretary of the Union Mr. K. Krishnamurthy Rao read the report of the Working Committee of the Union for the year 1916—17.

Sir Alexander Gordon Cardew then delivered the following interesting and thought compelling speech :—

You were fortunate last year in securing as your President a practical man of business, and he gave you an address which contained the best of all kinds of advice, that is, advice based on experience. I am afraid that I have no similar claim on your attention, and my presence here to-day must be taken not as indicating the possession of any special information to be laid before you, but as evidence of the very deep and sincere interest which the Madras Government, of which I am a member, feel in the welfare and development of this College. It would indeed be unnatural if the Madras Government did not feel a strong interest in the Agricultural College for, the prosperity and progress of this Presidency are indissolubly bound up with the interests of agriculture, and this College has been created to advance those interests. Agriculture is, as you all know, the leading industry of the Presidency, and out of forty-two millions of people in Madras over twenty eight millions depend either as workers or as dependents on agriculture for their support. You also know that through various causes the agriculturist

of South India, though industrious and hardworking, does not derive from his labour the reward, that he might under more favourable circumstances and with improved conditions, receive.

The object of the Government in creating this College was, to help this great population to increase the result that its labour produces, to make that labour more efficient, to enable it to produce larger profits, and so to leave a larger margin of comfort and a greater chance of progress and prosperity for South India. Those who are studying here are being trained to be the agents of this advance, and I am here to-day to say how keenly interested the Government are in the work of the College and to show that the work which is being done here both by the students and by the Principal and his whole staff of Professors and Assistants is watched with sympathy and interest and warmly appreciated by the Government. These magnificent buildings which have cost altogether some nine lakhs of rupees prove that at last the importance of agriculture has been recognised by Government. The annual report of the **Students' Union** which has just been read bears witness to the steady progress of **that useful adjunct of the College**, and, I congratulate you all on the share which you are taking in the great work of aiding the advancement of South Indian Agriculture. The work which is being carried on in this College and the Research Institute attached to it is, I take it, the application of

Modern scientific methods and principles and modern scientific knowledge and results to Indian conditions. Before this can be successfully carried out a very careful study of those conditions is essential. There was an idea prevalent some thirty years ago that Indian agriculture could be easily improved by the introduction of western implements, western strains of cattle and western ideals without any reference to the conditions of the country. That idea has now been abandoned. It is recognised that Indian agriculture which is the result of countless centuries of experience is not to be improved by the hasty generalizations drawn from entirely different surroundings. It is essential to take into account the climate, the soils and

character of the people. In order to improve Indian agriculture some thing more is necessary than to condemn indigenous methods. But it is equally true that the indiscriminate eulogy of everything Indian which is so common in certain circles at the present day is equally unlikely to produce any useful result. The Indian agriculturist has achieved progress in the past two thousand years and his rule of thumb methods will never carry things much further than they have been carried already. If the average outturn of wheat for instance per acre in India is twelve bushels against thirty three bushels in England it is clear that something should be done to improve the Indian average. The new Agricultural Department which has been created in the last fifteen or twenty years is hard at work all over India trying to deal with this and similar problems and with no mean promise of success. Undoubtly there are

Great difficulties in the way. The first of these is, it seems to me, the illiteracy of the peasantry. A population of illiterate ryots, however large a measure of national shrewdness it may possess, and shrewdness and ingenuity of the Indian ryot are undoubted, it is nevertheless at a great disadvantage when placed in competition with a thoroughly well educated body of agriculturists like that of Germany, Belgium or Japan. It is handicapped by inability to learn of experiments or new methods through the written word. It is entirely dependent on oral instruction and even then lack of general knowledge prevents the instruction from being fully appreciated. Results may be recognised but their causes are not understood.

Our first task should therefore be to educate the agricultural community. How that is to be done with the funds at our disposal remains a problem. As we have already seen we have in this Presidency a population of forty-two millions, a population which is increasing at the rate of three millions in each decade and which probably already numbers forty-four millions. How is it to be possible to provide elementary education for the six or seven millions of children in this Presidency without some prodigious increase of revenue. People perhaps hardly realise that the total Provincial

Revenues of the Madras Government for all Provincial purposes hardly amount to five millions a year. This is one of the cruxes of Indian administration of which no one has yet indicated a solution. But until education is provided the South Indian ryot must remain at a considerable disadvantage.

It has, I know, been suggested that education is not the first essential for South Indian Agriculture. The idea has been thrown out that the prior step should be to increase the wealth of the Agriculturist and let education follow. This idea is fascinating, but it may be doubted whether experience will show that it is a sound one. Nor is the lack of education the only difficulty that the Agricultural Department has to face there are even more.

