

the class more, or fit the pupils for life better, than will nature.

That the course in Useful Knowledge has been dispensed with, is often lamented. Does our course in Nature not furnish this useful knowledge? There has been much criticism of the course as laid down in the Nature Leaflet. True, it is impossible to teach all of these subjects, and this is as it should be, because if we had a cut and dried course, and time to drill the pupils, we should fail in the object of our teaching the subject, namely to keep up the interest of the child. It is good for the teacher to have it so. One who is to teach a lesson must seek information and become acquainted with facts, so as to render her capable of leading the pupils to discover these facts. As the pupils are to find out as much as possible themselves, to think, to observe, to investigate and to understand, this course cannot be taught through notes, yet notes must be kept of the experiments performed, and the knowledge acquired, so that the child will realize he is performing these for a definite purpose.

### RURAL SCHOOL PROBLEMS.

(Being a few extracts from the address delivered before the York County Teachers Institute, Fredericton, December, 1917, by President Burns.)

For our consideration I have chosen as my subject the Rural School and Some of the Problems that Confront It, but when we say rural schools we do not wish to eliminate any school, for the general problem of the rural school is the problem of the school in the city or town, for it is the desire to render to the community, whether city or country, the largest returns upon the investment. It is the purpose of the school to turn out as its product men and women fitted to take up the world's work in an efficient manner.

#### INTEREST AT LOW EBB.

Interest in education in the rural sections of our province in too many instances is at a low ebb — the children having educational opportunities far below that of any other class of people. While the town and city schools are steadily improving the country school is barely holding its own.

#### INADEQUATE BUILDINGS.

A few reasons might not be out of place to show why the country school is not doing the work that it should be doing if all the children of our country are to go out fitted to meet life's problems. In the first place the rural school is inadequate in its scope. It not infrequently happens that no pupils are in attendance beyond the fifth or sixth grade. This may be due to either the small number of children in the district or more likely to lack of interest to continue in school beyond the simplest elements of reading, writing and number. Again, the rural schools possess inadequate buildings and equipment. The average country schoolhouse is a one-room affair, much resembling a box with a roof on it. Its walls are

bare and dingy. The windows are often dirty, covered sometimes with tattered shades. The floors and other wood-work are scrubbed perhaps once a year. There are no pictures to relieve the dull monotony. Generally speaking, there is no library, and the equipment is of the most meagre kind. Why should this condition prevail? In the same district the work on the farm is done with the most efficient and modern machinery, but the work of the school, the place where the boys of our country are to receive their equipment for life, is sadly neglected.

#### FIRST STEP — CONSOLIDATION.

The first step in reorganizing the rural school is consolidation. Our country school buildings are far behind our industrial and social development. Adjoining a prosperous farm, with a large house that would do honor to any community, commodious barns, machine houses and all the equipment for modern farming, is the little red schoolhouse, barren of every vestige of beauty and comfort. Such a system of education leaves us on a par with the days of the sickle and the flail, of the tallow candle and the stage coach.

#### ADVANTAGES OF CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS.

The relative cost of the Consolidated School is an important factor, and while it is impossible to maintain a Consolidated School as cheaply as the old district school yet the increased advantages arising will far more than make up for any increase in cost. Not the least important of the advantages growing out of rural consolidation is the improved attendance; and better attendance, with the stimulus produced by larger numbers, creates a new life in the school which works a marvellous change.

#### COUNTRY SCHOOL COURSE BROADENED.

If the boys and girls, born on the farm, are to be retained in the farming industry, of which there seems to be a very great need, the country school course must be broadened in order that their education shall be equal to that afforded by the city for its youth.

#### SOCIETY'S DUTY.

Education should help in making a living, but it must also help a person to live. The child must come to know something of the great social institution of his day and of those things that led to their development. This is the right of every child of these enlightened days. The right of the country child as well as the city child. And society will not have done its duty by the children until it has made the best provision possible for the development of those faculties of mind and body which the country child possesses in equal proportion with those possessed by those who have greater educational advantages.

#### BETTER EDUCATED AND PAID TEACHERS WANTED.

The organization of the school, both in the matter of improved intellectual attainments and the development of the social side of life, having in mind the needs of the rural community, must engage that attention of the community. The financial support of rural education must be improved. Teachers for rural schools must be better educated and better paid. Better salaries will produce better teachers, for then there will be an incentive to undergo a longer period of professional training.