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EDITORIAL.

THE TRAINING OF PUBLIC-SCHOOL TEACHERS.

Correspondence and addresses relating to rural-school education, attach the highest importance to the training of the teacher. This is fundamental. In the main, the character of the work done in the Model and Normal schools determines what follows in the public schools. And if the move for the improvement of the public school is to be effectual, and fair to the agricultural interests of the country, we must look for tangible evidence of it in the institutions where prospective teachers receive their professional equipment.

We recently received from the Department of Education for Ontario the new syllabus of studies for the Normal Schools. Though "The Farmer's Advocate" is not contending for the teaching of agriculture as an art in the public schools, it is significant that, in the whole thirty-three pages of this syllabus, the only mention of agriculture is in a paragraph under School Gardening: "Exercises and lessons showing the use of garden practice and knowledge in the subjects of art, literature, arithmetic, agriculture, etc."

The former syllabus (1903) put agriculture in the list of subjects for examination, and allowed 50 marks for it, besides 200 marks for nature-study and elementary science, out of a total of 3,050 marks, being one-twelfth of the whole. The new syllabus omits agriculture from the examination list, and allows 150 marks for nature-study and elementary science out of a total of 4,350 marks, being only one-twenty-ninth of the whole.

Under Agriculture, the old syllabus prescribed:

3. AGRICULTURE.

Course.—Parts of the subject that can be profitably taught in public schools.

Method.—Nature-study method of teaching lessons relating to plant life, animal life, forestry, rotation of crops, soil, drainage, weeds, fungus and insect enemies of the farmer.

School Gardens.—Their educational value, preparation and care of.

The only particular notice it receives in the new one is under School Gardens, and is a recommendation that "Rural school teachers should make collections of weeds, weed seeds, economic plants, plant diseases, injurious and beneficial insects."

We learn from a memorandum accompanying the new syllabus that it is in force for the present term, 1907-8, tentatively. Before being adopted for a term of years, certain necessary changes will be made in it to suit the situation next September, together with such modifications as a year's experience of its operation may suggest as desirable. That these, and, we also believe, the equipment of the Normal Schools in the direction of such teaching, should be decidedly important, will be evident to all who have followed the discussion of the subject in these columns, because, unless we are to be surprised with the anomaly of securing the greater result from the lesser cause, this syllabus, on its face, must be regarded as one of retrogression, and not of progress.

Once more let us repeat that "The Farmer's Advocate" does not believe in undertaking to teach agriculture as a subject in the public schools, but it does look for an earnest and thoroughgoing effort to adapt the educational systems of Canada to the country's obvious economic requirements, and it is a discouraging sign that the former injudicious but well-intended effort to in-

roduce the teaching of agriculture should not have been followed up energetically by a whole-souled effort to promote school-gardening and nature study, and by an attempt to qualify school teachers in the Normal Schools to enable them to relate the public-school training to the environment and future requirements of rural pupils. Let us hope for a forward move in September.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF PUBLIC UTILITIES.

By a magnificent popular vote, a large circuit of thirteen cities and towns in Western Ontario, from Toronto on the east, to London and St. Thomas on the west, only Ingersoll dissenting, have declared themselves in favor of escaping the grip of the gigantic electric ring, whose tentacles have been stealthily reaching out and securing control of power franchises, electric-railway charters, municipal electric plants, and allied interests. Two years ago, an experienced American journalist predicted that the development of electric energy at Niagara Falls would not mean much of a boon to this Province, because, he said, "experience shows that the price of this power will be little if any lower than that produced by coal. Any difference in the cost of production will go into the pockets of the promoters." He was quite right—only, he reckoned without the Ontario Government's Hydro-Electric Power Commission, which, under the chairmanship of Hon. Adam Beck, has explored the question exhaustively, and put up such a magnificent public-spirited and inspiring fight on behalf of the interests of the people, and especially of posterity, that confidence was won from the outset, politics thrust aside by all but the most hide-bound party newspapers and by a vast majority of voters, and the victory in Toronto of well over three to one, and of an average of nearly three to one in the whole fourteen municipalities, is a more sweeping endorsement than the most sanguine supporters could have expected. It is a splendid triumph for the policy of public ownership of public utilities, which is fast coming to be recognized as the surest means of securing to the people the boon of those natural resources that otherwise fall under aggressive monopolistic control, which exploits them not for the advantage of the many, but for the enrichment of the few. The same spirit which carried the power by-laws has recently manifested itself in another form in Manitoba, where the Provincial Government has just bought out the Bell telephone system in that Province. While there are valid arguments against the public operation of certain public utilities, and while it behooves us not to be over-sanguine, there can be no question as to the wisdom of public ownership and control, and the growth of this idea throughout the civilized world may in time be a lesson to capitalists, that, while entitled to a reasonable reward for enterprise, they must, if they would retain their profitable franchises and privileges, seek profit by sincere and constant desire to promote the public welfare.

