UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OU_152620

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No. 379.1 B42/A82c Accession No. 18474

Author Ashby, M. K.

Title Country School.

This book should be returned on or before the date last marked below.

THE
Country
SCHOOL

ITS PRACTICE
and
PROBLEMS

By
M. K. ASHBY

LONDON
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
HUMPHREY MILFORD
1929

'How shall he become wise that holdeth the plough?'

'Hast any philosophy in thee, Shepherd?'

Printed in Great Britain

PREFACE

MUCH is written about rural elementary education, of which remarkably little is by those who have taught in the schools. The point of view of members of education committees, of inspectors, of administrators, and of farmers has been more often presented than that of the person who teaches the children.

The following chapters are the result of six years' work in rural schools (including by a series of happy chances the teaching of pupils of every age from three to eighteen) and of lifelong dependence on, or practical interest in, the financial results of farming and other rural avocations. They hope, then, to give an intimate, familiar, realistic picture of the schools as the majority of them are at present, and to state the educational problems that await solution with a full sense of their relation to the economic and social conditions of the country-side, and above all to the social and historical background of the children, and to their probable destinies.

Farming is at the moment a depressed industry; questions of ways and means for improved country schooling are exceptionally difficult, and yet the need of the industry for trained, intelligent, and adaptable recruits was never so great. Hence the rural community tends to criticize the school without seeing its way to expand its opportunities or to offer it practical encouragement. The industry needs all the help it can get and pressure is put

upon the schools, which are themselves indirectly dependent upon agriculture, to make contributions to the solution of its problems. That is the aspect of the matter the farmer sees, and that others see through his spectacles.

But agriculture is itself undergoing great changes, and the place of the children in the industry will not be what it has been in the past. Fewer of them may be wanted, and those who go on to the farm in five, ten, or fifteen years' time may be called upon to fulfil functions differing greatly from those of even their recent predecessors. School is as much concerned with those who leave as with those who remain upon the country-side. It is also true of course that the teacher is not concerned, even primarily, much less exclusively, with the child as wage-earner. There are his functions as neighbour and playfellow, as brother and parent, as villager and Englishman to consider, beside his being as eternal soul, in whatever sense that term may be accepted. But in these chapters the value of material goods to rural children is given a high place.

> Thine eyes shall desire
> Grace and beauty
> And *above both the green blade of corn.*

It is true indeed of our children that they are made for knowledge and have humankind's joy in beauty, but their supreme immediate need is the 'green blade'—economic opportunity. The farm-worker's wage does not provide, never has provided, the material basis of a good life. For many youths of this class the attaining

of the full local minimum wage is the peak of life. There are no rewards for skill, of money or position, in many districts; the dependence of labourers upon employers and the chances of unemployment render their 'local habitation' insecure and their low wage makes public office in anything but friendly society or trade union almost impossible. They are thus cut off from the great satisfaction of public estimation. This is the children's problem.

The farmer's problem is that of making his business support his family and meet the reasonable demands of his employees (who are his fellow farm-workers), and of the community, upon it.

It is obvious that neither labourers' nor farmers' problems are properly those of the elementary or primary teacher, because they are insoluble by the school. Nevertheless school may be able to make contributions both to agriculture and to the economic life of its pupils. Farm-workers and farmers pay a certain toll to education and are entitled to look hopefully and even critically at it. Indeed, lay critics are not wanting nor is there any thought here of disarming criticism, but rather of arming it with keener, finer implements—not weapons, for the field, though full of difficulties, contains no personal enemies. It is possible that one of the teacher's handicaps may be himself, but he is not morally at fault; he cannot at will improve the schools. The latter are the scene of conscientiousness and persistent public-spirited effort not paralleled elsewhere in any large class of persons, so far as my experience goes. But the conditions of

the work are often poor. These are provided in part by the teacher's critics, who are in part his employers, and these—buildings and playgrounds, the children's physical condition, the school's need for public notice and encouragement—should have a special interest for the lay and semi-expert public.

With agriculture in straits the provision of the conditions of efficient education must be a difficult matter. It is the more necessary that they shall be clearly understood by all those concerned so that there shall be the maximum co-operation to obtain them.

Most of the lay criticism of rural education has been directed, not to the conditions of school life, but to the subjects of instruction. One of the strongest impressions I have received from my visits to schools is that discussion of the curriculum looms too large. The rural bias is not as important as Jack's or Jenny's bias. It is the teacher's work to discover the natural powers of the individual and give them the greatest possible opportunity. The power to cater effectually for the individual comes only of knowledge of psychology and of educational method.

It may be that this will not be an easily accepted conclusion with some of my readers. The rural school shares the charm of the country-side. As thoughtful people fly to the country to renew their contact with the bases of life, to test their ideas and refresh their minds by the sight of an obviously satisfying life on farms and in gardens, so the country school, reared upon village economy, seems to offer a field for the applica-

tion of a simple and sound philosophy of life. 'The country child', thinks the charmed urban or academic visitor, 'should be brought into contact with his rich environment—the very environment which has given, and will give us, life. His future occupation of tilling the land is one of man's fundamental and original occupations, and in spite of all developments and complexities it is still in some sense his "natural" one. Adam was a gardener and Abraham a shepherd and stock-breeder. The life of farmer and shepherd gave the Old Testament its background, the New its illustrations; farms surrounded the Greek cities; estates produced the English gentleman. Agriculture feeds the world; it is compatible with a thoughtful life; it calls for skill. What can be better than to make school life simply a preliminary to it?'. If that were all, then the following chapters would be unnecessary. The rural school would be, instead, one among suitable subjects for a new *Georgics*. It would be perhaps like Fragonard's delightful picture of a school, where the children are a happy family, learning in the intervals of other occupations. The teacher cuts slices from a huge loaf, feeding while she instructs her children; one child plays with the cat, other children count their marbles; the alphabet is written up large on a black-board, but mere letters are kept in their place; the charming urchin nearest the board has his back to it. There is nothing formal, scarcely anything specialized about that delightful dame's school. It is the simplicity of some of the suggestions for the reform of the schools that brings that picture to mind. If only

teachers *would*, our critics seem to think, the rural schools could be idyllic. All that they suggest is that the children should learn the simple fundamental things such as personal cleanliness, good manners; should know the flowers and trees of their district, and be taken to see ploughing and to talk with farmers. A simple curriculum and time-table appear to them sufficient. The children will be taught in the early morning to be good, before 11 to sum and read, and at 12 noon be sent home as missionaries in matters of hygiene; the afternoons will be spent in learning to use their hands, to be craftsmen in wood and housewives well grounded in sewing and cookery. There are people experienced in teaching, in other spheres than the elementary school, who dream of retiring full of years and wisdom, but not of strength, to attempt this task.

