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Agricultural and Industrial Problems in India



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INTRODUCTION.



THE progress of scientific discovery and invention during the last 15 years has been extraordinarily rapid and the aspect of many industrial and agricultural problems in India has been materially changed by the advances which have been effected. As yet, the importance of these new developments is hardly recognized and most of the papers collected in this little volume have been written at odd times in the hope that they would contribute to the gradual diffusion of knowledge on such matters and that, thereby, they would lead to definite action on the part of those who possess facilities for initiating changes in the desired directions. It cannot, however, be said that much has been accomplished in this way; though at the same time it is satisfactory to be able to record that the results, obtained from what has been done, justify the conclusions which have been drawn in the several papers.

The agricultural experiments still in progress at Melrosapuram promise brilliant financial results and

the work which has there been accomplished by the Rev. A. Andrew is deserving of the highest encomiums. The Irrigation Commission, in their recently published report lay great stress on the importance of extending cultivation under wells and they specifically recommend experiments with engines and pumps. Unless Government act as pioneers in this direction, very little is ever likely to be done; but, on the other hand, if the initiative is taken by Government, and the anticipated results are actually obtained, there is every reason to suppose that private individuals will vigorously continue to develop the use of mechanical appliances and motors for raising water.

The recent trials of wind pumping engines carried out by the Royal Agricultural Society of England at Park Royal, have drawn attention to the growing importance of these motors and have revealed the immense advances which have been made in recent years under the stimulus of a ready demand for a cheap and reliable engine. In India we cannot afford to neglect these things and, the poorer the country, the greater is the necessity that its capital expenditure should be carefully made with a view to obtaining the highest possible return.

In industrial matters it is satisfactory to record that the Aluminium Department of the School of Arts has been closed after 5½ years' existence and the industry transferred to private enterprise. The whole expenditure on this experiment has been more than recouped and the result justifies the action of Government in putting an old indigenous industry on a new footing and in line with the most advanced practice of Europe.

In regard to the proposals for the Chrome Tanning, sufficient time has not yet elapsed for any definite conclusions to have been established, but the matter has been seriously taken up and the Madras Government have placed at my disposal, sufficient funds for preliminary experiments. Expert tanners regard the idea with favour and it is not unlikely that some of them will not be above adopting the suggestions of an outsider.

In hand weaving but little progress is being made in the extension of the use of the fly shuttle loom and, though it is fairly well known to the weaving community, it is not regarded by them with any favour. There is no doubt that it is a better machine than the native hand loom, and the cost of the most recently devised patterns is small enough; but, nevertheless, it is not popular with native weavers in the South

of India and it is hard to say whether they are aware of any real objection to its use or whether the absolute indifference to its advantages, which is displayed, is merely native prejudice. To improve the warping is still the unsolved problem of hand weaving and, if that can be satisfactorily done, the gradual extinction of the community may be postponed to a very distant date. The survival of hand weaving up to the present day, in spite of the most intense competition from the machine-loom, is due in some degree to its own merits, but in the main it may be attributed to the proverbial inertia of the people of this land.