The matter of Niagara power compels special interest, because this Province is without coal, and we have to import what we use from a foreign nation, where the supply is fast decreasing, the demand increasing, and the price ever advancing, the more rapidly because under monopolistic control, so that, if hydro-electric power promises benefits for us to-day, it will be vastly more beneficial in the years to come. Had the citizens of the Western Ontario municipalities interested failed to carry the by-laws, it would have been a monumental mistake, and a terrible

crime against posterity. That they stood true to their own interests, is a matter for rejoicing by every one who has at heart the interests of good government and the weal of the people as a whole.

What do the by-laws signify? They mean that the respective councils of these various cities and towns are authorized to raise money for local distribution plants, according to the terms of the proposed contracts with the Hydro-Electric Power Commission for quantities of power for street lighting and other municipal purposes, and for sale to householders, manufacturers, street-railway companies, radial companies, and others who desire it. It is a means of securing light and power practically at cost, for the current is to be paid for on a basis of the amount used. The Commission has made a provisional contract with the Ontario Power Company, a firm of American capitalists developing electric energy at Niagara Falls, Ont., by which it secures the power wholesale at a very low price, and, as the demand from the municipalities increases, contracts may be made with this, and also with the Canadian companies developing electric energy, for further blocks of power. The Commission proposes to distribute this by building a trunk transmission line to Hamilton, Ont.; thence building or buying a spur to Toronto, and a loop or circuit from Hamilton, including Galt, Hespeler, Guelph, Waterloo, New Hamburg, Stratford, St. Marys, London, St. Thomas, Woodstock, Ingersoll and Brantford. The expense of delivering this power will be ultimately borne by the municipalities interested, which now have to assume the obligation of buying or building local distribution plants, or else making business arrangements with some local firm in the business. It is, in effect, a concerted scheme on the part of the Government to assist municipal enterprise, by expert advice, by credit, and by effective negotiation with the power companies. It may be asked what do farmers stand to benefit by the project? Nothing, perhaps, at first, but ultimately the multiplication of radial electric lines will assist rural transportation, and possibly afford means, in time, of tapping the currents for farm purposes. But, leaving these benefits out of consideration, the farmer will benefit indirectly by the gain to the cities and towns. Realizing this great principle, we have patiently borne burdensome tariffs which tax the farmer to promote manufacturing industry, reaping such reflex advantages in the way of local markets and otherwise as accrue from having cities in our midst. Cheap power will assist these industries without imposing any burden on any other class. The harnessing of Niagara will prove an immense economic advantage that will directly or indirectly advantage every class in the community.

The victory for the by-laws is all the more gratifying because the power-ring used all kinds of underhand means to befog the issue, and to intimidate and frighten voters. "The Farmer's Advocate" has been in constant receipt of misleading and falsifying literature over such pseudo names as "The Economic Society" of Ottawa, the "Tax-payers' Union," and other creations of the interests opposed to the by-laws. Undoubtedly, these tactics, insulting as they were to the people's intelligence, helped more than they hindered the by-laws. At any rate, the people of Ontario have stood to their guns in splendid form, and impressed a deep lesson on those who would strangle and prostitute the voice of democracy.

True, there was some honest and sincere opposition to the by-laws in certain quarters. The Toronto News contends that the Hydro-Electric