

able means of literary education for young children." The formation of school collections illustrative of science or art was held to be a valuable aid to education, but that teachers and others should discourage the making of such collections as might tend to the extermination of rare plants or animals and should assist in preserving such objects by fostering a knowledge and love of Nature.

Our teachers who have given much thought to the above matters will be glad to notice that they formed the chief subjects of discussion at the Conference.

Visits to English Schools.

By G. U. HAY.

During a recent visit to England, I took the opportunity to see the working of some of the board schools which correspond to the public elementary schools of Canada. Those I saw were in Devonshire, in the neighbourhood of London, and in the city of London itself. The time spent in them was very brief—not more than an hour or two in each—and I will not pretend, in jotting down any impressions of the work seen, that these impressions are in any way final, or describe fitly the English common schools and the work done in them. The records I shall make in this and a few succeeding numbers of the REVIEW are merely those of a traveller with some knowledge of the work of schools in different parts of Canada and desirous of seeing what was best in the schools of the mother land, and holding it up as worthy of our imitation.

There are many people in England who, while seeing the defects in their common schools, are working by voice and action to remedy these defects; there are others—and perhaps more numerous—who criticize the schools, the teachers, and the course of study without any knowledge or reason. They do this from habit, and because their fathers before them did it, not because they know from a personal examination what is being done. This is merely mentioned in passing. We have both classes of critics in this country as well as in England.

When I called on Mr. P. A. Barnett, Chief Inspector of the English Board of Education, at his office in London, he very kindly gave me every facility for visiting any schools in the metropolis that I might decide on, and mentioned some in the East End or in the West End that would probably afford me facilities for seeing how young London-

ers are taught. I suggested that these schools were too far away, that my time was very limited, and that I should like one in the neighbourhood of Russell Square where my temporary home was. He smiled, and ventured the opinion that I might find the schools near the centre of London a little too antiquated for my purpose. This had not occurred to me. A few evenings before, at the close of Empire Day, I had leaned out of my window near Russell Square listening to a score or more of young Britons in the yard below as they sang lustily, each word hurled with vim and precision, sounding like the crack of a repeating rifle—

— Britannia Rules the waves (pr. wives),
Britons never shall be slaves (pr. slives).

I thought I should like to see how these sturdy little Britons who disdained to be "slives," stood fire under their schoolmasters. But I took Mr. Barnett's advice, and in an hour or so found myself in the Hammersmith district, and near to the Brackenbury Road school. It contained separate departments for boys, girls, infants—some 1,500 pupils in all. I found the headmaster at the top of the building, after climbing wearily many pairs of stairs. The headmaster does no teaching. He examines papers and grades the boys. The headmistress does the same for the girls, and I presume there was a head for the infant department, doing pretty much the same work. The headmaster offered to show us the papers he was examining, "or perhaps," he said, "you would like to be shown through the building?" No; we came to see the scholars and teachers at their work. He very willingly consented and conducted us to standard two, where we found forty or fifty boys—bright, alert, well-behaved fellows they were, and under perfect control. There were few orders given while we were in the room, and these were mainly by the eye or hand of the teacher. They were obeyed with instant alacrity and precision. There were no laggards. There was no formality or stiffness. Each boy seemed to be proud of the obedience and respect paid to his master. What impressed us most was the perfect lack of self-consciousness on the part of the boys and their teacher.

We heard a few read. The accent and inflection were good, and each appeared to appreciate and understand what he read, and to know every word. This was the more remarkable, as I selected the passage, and the teacher said they had just been introduced to the reading book the day before. There was no trace of shyness. Each boy appeared