

ADVANCED ENGLISH SCHOOLS IN RURAL DISTRICTS.

BY J. H. SMITH, P. S. INSPECTOR, ANCASTER, ONT.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

To-day I can adopt almost the exact language of St. Paul, and say that I am happy to be called upon to discuss certain matters that pertain to the welfare and happiness of the farming community, because I know that you, Mr. President, are an expert in all things that concern them, that will add to their usefulness and increase their prosperity, for from your youth up you have been intimately associated with them, you know their wants, and sympathize with their noblest aspirations. It is therefore a more pleasant duty for me to introduce this matter to the consideration of the members of this Association than it would be under different circumstances. The thoughts that I shall present have been floating through my mind for some time past, and though they may be somewhat crude in form, yet I trust there will be found sufficient truth in them to merit some discussion. I do not for one moment entertain the idea that I shall say all that can be said favorable to the proposed scheme, nor do I flatter myself that I am capable of answering all objections that may be raised to the details as now developed, for I am fully persuaded that the principle underlying this subject is sound, and merits our most thoughtful consideration. Our educational work has been rapidly developing of late years, and something of this nature is required to round off and fill out our otherwise admirable system.

The age in which we live, when compared with those of former times, has not inaptly been called the practical or utilitarian age. Old ideas and old theories are respected, not for their age alone, but for their inherent value. Everything is now subjected to the keenest criticism, the most rigorous scrutiny, as well as the most searching analysis. Whatever fails to respond affirmatively to these tests is cast aside as of little or no value, while that which passes this ordeal successfully is valued more for its worth in the every day affairs of life than for any other specific quality. Theories, as theories are quietly falling into the rear in the march of mind, while the van is being crowded with common sense thoughts and matter-of-fact conclusions. The dust and cobwebs of centuries are being brushed away rapidly, by the ruthless hand of practical utility. In science in art, in literature, in education, in fact every-