Formidable dragons in the path. The Indian social system and the Indian Law of property have not been devised with a view to agricultural or industrial efficiency but have grown up under the influence of deep seated religious ideas most difficult of change or removal. The scheme of family property which makes every son who is born into the family a co-owner in the family property and which gives to such co-owner or co-parcener a right to demand partition at any moment presents elements of great economic difficulty. Under the influence of western Individualistic ideas and the growth of population it has lead and is leading every day to more and more minute Sub-Divisions of the land until a point has been reached which is most injurious to the interests of agriculture. I heard lately of a village in which one survey field measuring only seven acres was divided into nineteen separate pieces or properties, owned by six different pattadars, one of these pattadars held nine separate pieces of land ranging in size from nearly half an acre down to one hundredth of an acre. In another village a survey field measuring only 1.66 acres of land and paying altogether a revenue of Rs. 4 as. 10 was cut up into thirty-seven minute properties. It is easy to see what a hindrance to sound agriculture such minute sub-divisions present. Mr. D. T. Chadwick, whose appointment to be the first Indian Commissioner for trade in London we

have lately heard of with so much pleasure has pointed out clearly the evils of this system. It renders supervision of labour more difficult. It means that implements have frequently to be moved from one small patch of cultivation to another, thus wasting time and rendering the use of any but light and portable tools difficult. It makes it almost impossible for a farmer to fence his land for pasturage. It places special difficulties in the way of any farmer who wishes to cultivate a different system of cropping from his neighbours and it greatly hinders any improvement of breeding stock. A man who owns such minute fragments of land cannot go in for agricultural improvements, such as sinking a well. He has to put down the same crop at the same time as his neighbours for if he attempts a crop which remains on the ground longer than those around him, the village cattle will come in and eat it after the rest of the fields are reaped. This minute sub-division also leads to frequent disputes regarding the passage of water channels, rights of access and so on, and involves much loss of actual land in sub-dividing ridges.

An Economic Evil of this sort, arising as it does out of the social customs of the people is peculiarly difficult to deal with and real improvement can hardly be effected without some drastic change in the Hindu Law of property and for that there is no doubt the Indian public is not prepared. Until however some such change is made, agriculture in India must continue to be at a grave disadvantage. Other causes are at work in India which tell against the improvement of agriculture. The long centuries of turmoil which preceded British rule have left an unhappy legacy even to the present day. It is the fashion to paint glowing pictures of the peace and plenty of Hindu times, but history shows a picture of internecine war during which the agriculturist was constantly the prey of contending armies. A South Indian inscription describing the proceedings of a conqueror in one of these wars says. "In the countries of hostile kings he drove into the rice fields his chariots drawn by restive horses. Into the fresh water tanks of the territories of his enemies he forced his angry elephants with broad feet and stout neck." It is small wonder that a population exposed for centuries to such treatment

as this cannot readily shake off its effects. For the sake of protection the agriculturist learnt to live in a village on a common village site often far removed from his fields with the result that the fields are deprived not only of the manure that would otherwise reach them but also of the constant minute attention which the resident farmer gives naturally to his holding. Moreover the old insecurity and uncertainty as to the future have left their mark on the cultivator's character. Improvements are not always immediately profitable and the Indian agriculturist is still inclined to look too much to the present and too little to the future. He is too apt to spend the capital which ought to be put into his land on marriages and other social ceremonies. You all know we have all heard of extravagant sums which are expended on such occasions and far too large a proportion of the great increase in agricultural profits which recent years have brought has been wasted in this way.

These are some of the formidable difficulties in the way of agricultural advance to deal with. It is not easy to exaggerate them or state the obstacles which the pioneers of agricultural progress have to face. On the otherhand there are

Some hopeful symptoms which must not be overlooked. Education is spreading surely and steadily. Chief of these is, I think, the surprising success of the **co-operative movement** which has undoubtedly opened a new vista of improvement. If co-operation continues to progress as it has done in the last ten years, its influence on the development of agriculture will be incalculable. It places within the reach of the ryot the means of raising the capital which is required for the improvement of his land without having recourse either to the too rigid system of State loans or to the usurious hands of the money-lender. It has been found in other countries to facilitate enormously the supply and distribution of agricultural implements. There are many directions in which co-operation will come to the aid of the agriculturist and relieve him of his present difficulties; and the enthusiastic way in which the co-operative idea has been taken up by the people of India is one of the best auguries for further advance.

The future therefore is not without hope and it belongs to those who are young like you and who are the students of this College to realise it. I feel quite sure that the work which is being done here is of the greatest potential value to the country, the money which is being spent on this College is well spent and I hope that each year it will be increased and that as the Department of Agriculture is able to extend its operations more and more funds will be placed for its usage. It will certainly be my endeavour so long as I am in charge of the Financial Department to help forward the cause of the Agricultural Department as far as it lies in my power and I feel sure that I am only expressing the sentiments of all members of the Government in wishing the Agricultural College, its officers and students continued success and prosperity. (Loud and prolonged cheers)

Unveiling of Mr. D'Silva's Portrait.

At this stage Mr. Vengail K. Krishna Nayanar in his capacity as President of the D'Silva Memorial Committee requested Sir Alexander Cardew to unveil a bromide enlargement of Mr. D'Silva. In unveiling the portrait, Sir Alexander said, that he was glad to find the memory of Mr. D'Silva so much cherished by his old Students and hoped that in the future there will be several such additions to the picture gallery at the College (cheers). A facsimile of the enlargement is put in as a frontispiece in this issue and details about the D'Silva Memorial Fund are published as an appendix.
