

Vocational Agricultural Education in Minnesota

*Under the Smith - Hughes Act, with a few remarks that are
closely associated with the subject.*

By W. F. GARDINER, B. S. A.

IN August, 1918, Dr. G. C. Creelman handed me a letter. It was accompanied by a few words and a smile that was rather difficult to interpret. I have often wondered since if he knew better than I did myself what was good for me, and was willing to take a chance in sending me out of Ontario. The result of the letter and the interview was that I was plucked from a niche in Canadian affairs, and planted in another one several hundred miles westward, in a foreign country, among strange people and under new working conditions.

This section of Minnesota is settled by a large number of Norwegians and Swedes. They are a fine class of people, with certain standards of their own to which one must readily adapt himself, if he is to do fairly good work among them.

Before rambling on any farther I might say that your present energetic, news-hunting Editor-in-Chief (Woof!—Ed.) asked for an article on my work, and one was promised in a moment of great weakness. This write-up is supposed to relieve me of this obligation.

I am at present teaching Agriculture in a High School and four associated schools. I will try in this article to give you an idea of some of the conditions under which we work. If you, dear reader, are interested in this line of work, read

on; you may obtain a hazy idea of conditions here. If, however, you are not interested, it might be wiser not to let your eyes wander down past the first stop.

My knowledge of Vocational Agriculture, a few months ago, was nebulous, to say the least. Now, I wonder why this branch of education is so little known in Canada.

The Vocational Agricultural Education in Minnesota, previous to 1917, was not considered by the educational leaders as altogether satisfactory, for many reasons; one being that sufficient salary was not paid the instructors to attract the really first-class men.

It was a twelve month job, with small opportunity of making any outside money. The school term was one of nine months. This kept many farm boys from attending school. The instructors were kept so busy with class-room and laboratory work that very little time remained for demonstration work outside of the class-room.

Many of these unfavorable conditions have since been removed by the Smith-Hughes Act. This Act was passed by the Sixty-Fourth Congress, on February 23rd, 1917. It provides for co-operation between the Federal Government with the several States working under this Act. Its object is the promotion of Vocational Education in the fields of Agricul-