

United States, beginning in Massachusetts in 1869, and spreading thence in all directions; there are now eighteen States in which the consolidation of schools and the transportation of pupils at public expense are being tried to a greater or lesser extent. The advantages are chiefly educational: these are most evident when, instead of attending a small one-roomed school with probably an uncertificated teacher in charge of all grades, the children are taken to a well-built, fully equipped school, with two or three rooms and two or three trained teachers; they are not so evident when the children are taken simply from a small school, with eight or ten children, to a somewhat larger school under the charge of one teacher, although even here there may be an educational advantage due to the fact that the last-named teacher may be trained, whereas the teacher of the small school is almost certainly not trained. The roads should be fairly good, and the distances not too great—not exceeding, in general, five or six miles—or else the cost of conveyance becomes too great to be outweighed in the minds of the ratepayers by the advantages. In the United States the expense is often reduced by arranging for the same driver to carry the mails. It is held that the children gain not only in the matter of instruction, but in the widening of mental outlook from mixing with a larger number of children coming from other places; it is found, too, that the children are better in health, for, being conveyed in covered vans, they are less exposed to bad weather, and attendance is naturally much more regular. The cost of conveyance is generally balanced, or nearly so, by the saving in salaries, and in the cost of buildings and their maintenance. It must be remembered that counties have to provide the greater part of the money for these items, not the Central Government as in New Zealand; a saving in cost would not appeal so strongly to the inhabitants of any district in New Zealand as in the United States.

The plan has been tried in Canada, but is not generally carried out; as a rule, the roads are not good enough. In the case of the Guelph experiment, rendered possible by the generosity of Sir John Macdonald, who established a model central school on the estate of the Ontario Agricultural College, the majority of the townships from which the children came have voted against the continuance of the system; but the central school is very awkwardly situated with respect to the townships, and is not so near to some of them as other large schools are.

In several of the States of the Union children are conveyed to high schools, and obtain a secondary education they could not get without boarding away from home.

There are no doubt many localities in New Zealand where the plan of conveying children could be adopted with great advantage. I should on all grounds advise its adoption where the roads were good, the distances not too great, and where the children would attend a school with two or three teachers instead of a small one-teacher school.

#### THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE RURAL SCHOOL.\*

Valuable as are collections of pictures, school museums, and school libraries in town schools, they would be far more valuable in increasing the efficiency of the country schools. Teaching pupils how to read books for themselves, and how to draw conclusions from well-selected specimens and illustrations is valuable in any school; but in the small school a due proportion of study-periods spent by the older pupils in such work would not only benefit them by showing them how to work and think for themselves, but would lighten the task of the teacher in the difficult problem of properly distributing his efforts among the various classes with which he has to deal.

Money spent upon the encouragement of school libraries would, I consider, be well spent, and I think the country would be justified in giving pound for pound on any sums contributed for this purpose by local authorities or private individuals.

The programme of work might also be simplified by grouping the nature-study work with the language work, as in Switzerland,† thus linking closely together the child's observation and his power of self-expression in the mother-tongue. To a large extent this might be done in the case of geography, and of history and civics also. Care must be taken, of course, to see that

\* Suggested by a pamphlet issued by the Agricultural Bureau, Washington.

† See the programme of work in the elementary schools of Geneva (Appendix).