How beautiful a life there would be for a teacher if only the children could by magic, even the magic of a life devoted, be made graciously mannered, clean, intelligent, and full of the small practical abilities that please parents and recommend the pupils to employers. But even devoted teachers cannot at present do it. Many a school that has been and is the very apple of its head teacher's eye could never strike our critics as being the result of close and deep thinking upon education. The spirit is willing, sometimes exercised to its utmost, but: This book consists of the buts.

The difficulties will not all be overcome by expertness on the part of the teacher, but when everything else is done great psychological problems will remain. Econo-

mical use of the children's time and the ratepayers' money can only be made by teachers who can tackle these problems of the mind.

Educational experiment and theory have made great strides of late. Do, can, the rural schools keep pace with these developments? Our national need of an alert, adaptable peasantry on the one hand and the crying needs of the children in the face of a complicated environment and an impoverished country on the other are such that a gap between our educational knowledge and our practice must be regarded as calamitous, at any rate in so far as it can be bridged by the efforts of those who have a duty to the schools.

The two main conclusions of this book have now emerged: that what will do most for the pupils of rural schools are economic opportunity for themselves and professional knowledge on the part of teachers.

In form, a good deal of what follows is simply an account of my journeys through schools. Such an account, if a just one, could obviously be of service to administrators, critics, and teachers. If any of this seem to my fellow teachers critical of work being done or to underestimate the numbers of schools whose work is adequately meeting all the main problems, I can but remind them that the only object of such a book as this is the improvement of the schools most in need of assistance.

I do not, however, expect this type of criticism from keen and responsible rural head teachers. Much of what is said has been gathered from them. I count many

friends among them who feel that their work is hampered precisely because the public do not realize just where prevailing conditions make weakness inevitable. But should any shortcomings of my work have the effect of provoking fellow rural teachers to take up their pens that adventitious success would redeem my faults. We are far too inarticulate. The letters to *The Times*, the schemes for rural bias, the charming descriptive articles in weeklies and quarterlies are not in the main by teachers who have done ten years' service in the schools, as indeed this book is not. Yet the need to 'educate our masters', committees, and administrators, in an understanding of the detail of school life and what is possible in it, is acute.

In addition to help from teachers, the book owes much to Arthur W. Ashby, and still more to Margaret Phillips. Professor Helen Wodehouse very kindly read the first draft. Agnes Everness has given me practical help without which I might have shirked its writing. I have to acknowledge the kind permission of the editors of *The Times Educational Supplement* and *The Countryman* to reprint some parts of Chapters IV and V. Finally, the book is dedicated to the memory of my father, to whom his children owe, among a thousand things, their interest in rural affairs, and their conception of the good countryman.

M. K. A.

SHENINGTON, *August* 1928.

CONTENTS

PREFACE . . . . . *Page* iii

I. SOME TYPICAL SCHOOLS . . . . . *Page* 1

Origin and plan of the book. Definition of rural school. Various aspects of rural school problem, sociological and educational. Some typical schools.

II. THE HISTORY OF THE RURAL SCHOOL . *Page* 25

Purpose of the chapter. General character of rural school history. Nineteenth-century attitude to children and primary education. Pre-nineteenth-century schools. Chantry schools. The Church's function. Charity schools. Early nineteenth-century charity and dame schools. Schoolmasters; their quality, social position, salaries Dame schools. Charity schools. Early Sunday schools. National and Parochial schools. Their aims. Liberal element. Achievement of nineteenth-century schools. Finances. Salaries of teachers. Objections to state aid. Staffing of schools. Pupil teachers. A schoolmistress of the time. The Revised Code and Acts of 1870 and 1902. Coming of the School Boards. The first trained teachers; their social position and housing. A typical country school in 1873. Village school under Revised Code. Attendance problems. Discipline and routine. Curriculum. Consequences of 'payment by results'. Unpopularity of schools. Survey of teaching methods under Revised Code. Equipment of schools 1870–1902. Act of 1902 and its effects on rural education.

III. SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND THEIR RELATION TO REORGANIZATION . . . . . *Page* 76

Unsatisfactory nature of many rural school buildings. Connexion of problem of buildings with problem of religious education. Attitude of parents. Historical origin of problem. Examples of defective school premises. Influence of buildings on methods of teaching. An acceptable building. School buildings of minimum quality. A suggested standard for school buildings. Relation of problems of buildings and religious education to that of reorganization. The case for centralization, educational and financial. Objections to it. Necessity for provision of meals, conveyance of pupils. Loss to small villages. Principles of approach to related problems of school buildings and religious education.

IV. CURRICULUM AND METHODS TO-DAY . . *Page* 105

Changes in Code since 1862; in curriculum; in atmosphere; in methods. Survey of current curriculum and methods. Notes on some special difficulties; changes of staff; lay criticism. Practice in the junior school. The teachers' material: the pupils. Supplementary teachers. Conditions in infants' classes. Work of uncertificated teachers; current teaching methods. The junior standards; current teaching methods. The uncertificated teacher. Practice in the senior standards. Staffing. Small schools under women head teachers. Advantages and disadvantages of small schools. The larger schools; staffing; possibility of specialization; possible effects of reorganization.

V. THE COUNTRY CHILD . . . . . *Page* 140

Country types of personality in literature. Our lack of knowledge of country child. Regional variation of characteristics of country children. Types of villages: large open village; village of large farms; village of numerous market gardens or small holdings; village of mixed population. Physique of rural children. Wages of farm-workers. Farm-workers' budgets. Relation of economic facts to school life. Housing. Intelligence of children. Connexion between methods of teaching and children's physique. Interests and knowledge of rural children. Girls in relation to rural environment. The aesthetic response of country children to natural scenery, &c. Destinies of country children. The farmer's child.

VI. THE RURAL BIAS AND THE CURRICULUM *Page* 177

Trend of lay criticism. Use of the rural environment. Two types of rural bias: by agricultural instruction; by teaching of rural lore. Value of environmental reference in all subjects. Importance of professional bias in teacher. Local reference in geography, history, arithmetic Teaching on treatment of animals; of rural biography. Speech training for rural children. Value of specialization by teachers. Minor suggestions.

VII. THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL METHOD . *Page* 201

Need for fundamental reform in the life of the school. An experiment. Schools that miss fire. Method in infant and junior classes; importance of sense experience and vocabulary. Need of rural basis of teaching for young children. Teaching of reading and arithmetic. Need for general knowledge. The kind of handwork needed. An exemplary school.

