

RURAL SCHOOL FAIRS.

Mr. W. B. Roadhouse, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Toronto, said in part:

During the past three or four years the Ontario Department of Agriculture has been endeavouring to carry out certain plans with a view to interesting the young men in the rural districts in the work of agriculture. These have been inaugurated and developed quietly and unostentatiously until at the present time they cover, to a very large degree, the whole Province. In fact, so great is their extent and so impressive their importance that the Executive of the Experimental Union thought it advisable to have a statement of the junior work of the Department of Agriculture submitted to this gathering at these sessions. The plans are very largely carried out by the District Representatives as part of their manifold work in the counties, and they, therefore, come under the immediate direction of Mr. C. F. Bailey, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Agriculture, and it would be very fitting and appropriate if he could be here to present the story. The success achieved in the work has been due in no small degree to his ability, energy and enthusiasm. I join with you, therefore, in the sincere regret that owing to illness Mr. Bailey is not here himself as advertised to tell this story.

Let me cite at first just briefly the object in view—the problem in reaching the young. Up to a few years ago the work of the Department of Agriculture consisted of agencies and organizations which dealt very largely with the adult farmer, and little, if any, attention was paid to the boys and girls and young men. This fact impressed us in the Department as one which merited special attention, and it seemed that here lay a problem which awaited solution and which would give, to those who would utilize the time, results which would be gratifying to them and of benefit to the Province as a whole. Hence, we took up this work. We endeavoured to bear in mind the fact that our purview lay along the highways and byways and the side lines of the country. It was not our province to invade the jurisdiction of the school, because the school had its own work to perform. It could do much, and was doing much in connection with agricultural education, but outside of that altogether it seemed there might be scope for work among these boys and girls at their homes and on their farms. We recognize that “it is the mind that makes the body rich,” and also that we learn to do by doing, and if we could link together in some way these two ideas, we might point the way in the mind of the rising generations to “higher things and better days.” How, then, could this be accomplished? In some counties of this Province, as in some States across the border, a limited amount of work along this line had been done. In the county of Waterloo, school fairs had been held, the same sort of organization which we now have all over the Province, but serving only a limited area. In that idea we found the germ of a plan which we felt might be extended and broadened to cover the whole Province of Ontario. Hence in 1912, we took hold of this idea and made it the policy of the Department to conduct Rural School Fairs, and thereby interest and educate to a certain degree the boys and girls who at that time were not receiving so very much attention from other sources. As I have already said it was not our aim to encroach upon the territory of the school. While they are termed School Fairs they are so called because the school of the community is the center of organization, and as a rule the School Fair is held on the school ground, though not necessarily so. It