

AGRICULTURE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

The following is the report presented to the Trustees' section of the Ontario Educational Association by the Special Committee appointed to investigate the question of teaching Agriculture in Public Schools. It was adopted at their meeting held March, 1894 :

1. The present state of the law on this subject may be gathered from the prescription of work in the Departmental Regulations respecting the "Course of Studies" in Form IV. of the Public Schools, as follows : "Plant life, composition of soils, etc. The course in authorized text-book to be followed." In the "Special Directions" to teachers, the subject of agriculture is thus dealt with : "The authorized text-book on this subject should be introduced into every rural school. Special attention should be given to such points as how plants grow, and what they feed upon ; how farms are beautified and cultivated ; the value of shade trees ; what trees to plant and when to plant them ; the relation of agriculture to other pursuits ; the effects of climate on the habits of a people."

2. Except that the teaching of agriculture should not be limited to Forms IV. and V., there does not seem to be much need for any change in the phraseology of either the above regulation or the above direction, so far as rural schools are concerned. Under them agriculture may be taught to any extent, and in any way that may seem good to the authorities of each school. If the trustees of a particular school desire to have agriculture taught, they can require the teacher to give instruction in it, and the inspector will have to see that the requirement is complied with. The subject is not optional, but obligatory in rural schools, and if it is neglected school boards have themselves to blame.

3. The chief obstacle to the more general introduction of agriculture in schools seems to be the treatment it receives at the High School entrance examination, and your Committee are strongly of opinion that a practice, different from the one which at present obtains, should be adopted with respect to it. Under existing regulations, agriculture is nominally an optional subject, but instead of being encouraged to take it, pupils who go up to the examination in it are subjected to a serious disadvantage as compared with those who do not, and the consequent discouragement has practically driven the subject out of the rural schools, in a large portion of which it was taught for a time.

4. In the opinion of your Committee it is an advantage rather than otherwise that the subject is optional at the entrance examination, as the teacher is free to adopt, subject to the approval of the