VIII. THE RURAL TEACHER AND HIS TRAINING . *Page* 220

Importance of the teacher. The rural teacher of the recent past. Pupil-teachership. The teacher and the reorganized schools. Types of rural teacher of to-day; certificated teachers. Supplementary teachers; uncertificated teachers. Qualifications desirable in head teachers. Uncertificated teachers; supplementary training for; their career. The 'new' rural pupil-teacher. Dangers of segregation of rural teachers. Specific training of teachers for rural work. Suggestions for a 'Third-Year' Course. Reorganization and women in country schools. Methods of helping existing staffs.

IX. THE EDUCATION OF THE COUNTRY ADOLESCENT *Page* 250

Nature of the problem. Characteristics of country adolescents. Existing provision. Type of teacher required. Subjects and methods of teaching. Special needs of girls. Residential courses. Opportunity for the Church. Need of provision for athletics. Need of economic opportunity.

I

SOME TYPICAL SCHOOLS

RURAL schooling is not a subject that lends itself to a strictly logical ordering. It is impossible to evolve neat theories from the facts. The subject is so rich in particularity and variety, touches upon so many worlds, that intimate and detailed knowledge is necessary to any one who has to make practical decisions concerning it. For this reason I have retained the order in which the chapters were first written instead of attempting a logical scheme.

The genesis of the book was as follows: After a period of working in rural schools in a not very intimate capacity I left them and lived in an industrial area where a blade of grass was literally a rarity, and was in close touch for a period also with the activities of a university, my thoughts thus being far removed from the primary education of rustic children. Then returning to rural work I saw things already familiar with new eyes. There followed a period of extraordinary interest when I toured schools like a foreigner, enjoying whatever I saw because of all the new relations in which I saw facts already well known. To this phase belongs the present chapter.

It records my impressions of the schools as such, largely without classification. Some of the facts are odd and surprising, and seem strangely unrelated to modern life and thought and standards; apart from such facts there is a strong special flavour as it were about rural schools. From wonderings as to how these arose came Chapter II, 'The History of the Rural School'.

As one travels abroad for experience or amusement, one loses one's first high degree of impressionability, because one's practical and purposeful self awakes and one begins to note things as admirable or regrettable by one's own previous standards. In the case of travels through rural schools it must be admitted that one early notes a striking handicap. This lies in what we may call their major equipment—their buildings and grounds. Hence arose Chapter III, 'School Buildings and Reorganization'. After pondering on the stone-and-mortar and other circumstances of the schools, one's mind was free to consider the most important question: How are they now discharging their special function? Chapter IV, 'Curriculum and Methods To-day', consists of matter relevant to this question.

At Chapter V begins what might be called the second part of the book, for we begin definitely to ask what are the possible future attainments of the schools. The raw materials of the school's work are considered in 'The Country Child'. There follows naturally after this some reflection upon suggested ways of dealing with the raw material (Chapter VI, 'The Rural Bias and the Curriculum', and Chapter VII, 'The Importance of School Method'), and upon what sort of qualifications best help a person to understand and treat it (Chapter VIII, 'The Rural Teacher'). Lastly come a few notes on a problem closely allied to that with which the main part of the book deals—'The Education of the Country Adolescent' (Chapter IX).

The descriptions in this chapter are pictures the details of which are painted 'from nature' and not in the studio; but each is a composite picture, not true to any individual school, except in some cases where

the removal of the head teacher has made the picture retrospective. The names here, as throughout the book, are pure inventions, and the details disguised; yet the pictures are essentially true. There are scores of schools similar in every important respect to these; it would be easy to multiply examples from the four counties which have provided the material for this book.

It is possibly a necessary assertion that these schools are none of them in exceptionally remote spots. The counties best known to me are all well in the way of traffic. I have seen some extremely remote, as well as other exceptionally circumstanced schools, but I have omitted to describe them. Yet remoteness or otherwise is not synonymous with backwardness or advanced condition: one of the most difficult and in some ways least fortunate schools in my experience lay (its conditions are now somewhat improved, and with them doubtless the education it is able to give) but a short walk across fields from a university town; and perhaps the most old-fashioned school in my experience was one I saw some years ago within a few miles of Birmingham.

Few schools could be described with strict accuracy as 'purely rural'. A good proportion of the children always leave the rural environment and a non-rural element has of late been introduced into many schools through the avocations of some parents who work in local factories or mines, or cycle to towns. The distinctively rural character is given to a school, not by green environs, but by the employment of the children's parents in agriculture, by the rural history and background of the inhabitants of the village and of the school as a corporate entity.

Given this background, schools will be found to pre-

sent similar problems all England over. Yet within this similarity great differences will also be found. In Chapter V are distinguished several types of villages which differ in their economic and historical circumstances. In these villages the schools are different too. Many problems of rural education have a sociological or historical aspect. Of these may be mentioned for example the influence on the schools of the children's physique and mental preparation for school life and certain aspects of what is called the religious problem. There are other difficulties or factors calling for consideration and action, of what may be called an educational nature—as for example the small size of many schools. Then sociological and educational problems are combined in financial difficulties, in the imperfect training of teachers, in the sufficiency of the materials and furniture provided for the use of scholars.

These problems, or aspects of the whole problem of rural education, are mentioned as samples of points that naturally occur to one in a study of rural schools, but it is not proposed to illustrate them directly from the sample batch of schools here described. No morals will be deliberately pointed, but the reader may take his choice of innumerable ones, inferring that large schools are better than small, or small than large, that the unqualified teachers of obsolescent régimes are a drag upon the schools, or that the wind of virtue and of skill blows where it listeth—sometimes over the comparatively unqualified; that the policy of 'beheading' small schools and concentrating the senior classes in district schools is to be approved for this reason or condemned for that; that local managers fail to get an educational point of view and are even negligent, or that they provide a

necessary and comfortable link between school and parents. All these points must be discussed upon a basis of generalizations about the schools. But the samples here cursorily exhibited may serve to remind us of the high degree of individuality in the school and of the uselessness of putting all our hopes for rural education upon any single prescription.

South Farrington School (its real name is somewhat different) is a 'fortunate-unfortunate' one. Few suffer some of its misfortunes and fewer still enjoy its luck in one or two directions. The village lies a mile and a half west of a great trunk road and some eight miles from a town. The carrier's cart (now motor-driven) goes to town on two days a week, and it is possible to go by bus on the high road on two other days of the week, if you can walk the mile and a half to meet it and get home from it again. Thus if you have time and a little money, or a bicycle and plenty of strength, you may get to shops and cinemas, or whatever your magnet may be, fairly frequently. But if you are poor you are as much confined to your village as you have been these thirty years.

