

for consolidation. He says that it is a difficult matter for teachers to go to the schools, because each way they would waste one day, and if they could only collect a lot of children, and have the same teacher, they would be doing the same work by consolidation and would be saving a great amount of time. Mr. Hall says, "There are four main features in this plan—the first proposal is intended to show what improvements can be effected in education by the consolidation of a number of small schools into one central school, with a school garden and a manual-training department as part of its equipment. With this end in view it has been decided to offer financial assistance to one such school in each of the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. Vans are to be employed to convey the children to and from school without charge, who live at any considerable distance, so that a number of weak rural schools may be consolidated into one well-appointed and well-sustained central school, when it is anticipated that much better results will be obtained. Such centralisation of schools would provide more experienced teachers. Instead of the coveted posts being, as they too often are, in the towns and cities, thus drawing the ablest teachers from the rural districts, large central schools in the country would provide prize places for teachers, specially adapted for the work, who might be induced to devote their lives to the advancement of education in the country districts." I may say that Mr. George, Director of Technical Education in Auckland, is the only one that we have noticed who has taken up the subject of rural education since Mr. Riley ceased to be Director at Wellington. Mr. Riley was not able to do much in this direction, because there really were no funds for the purpose. But Mr. George has brought forward a scheme—I have not got details of it here, but they can be obtained—which is very much on the lines of Professor Robertson's in Canada. Take the case of France. France is, perhaps, the most advanced of the older nations, and in our own papers we have a very excellent report on the system of rural education there. It is in the fifth report of the Department of Agriculture—the report for 1897. Mr. Gilruth was at Pasteur's Institute and took the opportunity of inquiring into rural education, and when he came back he read a paper, which is published in the Department's report. This gives information as to what they are doing in France—not full information, but it shows the way in which they are going on. The Education Department have also got a report of a similar character. They issued a report themselves, which was published in separate form. That was in 1899. It is entitled, "Teaching of Elementary Ideas of Agriculture in Rural Schools." It is Bulletin No. 2. I think it is obvious that if you are going to teach in primary rural schools something to do with agriculture, you must have an agricultural text-book. I brought under the notice of the Premier the necessity for this text-book. I suggested that a very handsome prize—not less than £500—should be offered for the best text-book. Nothing was done, however; but since then a very nice little text-book has been published by Messrs. Whitcombe and Tombs (Limited). It is the original "Elementary Agriculture," republished by them and edited by Mr. Kirk, the Government Biologist. It is not a very attractive book, as you can see for yourselves [book produced], and latter-day photographic work could make it more attractive. The best thing I have seen of the kind came to me the other day. It does not belong to me, and so I cannot leave it, but I brought it down to show you. [Produced.] This is "Rural School Agriculture." It is published by the University of Minnesota. This book [produced] is Bulletin No. 1, "Exercises in Agriculture and Housekeeping for Rural Schools." First of all, it gives instruction to the teachers—how to teach the children by means of the exercises—and you will see that it is freely illustrated by different diagrams. Each teacher can take up any particular subject. There are, I think, 130-odd exercises in relation to agriculture and to domestic economy as well. It is very interesting indeed for one to read.

4. *Sir W. R. Russell.* It is not procurable here, is it?—No, but it could be procured by the hundred in America. Every teacher ought to have a copy. It is really a teacher's book—it is not a manual—and each teacher having this in his hands would be able to get up a particular exercise himself. For instance, here is a chapter regarding the strawberry-plant. He would take up that branch of the subject, do the exercise, and give a lesson to the children at the school on the following morning. On another day he would take a chapter dealing with something else, and so on. Then, in the same way, there is domestic economy for the girls. I believe this is a most invaluable book, and I think a large number of copies of it ought to be procured for New Zealand. It is quite on the lines that we ought to follow, I think, in a small way—to begin with, at any rate. The second proposal that Professor Robertson makes, which is detailed by Mr. Hall, is "to form groups of rural schools with a travelling instructor for each group. This part of the plan proposes to give object-lessons on the value of school gardens and nature-study at individual rural schools, as a part of general education, to be begun by means of a travelling instructor, who would visit and spend one half-day per week with the children and teachers at each school of a group of ten schools, for a term of three years, or until a number of suitable trained and qualified teachers would be available to carry on such work themselves." It is obvious, of course, that unless you have trained teachers to begin with you must have some trained person, and unless you can bring him you must go to him. "This nature-study is to be dealt with, not so much for the purpose of acquiring information about soils, plants, animals, and inorganic things, as to be a means of training the personal power of the pupil into a condition of symmetry and maturity, through a knowledge and sympathy with such things, acquired by doing something with them." I will refer by-and-by to travelling instructors. Professor Robertson also lays great stress upon the fact that there should be school gardens for the elder children, "to be used like slates, to put things on and rub them off again when they have served their educational purpose." Something is being done in New Zealand in that direction, but not very much, I am sorry to say. If you look around the schools of New Zealand you will probably think they are about as ugly buildings as you could possibly imagine, and have very few attractions round about them—a bare playground generally covered with mud. But in some parts of New Zealand they are doing something. I would refer you again to the Agricultural Report for 1903, and there you will see a very interesting account given by Mr. Kirk of what they are doing at Mauriceville, up in the Forty-mile Bush,