

88. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Is there any danger, if you specialise in the way you suggest from nature-study, and so on, of getting the elementary education on too narrow a basis?—To my mind, it is the only way to get it on a wide basis, because you begin in the very place where a child gets first concepts, so far as observation, and language, and thought are concerned, and you expand your base by building knowledge upon it.

89. If you study cress without Crecy, do you think you are getting on to a narrow line?—I do not know. I should not like to determine that question.

90. You said that the study ought to be according to basis—that the child should be biased towards the industries of the country. Is it possible in a young country to say what the industries are going to be?—That is what we have been saying. If you take a district and prepare the child according to its environment you bias the child according to it.

91. The only environment of a child in a new country is the life that he sees around him. There is no bias towards a manufacturing industry?—Pardon me. He has it in the town.

92. I am talking of a new country that has only small towns. If you adopt that principle, are you not limiting yourself to the particular life that is immediately around the child?—A child cannot get a thought about the buildings in London and the wonders of London from the whare in which he lives, and until that child sees larger things his thoughts must be all curbed and cribbed in proportion to his environment.

93. If you attempt to bias towards the particular industries of the country, do you not limit the possibilities of a child's education by excluding the things which are not immediately around him, but which have to come in the course of time—like manufactures?—I do not anticipate what is going to be. I simply accept what is there for the time being. The knowledge I have of my surroundings is the knowledge upon which all my new thoughts must be based.

APPENDIX.

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION.

At a recent meeting of the executive of the Hawke's Bay Branch of the Farmers' Union Mr. G. Hogben, M.A., Inspector-General of Schools, gave an address on the subject of agricultural education.

Being invited by the Chairman to express his views upon the remit from the Hastings branch—namely, "That the subject of introducing technical agriculture education into the primary schools is of the greatest importance, and is recommended for the support of the union"—Mr. Hogben said,—

I have first to thank you for the opportunity you have given me of explaining what has been done, and what I think can be done, in this most important matter of agricultural education. I state not what I regard as a mere platitude or truism, but as a most important fact, when I say that in my opinion properly organized instruction in the principles of agriculture is one of the most urgent needs of this colony. Agricultural and rural pursuits engage the efforts not only of far more people than any other single trade, business, or manufacture, but, I believe, of more individuals than all other productive occupations put together. While, therefore, we are making provision for training apprentices and foremen in other pursuits, we ought to see that we do not neglect that which concerns the interests of the largest class of producers.

I have read with much interest the remarks made at the last meeting of the Colonial Council by your president, Mr. J. G. Wilson, by Mr. Edwin Hall, and others, in reference to this question, and find myself largely in agreement with them. I note especially the stress laid by Mr. Hall on the necessity for sound preliminary work in the primary schools—such work to include nature-study and the keeping of school gardens—not so much with the view of imparting technical knowledge in agriculture, but rather as a part of general education, to train the observation and other personal powers of the children. Unless this training of the observational and reasoning powers of pupils forms the foundation, the remaining superstructure of agricultural instruction will be unsound. I should therefore be inclined to omit from your resolution the word "technical." Very little instruction that can in the strict sense be called technical—that is, bearing directly upon the principles that underlie a given trade or trades—can be given, or ought to be attempted, at a school, least of all at a primary school. But the preliminary training in nature-study, in the observation of the common objects and phenomena of the every-day life around him, ought to form part of every child's education, and I am convinced that when this is realised in practice, the intellectual training that is afforded him will not only not suffer, but will gain immensely in depth, reality, and interest thereby.

Mr. Hall holds up as worthy of imitation the scheme of rural instruction being carried out in Canada. This scheme is in many ways most admirable, but it depends in a great degree upon the centralisation of schools, whereby several small country schools are replaced by one larger central school, so enabling classes to be formed sufficiently large to tempt teachers of marked ability to devote their lives to the advancement of rural education. I do not think we are yet prepared for such a radical change, although it has much to recommend it. Other countries have done much towards fostering specially adapted courses of instruction in elementary schools, the French scheme for the "Teaching of Elementary Ideas of Agriculture in Rural Schools" being admirable. (A translation of this publication, I may point out, was issued by the New Zealand Education Department as a special paper in 1899, and copies of it are on the table before you.)