The land is divided into four large farms, one of which is owned by a fruit-growing and jam-manufacturing firm. The County Council are just now buying a few acres for small holdings, by exercise of their prerogative and having failed to get them by negotiation. At present the men of the village are almost all employed on the farms; a number of girls ride daily to the jam-factory, and the women (the mothers) work on the fruit farms and ordinary farms in harvest, and at other times of urgency.

The method of finding the school is, as usual, to make for the church tower and then look for something faintly

resembling a church nestling near. You might be quite favourably impressed by the building but for an old sun-blind flapping in the wind (managers seem to find it difficult, almost always, to get minor repairs done; they have no conception, often, of the importance to a school of windows that can be easily opened or a door that can be shut without banging). Three class-rooms and two cloak-rooms make the school building; two uncertificated women teachers and one certificated head master the staff. The head master, my diary says, 'is clearly a man of refinement and very high standards for his work'. The luck of the school lies, or lay when I first knew it, in its staff, in its possession of a class-room for each teacher, and in the manageable numbers of the children.

'The babies of under 7 number only 13 and they have a room which is genuinely large enough. Some of the space is used for a cooking-stove for an evening class, and some for storing models made by the big boys. Still, there is room yet for games, for playing with toys, for walking to and fro without being a source of irritation and a hindrance to work. And these privileges are allowed. A wet playtime affords a merry and domestic scene, dolls and their houses, trains, and balls and bricks come literally into play, and every afternoon, wet or fine, there are singing-games and dancing.'

Even the cooking-stove has its uses—and the room its disadvantages.

'The temperature of the room this morning', says my diary, 'was 32° F. and the teacher says this is not infrequent. This afternoon again the room grew acutely cold, but the cooking-stove was lighted before the cold grew intolerable.'

Two of the school fire-places are new, but the winter-temperature problem is not solved.

Another winter problem of a physical nature is that of how to get exercise for the children in school hours. The playground is an archipelago of muddy water and gravel islands. 'There have been no physical exercises for ten days.' The middle room (Standards I, II, and III) is fortunate enough to have chairs and tables, and the stranger may say, 'Can't you pile these one upon another and drill in the class-room?' This cannot be done often because of the noise made and the time and energy required—energy to bear the noise and to manage boys who might damage tables if not controlled. The school is divided by means of light wood-and-glass partitions, so that always one class must consider another in the methods of work it adopts. Of the two rooms for the 'Standards' both are small, and one well lighted. The other, the head master's room, is lighted from one end only and is full of very long backless desks, so that the only reasonable path from one spot to another is often over the tops of the desks. As his children are not very young and he believes in a largely literary education, which can be acquired in a sitting- and leaning-forward position, the head master does not make a difficulty of these. The school does afford woodwork lessons, we must add, but the tables are kept in the boys' cloak-room, where the woodworkers are very cramped but nevertheless employ themselves quite happily and profitably.

At the time when I visited the school it was well staffed. The head master was a lover of literature and of children, well versed in methods of teaching, and an expert on text-books. If the method of the uncertificated teachers was sometimes extremely wasteful of the children's time, the teachers themselves were so kindly

and conscientious and willing to learn that the children fared happily and learnt a good deal. Occasionally, as with the teaching of sewing, there was real efficiency. The children were taught construction of garments from general principles, and were made enthusiastic about sewing by making things of a well-judged degree of difficulty for themselves or their homes. In some other subjects the head master had made schemes that were also tractates on method, and gave his assistants detailed help. (In this he was a great exception.)

Here we have a picture of a very ordinary country school, comparatively fortunate in building, and with a young, keen, able head master. But there its good fortune ends. Of the sixty children a large proportion are under-nourished, both among the infants and the older boys. In some cases this is clear at a glance. That it is a rather general condition one learns gradually. One sees the schoolmaster weighing boys and he remarks on the rate at which they gain in weight. One has put on only $2\frac{1}{2}$ lb. in two years, and another only $5\frac{1}{2}$ lb. During playtime one of the assistants goes round the school with the jar of cod-liver oil and malt which is provided by the Education Committee and serves out spoonfuls to five or six children. Whenever a child scratches himself a festering sore follows. So constantly did the children come with ill-dressed and painful sores that it became a matter of routine for a child who had hurt himself at all to be sent into the schoolhouse to have his wound bathed in boracic lotion by the head master's wife.

The sulkiness and quarrelsomeness of the children are the despair of the head teacher. Mr. and Mrs. *X*, as we may call the head master and his wife, say that this

state of things is due largely to unsuitable feeding; the people sell their green vegetables and buy quantities of bread. (There is a cookery class in the school one evening a week, but it is attended only by young girls, not by any of the mothers. It is taught, too, by a rather young lady who has little idea of the limitations of cottage economy.) The effects of under-nourishment are most clearly seen in the little ones and the children in the upper standards. (Several teachers have commented upon this to me. When appetites get large, children may still only have their 'share'. One thoughtful head mistress wishes her children could leave at thirteen, because the parents cannot feed them after that age.)

Mentally the children in South Farrington School vary extremely. The big girls are dull, but some of the boys have ability. There is one deficient child who cannot at the age of 10 take seven from nine. The children bring no keenness to school, though now and then they can be stirred to work hard at sewing or carpentry, or to love a poem, and the younger ones are almost excited by a geographical argument as to how, say, given the climate and other conditions, certain people will earn their living. There is one boy who is decidedly, says Mr. *X*, 'too good to go on the land'. One demurs to this idea, but he says, 'But a labourer is a serf here. If he dares turn leader here he'll get the sack from the farms and will have to go to B. for employment. He's too good for that treatment.' The lad stands no chance even of a trade scholarship. If he obtained one he could not hold it. Already he is working before and after school and has done so for some time, although this fact has been reported to the proper quarter.

I have spoken of the staff when I first knew the

school. Shortly after that time one of the assistants left. A supply teacher was sent who satisfied the head master and who applied to the vicar, who was both correspondent and chairman of the managers of this Church school, to be permanently appointed. He gave her an interview and asked her several questions, among which was 'I suppose you would help in the Sunday School?' She replied that she wished to be able to go home at week-ends. Her application seemed to go no farther and she was sent 'on supply' to another school. After that the school was without an assistant for months. Another suitable candidate was known to suffer the fate described above. The schoolmaster reminded the vicar (and correspondent) of his needs and was told he 'ought to be able to manage', and—the children being quiet—that 'they seemed to be going on all right'. Eventually the young and keen schoolmaster left the school and went to a small town on the other side of England, shaking the dust of South Farrington from his shoes. He had been over-sensitive to the powers that were in that village, but who will blame him? A miserably small schoolhouse of two bedrooms and one draughty sitting-room did nothing to keep him. Nor did the attitude of the managers; there were continual allusions to the cost of the school and critical remarks as to the ambitiousness of the curriculum, unbalanced—until too late—by any word of appreciation.

