

that environment is an important factor in the education of the people, and that our needs and ways of living, and even our national aspirations differ from the ways and needs and aspirations of people who live in other lands. It may be that the course of instruction adopted in the public schools of England and Germany is best suited for the present needs of those countries, but is it to be said that what is good for England and Germany is therefore good for us? The case of the boys and the frogs as told by Æsop should give us the answer. What, then, are we in this country to do if we may not accept the schemes of education such as other Governments have adopted for the benefit of their people? The answer is an easy one. We must provide a scheme adaptive and adaptable to our own ever-varying conditions, where the law of evolution will operate and education will be modified to meet environment as presented in the unlike conditions that now exist in the colony. We must foster a knowledge of natural science among the teachers so far as relates to local and even colonial environment, and we must have teachers prepared as teachers in anticipation of the profession they are to follow. Our country sadly lacks teaching experience and skill, and the two training institutions in the South Island are certainly running along on unscientific lines. There is an abundant supply of bookmen who teach the book, the whole book, and nothing but the book, but who are ignorant of the great book of nature, of which we need so much to encourage the study among children. Mere book knowledge makes a good show to the outside world, which only reads of examination results; but teachers who know nature even as far as their surroundings, and who can interest children not alone in the dead past but in the more important living present, are badly wanted by this country, and they must be obtained if our education is to be anything better than the mere varnish of knowledge. The industries, the scientific progress, the material, and even the social and political status of the country are in the hands of the six thousand or so teachers who are occupied in the noble work of education. Provision must be made for the training of teachers in technical skill apart from mere academic instruction; and this must not be on the antiquated lines of 'normal schools,' such as were established in England and elsewhere when provision was first made to prepare teachers suitable for the elementary instruction then deemed sufficient."

3. *Sir W. R. Russell.*] You spoke yesterday of the undesirableness of technical education in agriculture commencing until the Seventh Standard was reached, so I understood?—Yes.

4. Then, does not that virtually amount to failure to teach any technical agriculture in the primary schools at all?—Certainly not. To give the children an acquaintance with their surroundings they should have a knowledge of elementary botany—that is, a knowledge of the local plants of a district.

5. In the Seventh Standard?—No, the children in the lower classes. I would take all these lower-class children in real nature-study. That is what I am wanting.

6. You have not understood my question. I understood you to say yesterday that we should not teach agriculture to the children until they came into the Seventh Standard?—That is so; but anticipatory to the teaching of agriculture I would like nature-study in the matter of environment to be taken in the case of every school district—that is, so far as a knowledge of the plants, of the insects, of the noxious weeds, of the birds, and of the rocks of a district are concerned. Every pupil should learn things anticipatory of the Seventh Standard specialisation. Then would be the time, when they had that information, to prepare agriculture in a scientific manner.

7. What do you mean by the word "agriculture"?—Everything pertaining to the scientific preparation and growth of cereals and the production of live-stock—everything pertaining to scientific production on a farm really.

8. Then, in other words, agriculture would only be an advanced standard in the same class?—Exactly. Agriculture is an art just as is the manufacture of cloth. It is applied science. And I want to bring all the concrete information bearing upon the subject to bear upon the children before introducing them to applied science.

9. How would you, without materially interfering with the present syllabus, teach the earlier stages of agricultural science in the primary schools?—You must begin with the teacher first. I stated yesterday that the teachers were not prepared in this. They are unacquainted even with elementary natural science.

10. You disapproved of the peripatetic teacher?—Certainly.

11. But you said that the study of nature ought to be from nature itself and not from the book?—Yes.

12. How are you going to teach the teachers in the large centres from nature?—By bringing them under the very conditions that you want to apply to those various places. You want to take the technical man, the man who is able to teach the teachers, and what the technical man gives to the teachers let them carry into the country and into the schools.

13. But if you have to study from the book of nature, how are you going to learn on Lambton Quay the flora and fauna?—I would not take nature-study here the same as I would take nature-study in the Seventy-mile Bush or on the Heretaunga Plains. I would take what is here and available.

14. If you are going to bring the whole of the teachers into local centres, then you study the book of nature on the pavement?—But you have your different centres. For instance, I should have a centre here and another at Palmerston. I should have certain centres and adapt my work to the centres. We have three centres in the Hawke's Bay District.

15. You have trained your teacher and have got him ready to teach whatever the syllabus directs in this matter, we will say; at what age would you begin to impart to the children a knowledge of plant-life?—You could take them even in the lower standards in observational lessons. To give, for example, a concrete illustration: You could take for young children all the types of plants common to a class or order. You could take the stock, the ordinary wallflower, the turnip, the radish, and the cabbage. The children know these but they do not know that these flowers are similar. I would get them to discover likenesses from the flowers followed by a near de-