

**THE ECONOMICS ASSOCIATION.**

When the College re-opened after the Summer Vacation, our next sitting was settled to be held on the last Saturday in July. In the meantime the idea of starting a War-study Association in response to a letter of the Honourable the Director of Public Instruction having awakened a keen interest among us and no other suitable day being available near at hand, we had to postpone the expected meeting of the Economics Association and to hold a general meeting of all the students of our College in order to make necessary arrangements for organising the new Association on the last Saturday in July. A full report of the proceedings of this meeting, which we consider as the opening meeting of the young Association, appeared in the September issue of the College Magazine.

In consequence of this, no regular sitting of the Economics Association could be held before Saturday, the 24th August at 3 P. M. when our fifth meeting came off with Professor Devendranath Mukherjee M. A. in the chair.

This time Sj. Hariprasad Chatterjee read a paper on 'Indian labourers.'

The paper opens with an attempt to trace the condition of labour in India in the old time and its gradual development up to the epoch-making age of transition. After a survey of the condition of land in India in the past and present times and a review of the steady increase in the number of labourers in Agriculture, mines and other industries, the paper judges their efficiency in different branches and investigates into the causes leading to their insufficiency and drawbacks. It also deals with the comparative output and average rates of wages in different industries and enumerates the characteristics and nature of the labouring class in India. For the improvement of the general intellect of these labourers the paper proposes the introduction of free and compulsory primary education throughout the country. As for their efficiency technical training is suggested. Then it dwells upon the influence which such education will exert upon them and supports its views with proper citations of authorities. The paper ends with an economic study of the causes standing in the way of the improvement of the labouring class.

When the paper and the subject were thrown open for discussion, Sj. Harisadhan Ganguly suggested that the paper should have contained

some comparative statistical accounts, illustrating the condition of the labouring class in India in comparison with that in other countries.

Sj. Satyendranath Bose found in the paper no mention or suggestion of any regular scheme for the improvement of the general condition of the labouring class. He regretted the lack of proper interest on the part of the employers in the welfare of the labourers. Sj. Anathnath Sinha who also observed the same drawback in the paper suggested that the Indians who have migrated into foreign lands as labourers should have come within the scope of the paper.

Sj. Awdheswari Prasad spoke a few words about the inefficiency of Indian labourers.

Then the President offered some general remarks on the paper and gave a valuable discourse on the subject of the day.

At the very outset he drew out a point of distinction of the term 'labouring class' as applied in India and in the West. 'In the West,' said he, 'the term stands for those employed by the entrepreneur class in factories where they are under the direct control of their employers but in India besides the above element it includes a special class of labourers viz. the peasants who have land of their own and look after their own business without any guide or control.' He explained why improvement should be exercised on personal efficiency in the case of factory-labourers and on the scientific form of Agriculture among the peasant-classes. He then dwelt upon the manifold virtues of free and compulsory education and supported the essayist's view of an immediate introduction of the same among the peasant-class in India. He went on to elucidate how proper education would make them ambitious enough to adopt a large-scale farming, trade-unions, better irrigation, scientific principles of cultivation etc. As regards the ordinary class, besides proper industrial training, free and compulsory education also should be imparted to them and this by familiarising them with the labour-market, the comparative rates of wages in different countries, mobility of labour and other elements of labour problems would ultimately instigate ambition in them as a remote result of which the national dividend with a remarkable swelling would entitle them to a better distribution. He ended his discourse with a hope of the steady expansion of the Co-operative movement among the labouring classes.

Then Sj. Awdheswari Prasad, who has been newly appointed Librarian in place of Sj. Narendranath Bhattacharyya read a list of the new additions to the Association-library since January.

The subject for the next sitting was settled to be *'The necessity of free and compulsory education for the development of the economic condition of the country.'* And S<sub>j</sub>. Pulin Krishna Mitra and S<sub>j</sub>. Jitendra Kumar Khandu were selected as the essayist and the critic respectively.

Then the meeting separated with a vote of thanks to the chair.

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The Sixth Meeting of the Association was held on Saturday the 28th September. Professor Devendranath Mukherjee M. A. was in the chair.

The essayist of the day was S<sub>j</sub>. Pulinkrishna Mitra, ; the subject has already been mentioned.

The paper of the essayist was of high merit. The facts and figures were accurate and up-to-date, and the treatment was ingenious and thoughtful.

After a quotation of the opinions of great men on the divine nature of education, he began with a brief discussion of the significance of mass-education—how it meant a keener enjoyment of life and a more reformed standard of living, the greater moral and economic efficiency of the individual and a higher level of intelligence for the whole community. On the question why education should be made compulsory, he said that without a resort to compulsion no state could properly ensure a general diffusion of education and that where there was no compulsion one had to look to the deplorable fact that seven children out of eight were allowed to grow up in ignorance and darkness. 'Education shall be so diffused' he quoted 'that there may not be a country with an ignorant family or a family with an ignorant member.' In his observations on the benefits of mass-education he pointed out how the diffusion of universal education would entitle the mass of the people to a better chance in life and a hope of better success of all efforts and how it would bring about moral improvement and economic well-being in the country. "Proper education" he said "will serve them against the exactions of unscrupulous money-lenders or against the abuses of 'little tyrants of the fields.'"