Sharpton School lies across the trunk road to the east of South Farrington and a few miles farther from a large town, but is a far larger village. Its school consists—at the end of the school year—of some 160 children. Recently a neighbouring school has been beheaded and the children of eleven and over sent to Sharpton

School. The building is comely enough; the infants and Standards I and II are well housed, but the eighty older children are all in one large room, with only a rather ineffective curtain between the two classes into which they are divided. The windows of the school, though numerous, are small, and need all to be open in warm weather. This is very unfortunate, as the lavatories are just outside the windows on one side, both of the senior school and of the infants' room, and in summer 'the smell is sometimes intolerable and we have to shut all windows on that side'. It is a Church school with a small endowment, and twenty years ago the managers spent a good deal of money on adding to the building. But now they cannot afford the necessary alterations to make it satisfactory as a senior school, or presumably to make it hygienic.

'The Vicar is Chairman of the Trustees, and feels it somewhat of a "hardship that his incumbency carries with it this harassing post." He cares for the school, teaches in it regularly, is a friend to the teachers, and would "compromise to any extent" to get local peace from the controversy about buildings, though he greatly fears that if no religious institutions were directly concerned with the schools, religious teaching would cease to be given.'

This school is interesting as a school with a 'senior' or post-primary department. One wonders how long the children from Lower Sharpton will have to walk four miles a day, wet or fine, and eat sandwich dinners without any supervision, for the sake of the education afforded by this school. Not that it is bad; but is it better than they received before? In the matter of hygiene the children have lost. Undoubtedly there will be wet feet, and sandwiches do not make a good basis

for resistance to colds; nor are children the better for spending a dinner-time of an hour and a half or two hours every day in unselected company of their own age, for the manners and conversation of village children vary remarkably.

Will their formal, more intellectual education be much better? They have been taught hitherto by a conscientious woman teacher who has fed them on plenty of good books, in a beautiful little school, and who has kept her information and her methods up to date. She had to teach children of from ten to fourteen and the handwork at any rate must have been too rudimentary for the capacity of the oldest children. Now the boys have lost the folk-dancing they did with her and gained carpentry in the last year or two.

Sharpton School has a tiny woodwork-room where eight boys can work. While the schoolmaster teaches these his wife is left with eighty children in her charge, fifty of whom are girls learning to sew. The head master is a man of greater intellectual capacity than the woman whose charge the Upper Sharpton children have left.

'The school evidently does or has done nature study and local geography with keenness; the last Inspector's report was remarkably pleasing. The schoolmaster's speech and manner are no evidence of his value.'

The boys will have gained in athletic stimulus, as the school takes part in the tests of the Schools Athletic Association. Most of the work in the Upper Standard School, even under the present hard conditions, reaches a good standard. Of the sewing, for example, my diary says:

'The schoolmaster's wife takes 52 of the girls together for

sewing! The elder girls do good sensible sewing. They are making shirts, pyjamas, babies' frocks, and younger ones hemming towels and making dolls' dresses. Socks have been knitted. Judged by any standard, past or present, the sewing here would be good. The girls enter for sewing competitions and have won valuable prizes several years in succession.'

Another note on the work from my diary says:

'Spent some time with the head master—seeing the card work and wood work, and discussing his methods with older children. These work by themselves and they have a shelf of reference books to use. These books belong to the head master and are just what he happens to have on various subjects—e.g. out-of-date histories, and very modern anthologies of poetry. The Ex 7 children are working through Book 8 of the New Guide Arithmetics—i.e. are beginning Algebra and Geometry.'

Anforth School is representative in the quality of work done of a smaller number of schools than the other types here chosen. Yet it is well to realize that such schools are not uncommon. Drastic action is not possible with regard to them. The worker does according to her lights; the lights of her successor are being decided now in the counsels of administrators.

There are sixteen children here; the schoolroom is of ample size for them, for it was built for forty children. The head mistress of this school began teaching at the age of 15 and is now a grandmother. I do not think she feels at all weary of teaching. Indeed, as she practises it, it is a simple matter. Her time-table has not been changed for twenty years. On it there is no history, no geography (but there is mapping), no literature, no nature. But the children have history and geography readers; the method of using them is to read a chapter,

then learn six or eight lines by heart, and write them out in an exercise book. The children write quite a number of 'compositions', but not even the fourteen-year-old children use a single compound sentence. Arithmetic is learnt from cards of sums concerned almost wholly with processes. 'Add so many thousands to the difference between two other huge numbers.' There are no practical sums. But the school's handwork is the most remarkable. All the children learn to make paper flowers. The whole of Friday afternoon the children spend knitting. Knitting, except when carefully taught, is a narcotic rather than an occupation; but knitting socks in coarse old knitting cotton which no one could possibly wear, as two boys were doing, is a penance. I asked the children who would wear the stockings they were knitting? Themselves? 'No,' was the proud answer; 'Mother buys ours.' I was much struck at this school by my 'social position' as a teacher. The head mistress had fallen ill and the school had been closed for a week on this account. I volunteered to take charge for a few days, riding some ten miles on a push bicycle on Monday morning. I arrived a few minutes late to find that prayers had been taken by the vicar, who grumbled 'I thought you would have been here earlier than this'. I asked him where I could get a bed, a dinner, light refreshments, but he could tell me nothing and made no effort for me. Neither from him nor from any one did I receive any slightest courtesy. Yet supply teaching is a poor job and one that every mother must be glad to have done. A supply chimney sweep would, I think, be taken less as a matter of course.

The school was not without its charms. There were a few indoor games for wet days; a box of beautiful

books of legends from the County Library which the children were allowed to read once a week; and the schoolmistress may have been a potential musician—at all events the children knew one or two beautiful tunes from *Hymns of the Kingdom*, which has been recommended to the schools by the Director of Education. The children were intelligent and friendly; and though their number included one rough family of an almost incredible background (my bedroom window in the school cleaner's house looked down upon their back door) they were kept—poor things—admirably in check by the fourteen-year-old girls. It was an exquisite pleasure to tell these children a story, to give them amusing things to draw, to give them strenuous exercises and games; their minds were unawakened but just as much unspoiled.

East Redway School has a woman head teacher. It consists of about fifty children, infants and Standard I under a young uncertificated teacher, and the rest with the head. It is a Church school in bad repair, both dark and very difficult to keep ventilated. The head teacher is certificated but not trained, and the uncertificated teacher's schooling ceased at 14. Yet here is spiritual air the most cultured person could breath with comfort, and a skilled and learned educationist could add to his knowledge from the stores of digested experience of these two. There are no pronounced modern methods either of teaching or discipline, but there are the age-old methods of those who want to learn. The whole school makes a hobby of nature study by the simple method of bringing natural objects and naming them; for geography there are guide books, pictures, and maps of many countries patiently collected from their official agencies

and travelling friends. Sewing and basket-work are practical and modern. Even the babies had caught the thirst for work and might be seen learning letters with their little fists clenched. The tinies went a little too far, I thought, and, as it was within my province, I said so.

How is it that this school can get what so few do—this simple regard for school and what is learnt there, this atmosphere of faith in people, in the future? I do not know. Both the teachers are single women and the school is their life. They look for no promotion, no public recognition; they work hard, day and evening, year in and year out; and they have a certain reward. Also I suspect they have a good ally in the Salvation Army, to which—a rare thing in a remote village—many of the children's parents belong. But the Army spoils the children's singing voices. No crown without a cross.

Thellwall School is one of the largest in its county. There are about 200 pupils in a building of various dates, the last of which is 1899. There are two rooms each containing two classes, and three classes have a room each. It is a very homely building in more senses than one; there has been no attempt at an ecclesiastical style of architecture, so that the windows are low and numerous and there are no dark corners; lighting is good in all but one room. It is not, however, a good building; one room has no access to the playground except through other rooms, and there is nowhere, except in one of the infants' rooms, any indoor space for drill or other physical activity. It does not lend itself specially to educational purposes; it is far too crowded to allow of much choice of work or method; still, it might be described as a decent building. The boys' playground too is of fair size; in winter it is

sopping wet although it is well gravelled, but in summer, though it must be used for ordinary playtimes, it is supplemented by the use of a field in the dinner hour and for organized games. But the girls' and infants' playground is a mere gravelled passage, with the school on one side and a high wall on the other, and is full of dust on a dry day when the children are playing. The original school premises here—building, playground, and schoolhouse—have a prison-like exterior; there was not a blade of grass to be seen in them, and the children playing on the gravel inside the iron railings looked like monkeys in a cage. Now, however, a touch of grace has been given to them by the addition of a handwork-room and a good school garden. The last is quite beautiful, with turf paths, some fir-trees, and small flower borders with varied flowers. It has a view of a meadow with fine grass and timber and a rounded hill crowned with a great medieval castle closing the view. The garden contains fruit trees, a mushroom bed, and manure experiment plots. There are small flower gardens for all the lower classes, and for the tinies banks of rough grass. The garden is used for lessons and play in summer, and would be used more but for the fact that two of the classes of young children cannot reach it without disturbing other classes.

The handwork-room is a 'hut' which is used for carpentry and cooking. Here the eldest boys are sometimes allowed to work in quiet without supervision and for long periods, which is impossible anywhere else in the school. The curriculum here, it is already clear, includes gardening (with experimental work), carpentry, and cookery, carried out under very fair conditions. A few children attend this school from a neighbouring

small village, and it may be taken as affording the minimum advantages that a senior school should offer. There is a largish staff—three Certificated teachers, four Uncertificated, and one Supplementary—all able people and keen on their work. The head master is a man of winning personality, with an easy grace of both mind and manner. And yet there is very little pulling together in the school. Two classes are to be for the whole year in the hands of girls who are just out of their student-teacher year. The teaching of various subjects is never discussed among the teachers; and there is some dissatisfaction in the infants' department because it is felt that the head master states his expectations of the children though he knows nothing of infant psychology or method.

The school does not achieve any very high degree of activity or happiness for the children. The cane is still used pretty frequently, and the children's word is not, perhaps one should say cannot be, relied upon in quite ordinary cases. Having acted once or twice as a temporary head teacher, I came to the conclusion that any woman put temporarily in charge of the school would find herself baited and defied. School life is barely tolerated by at the least a large majority of the boys. Yet the children are given many pleasures. There is a good amount of handwork, very fair singing lessons, readings from exciting books, school festivals—but in spite of all these the boys, and probably girls too, live with one eye on their last school day.

This is not the place to look for the reason for this; but one reason stares us in the face. The school is full of ancient long desks. From the day they enter school to the day they leave the children's limbs are cramped,

their flesh irritated, and movement horribly restricted for a good part of most days. This alone would account for a considerable degree of subconscious hatred of school.

The conditions of the village may have something to do with the children's attitude. Thellwall is very isolated; it is fifteen miles from a town of any size or attractions. It has no regular service of buses in any direction; the fare by rail to the nearest town is four shillings return, except on Saturdays. The head master says that twenty years ago brickbats would be thrown at unattractive-looking strangers, and that the homes are still very rough, swear-words being a large component of many of the children's home vocabularies. But on the other hand the village seems to a casual observer full of activities. There are tennis and bowls, cricket and football clubs; a flower show; friendly societies; Hospital Sunday is a well-supported institution, and there is a fairly good Women's Institute.

Village schools are not without their humours. Meggleton is a Church school with an elderly head mistress of diminutive stature but royal port. She rules the school by dint of impressiveness, personal and social. She has established herself as a friend of a local titled family, addresses her staff by their Christian names (both are village women, one quite unqualified and the other with the Preliminary Certificate) and is addressed in her turn by them as 'Miss'. She is careful to maintain her prestige by total abstinence from odd jobs. The disciplinary problem in country schools is often a tough one; but the curious methods here adopted seem successful, perhaps partly because it is a country of large farms and the children are accustomed to rendering the

forms of respect to the parents' employers. (In a neighbouring school one's breath is taken away by surprise when the little girls perform elaborate curtsies, pausing exactly in front of one for the purpose. But it is the only school I know where children are handicapped by the teaching of manners so abnormal.) The Meggleton children are gentle and friendly. There are smiles for every amicable stranger and life is rendered luxurious by their readiness to run errands. The work done here is not uninteresting; the head mistress has a sound conventional taste in literature, and an interest in, if only a vague knowledge of, local history, customs, and speech. The children bring her old books and rare flowers and tell her of their experiences. Though well on in middle age, the head mistress maintains the physical exercises well, and directs and helps with corner-ball and other games. On the other hand the standard the children attain in English composition and reading and drawing is little short of lamentable. Great fellows of 13 can only find enough to write about a holiday to fill about ten lines of an exercise book.