He then launched into a discussion of the deplorable condition of India in the matter of education. He compared the economic and educational conditions of India to those of other countries and held with the sweeping opinion that India must follow in the wake of other civilised countries in the matter of free and compulsory education of the mass if her children were to enjoy anything like the advantages which the people in those other countries enjoyed in the face of life. As regards its benefits on the peasant-class in India, he showed how it would bring by its means 'a ray of life, a touch of refinement, a glow of hope into the minds that needed them all.

He retired with a bold advocacy for the elevation of the empire by the universal diffusion of education rather than by the political reform for self-government.

The paper of the critic S. J. Jitendrakumar Kundu abounded with forceful criticism of the disastrous effects of modern education. He compared the moral and material prosperity of India in her old ages with her present deplorable condition and attributed the cause to the spread of western education. In his opinion education had robbed the people of simplicity, self-denial, morality and religious devotion. A small spark of education was sufficient to breed in vulgar minds a contempt for their illiterate friends, brothers and ancestors. While dealing with the depressing effect cast by education on the industrial activity of the people in our country, the paper cites some concrete examples. If any low class-man gets a little light of education he gives up in contempt the independent and humble profession held by his forefathers and hankers after some kind of service. Education makes the people so very ease-loving that they scarcely pay their attention to the responsible fields of trade and commerce. Among the middle-class men education only uplifts their standard of living but fails to raise their net income in the same ratio.

The paper does not spare a harsh criticism on the conduct of the so-called highly-cultured men of our country whom western education and materialism has drowned in the cups of luxury.

The paper concludes with a sharp criticism of the present mode of imparting education and of the actions of the Universities, which in the critic's opinion is bringing forth annually a number of service-seeking young men, who are hardly fit to struggle in the work-a-day world.

The paper gives a picturesque account of the poverty prevailing through our country and ends with the suggestion of trying education after relieving the poverty of the country.

When the papers and the subject were thrown open for discussion S. J. Apurbakrishna De, who found the present system of education to be quite unsuitable, wanted to set up a compulsory course of agricultural and technical education for the peasants and labourers. He held that Agricultural India would never take an industrial turn without a healthy expansion of education. He found fault with the critic's postponement of education to the relief of poverty within the country and elucidated how education by itself would remove the poverty.

S. J. Hirendranath Ghosh, a student of the Junior B. A. Class, spoke a few words on the influence of education on the political evolution of a country. He felt a conspicuous want in the paper of any constructive scheme of free and compulsory education. He criticised the one-sided and cold views taken by the critic.

S. J. Gaurisanakar Banerjee, another Junior student, spoke a few words on the benefits of education to the common folk and the country. In his consideration, the remarks of the critic did not hit the target, the attack being

more upon the regrettable outcome of the modern method of teaching than upon education proper.

Dr. Awdheswari Prasad also discussed the topic.

After short review of both the papers, the President concluded with an instructive discussion. In his opinion the truth of the necessity of education for the development of the economic, social and political condition of a country required no learned speculation, a comparative study of the condition of agriculturists in America and India serving as its ample proof. While dwelling on the efficiency of education, he pointed out the additional advantages which America gained over India through the benefits of better education. In his speech he explained why the prosperity of a country was fast locked up in the arms of education and elucidated it with copious illustrations from all the countries where the income per head had gone up by leaps and bounds synchronously with the spread of education.

The subject for the next sitting was settled to be 'Cotton-manufacture in India' and S. Apurbakrishna De was selected as the essayist.

The meeting dissolved with a vote of thanks to the chair.

SALILKUMAR BANERJEE,  
*Honorary Secretary.*

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## INDIA AND SCIENTIFIC AGRICULTURE.\*

In whatever district of India we travel,—be it the hilly tracts of the Himalayas or the deltaic swamps of Bengal or Burma, or the dry land of Central India or the tropical regions of Madras or the elevated plains of the Deccan or the dreary desert of Sind or Rajputana,—vast fields smiling with golden harvests will, no doubt, be a good treat to our eyes and it will thus be no exaggeration to say that India is the favourite haunt of Ceres of the classical mythology. Except in a few cities, the atmosphere is altogether agricultural; over vast tracts of the country, the only common interest is agriculture, the monsoon, the state of crops, the health of cattle. Of its immense population, at least two hundred millions are dependent for their livelihood on agriculture, or industries subsidiary to it. The annual value of the agricultural produce of British India is over 15 hundred crores of Rupees.

This important branch of industry, affording us the sources of maintenance and yielding such rich fruits is nearly left in the hands of unlettered and uncultured peasants only. Their tillage implements are not

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\* A paper read at the 2nd sitting of the College Economics Association.