The babies are delicately cared for and gently taught by a devoted but far from clever Supplementary teacher who has failed many times to pass the Preliminary Certificate. She has parents to keep on her small wage, and cannot afford a journal to help her with her work. Still, the infants are in good hands.

Not so the intermediate Standards I, II, and III. The Uncertificated teacher in charge of them is a married woman with a family, the wife of a 'knacker man' and small holder. It would not be possible to say she neglects her school work, for she is never late and seldom away. To put it euphemistically she earns two livings.

She presses on the children to learn by rote, with the result that their minds are muddled and worried. They are 'learning decimals' without a preliminary notion of place value. They are full of jumbled rules about the use of quotation marks, but cannot describe on paper the simplest—or the most interesting—thing. The head mistress's life is somewhat embittered by the presence in her school for the last ten years of this incapable teacher, who has also failed to achieve the respect of her neighbours in the village, and the discipline of whose class has therefore—it follows directly—to be maintained by the head mistress, who has also to un-teach the children what they have learnt for three years.

An interesting school is that of Balmington. It is different from those so far described in being a Council school which began as a British school in 1856. The village is and has long been a stronghold of both non-conformity and fruit-growing. Several sects having joined in the erection of the school, there is no one person with a right to the position of chairman as in the 'National' and Parochial schools. This has been an advantage here, though often it could not be in tiny villages. Responsibility has been distributed and all the managers here take their posts seriously. The school has been and still is, it is said, the only place in the village where all the village will meet. Most of life here revolves round the chapels and church.

The building was from the beginning above the average, being spacious and well lighted; subscribers were building for their own children and probably they were ambitious for them. At any rate even in these days of agricultural and general depression the head teacher says that the people are 'all for getting on'. Though he

knows suburban children well, having taught them for fourteen years, he still asserts that most of his present pupils are intelligent. The builders of the school had no desire to belittle the functions of the teacher; the schoolhouse is as good as the manses in the same village. The school has a small clock-tower, beds of evergreens, and some well-spaced, fine old limes, and how rare are such touches of grace about our rural schools!

Since the school became a Council school, shortly after 1902, some rooms have been divided by screens (in only one room are there two classes now), a woodwork-room built, and the playground concreted and cunningly drained so that only in the worst of weather is it wet. This is the best country playground I have seen. It is not large, but the lane outside is not much used and serves as an extension in good weather. The head master (it is a large school of 225 pupils) has recently come from a London borough to take up this head-ship. He was country born and felt when he first came to this school that he had a new lease of life and energy. (He is a man of some fifty years.) On arriving he made a great effort to get into touch with the children's parents, sending them now and then short typewritten circulars explaining his reasons for certain changes he was making in school, and welcoming them to class-rooms and school gardens. He arranged school prize-givings with speeches from managers and friends and old pupils, thus crystallizing the school's history into tradition.

Mr. *Z* is a man of pluck, and will not be easily discouraged, but I doubt whether he still feels a large fund of freshness at his command. His staff includes one trained Certificated teacher, and he fresh from college.

There are two other Certificated teachers, both born and trained in the village. The upper classes are large and are in the hands of the Certificated teachers. But the whole of the lower school is in the hands of Uncertificated teachers. Ninety infants are starting school life under a senior Uncertificated teacher whose cure—though she does not apply it—for the naughtiness of the children is slapping. Her two assistants (the head master is head of the infants in theory but she in practice) are just out of their student-teacher year and she is not in a position to help them, for she conducts the school as it was conducted when she entered it at 13 or 14 as a pupil-teacher. Consequently the first two classes of infants are wasting half their time, at a cautious computation. There is a cottage 'clothes-basket' full of bricks (the one really generous bit of equipment the infant school boasts) and room to stand and move, but the tinies are kept quiet with about four or five bricks each, sitting in their seats, while the young lady looks up a story from a twenty-years-old book on infant teaching to which she is indebted for all suggestion as to what she can do.

To close with a pleasant picture. The writer had the good fortune to walk one day into a little school of about thirty-five children, in charge of one Certificated teacher and a monitress. The room was hung with hand-made baskets full of blossoming branches of ivy. The mistress received me hospitably but left me to look round alone. She was too busy to talk to me; children were waiting for her. As I looked round it seemed to me that every problem the school presented had been tackled. The room was small, but there was a low bench obviously used for carpentry, and it was clear that the screen, the

medicine chest, a waste-paper box, had been made in school, by the processes known as 'light woodwork'. The boys were handling tools and using ingenuity. Girls had sewn and decorated curtains; small children had papered the screen with marvellous bright cuttings.

The children were working with concentration, the mistress sitting beside one of them helping to solve some problem. The apparatus in use by the small class of infants showed that the monitress was working under skilled direction. The head mistress had found that unless considerable stimulus was applied the children's general knowledge was too little to provide a good background for school work, so she had tried many devices for widening their view. For the time being she was setting a number of questions each week to which the children found the answers by any means they liked in the course of the week. Books and parents and newspapers were called on to help solve the problems.

One could write of the folk-dancing taught, the organization of the meal for those who stay to dinner, of the first-aid provided, and so on, but those who know most of school life would perhaps find the quality of English work done the most reassuring of all. All the children of the upper classes were writing 'compositions' and letters on subjects selected by themselves, after some days' notice, from a fairly long list. They were of good length, well and freely expressed, with observation of all the simpler rules of written composition. This school is in a 'good' village which contains tradesmen and skilled artisans, but even so its achievements seem to suggest that the right teachers well equipped may yet find sound intelligence in a good proportion of rural pupils. That is a point on which more light is required.

The teacher here is certificated but not college trained. But she has taught in London schools and knows the standard of work obtained there; she has attended many classes both in the subjects appearing in her school time-table and in the theory of education. She is a countrywoman teaching in her own district, but she has been away from it long enough to have much to give it with which it could not have supplied her.

II

THE HISTORY OF THE RURAL SCHOOL

None too learned but nobly bold
Into the fight went our fathers of old.—KIPLING.

In fact we rule a National School;
The duties are dull but we're not complaining.—W. S. GILBERT.

When all is said, and all is done
Concerning all things, both more and less,
Yet like to the school none under the sun
Bringeth to children so much heaviness.—*The Disobedient Child* (Morality Play).

Read (for read you can) . . . —GRAY'S *Elegy*.

THE main purpose of this chapter is to link the present condition of the schools with the past in so far as it still binds us. It is not the work of an historian; much of it has been gathered in conversation in schools and villages. It embodies what may be called the live history of the typical rural school, the history which is current as legend and lore and influences the present condition and repute of the school. The main sections deal with the school in the nineteenth century, though I have not been able to resist the temptation to make some notes on what I know of village education in the previous centuries. Perhaps soon some leisured student will

produce the scholarly monograph for which plentiful material exists.

The chapter is to have four sections: pre-nineteenth-century schools; the early nineteenth-century charity and dame schools; the National and Parochial schools to 1862; finally, the Revised Code and the Education Acts of 1870 and 1902.

To the normal eye the rural elementary school has a very fustian, not to say ignoble, past. There is a difference between working beneath the portraits, in the ethos, of predecessors whose good qualities have been recognized and rewarded, and working in an institution whose work and personnel have never seemed worthy of commemoration to the public that it serves. How empty our schools are of any sign of a noble past is a matter to be pondered. On seeing, one day, a mural tablet in a school, specifically praising the work of a one-time teacher, I realized that though I had seen portraits of inspectors and rectors and royal persons in schools I had never seen before so much as a framed photograph of a teacher. The beginnings of our present system of elementary education, perhaps especially in regard to rural work, were most bleakly uninspiring.

The attitude to the poor and to children of the early years of the nineteenth century in which the system took its rise, was unheroic, unhopeful. Children were children of the devil and the poor potential thieves or revolutionaries. The elementary schools of that period were, with certain exceptions, established definitely for the combined 'lower order' of the immature poverty-stricken. £30 a year was much to pay a teacher for warning them of their probable destiny in their capacity of children, and the three R's sufficient to bring home

their foolishness to them as possible rebels against the social system.

If this era saw the real beginning of rural elementary education one's best hope would be, first to reckon with the ill effects of the historical legacy and then to forget and forswear the early days. But it is not so; the early nineteenth-century movement was a revival, not a birth. If honour is more, antiquity is much, and this at least the rural school seems to have.

Pre-Nineteenth-Century Schools.

It is thought that the chantry priests of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries often filled the post of elementary teacher, instructing the children in the chantry building itself. In a very few churches, children's seats where they probably sat for their lessons in the fifteenth century still remain.

'Reading at least was thus a far more common accomplishment amongst the labourers of the country during Mediaeval times than it afterwards became; and the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century seats are almost invariably constructed with book boards. For scarcely a church but had at least one chantry attached to it.'[1]

The chantries were destroyed in the reign of Edward VI about 1552; endowments were confiscated and buildings demolished.

A very few existing village schools attribute their origin to chantries or parish guilds, or to monasteries, with what justification, investigation is needed to show.

We may take it, however, that few villages could offer any instruction in letters to their children in the fifty years between the destruction of the chantries and 1604. Private teachers, however, appear to have begun to

[1] Cf. *History of Cambridgeshire*, by Edward Conybeare.

open schools, for the Canons of 1604 made it illegal for any one to teach without the bishop's licence. From this time on the bishops made at least spasmodic efforts to see that instruction was at hand for village children. Perhaps a majority of villages in the seventeenth century could boast a schoolmaster taken cognizance of by the bishop, and reported upon by his inquirers.

A good deal may be inferred about these schools from the following postscript from a letter from Bishop Francis Turner (of Ely) in 1686 to the incumbent of Caxton.

PS. 'If you have no little schools in your town I shall wonder and you ought to procure one. If there be one then you need not want a congregation for both morning and evening prayers.'

The postscript shows clearly that at this time schools in villages were not universal; that even a very large village or small town might lack one. It reveals one motive for the maintenance of schools at the time. It shows that the administration of the Church's functions in the matter was somewhat haphazard. The licensed teachers seem to have taught reading, the catechism, and singing. The success of the schools does not seem to have been very great: it was the Puritan practice to read out the Psalms verse by verse in the service on Sundays so that they might be intelligently sung. This practice was deplored by the other party in the Church, who seem to have made considerable efforts to get licensed teachers well distributed partly in order to defeat it. But at all events the link with the Church seems to give dignity to this epoch of the schools' history. In the villages the Church stood for the whole of life that was not economic. At that time there were no guilds, no chapels, no schools, no doctors except in association with the Church.

It was in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that a few parish vestries provided teaching for poor children, levying a voluntary rate to cover the cost (as was sometimes done in the nineteenth century). These schools were held in the church; occasionally one is shown damage done to pillars and walls by the bored pupils of these or earlier schools.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries many village schools were started by ladies and gentlemen. Quite often the project was that of a woman, carried out in some cases by her husband. The charitable impulse is a noble one, and occasionally there was added to this a largeness of scheme and intention with which our schools may welcome a connexion. Lady Falkland of Great Tew set up a school in her village about 1640, and of this and other village schemes her biographer Duncan writes:

'To other poor children she contributed much both for their spiritual and temporal well-being by creating a school for them where they were to be taught to read and to work; . . . Neither was her care of improving others confined to the present age; designs and projects she had also for posterity; of setting up schools and manufacture trade in the Parish; to shut out (by those engines) for ever ignorance, idleness and want.'[1]

The charitable impulse was very active in setting up schools in the eighteenth century, but the spiritual atmosphere of the times is different. Hannah More would not have hoped with Lady Falkland to 'banish ignorance' from the villages; vice she would have ousted if she could, but knowledge, except of their duties and their 'place', she would have advised her Somersetshire

[1] Cf. *Three Centuries in North Oxfordshire*, by M. Sturge Henderson.

villagers to leave to their betters. Many of the eighteenth-century schools had as their intention to make good servants and to this end taught sewing and laundry. Reading was almost always taught as well, so that the children might be able to read the Bible and the Prayer Book. Reading was indeed taught from these books.

Usually endowed schools did not attempt to provide for all the children in the village (twenty was a favourite number with benefactors), though usually in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century the schoolmaster was allowed to supplement his income by taking fee-paying pupils if such presented themselves.

It seems probable that whether the original objects of these schools were liberal or very limited, to 'banish ignorance' or to produce good servants, the curricula and achievements would be very much the same. Both would depend more upon the available teacher than upon the patron, and in any case both would seem to us very meagre. Yet results of the schools may have been important. I have heard the difference in the labourer's wage that obtained in the early years of this present century between two adjacent villages attributed to the fact that one village had an immemorial school, and supplied better workmen—a doubtful explanation, but offered by an observant villager who had evidence of the great value of the school in the keener communal and political life of one village.

Early Nineteenth-Century Charity and Dame Schools. In the early nineteenth century there were three main kinds of village schools—private schools, often 'dame' schools but sometimes kept by men, Charity schools, and the new National and Parochial schools. These

three types had certain differences of intention and tendency, but there was great similarity in the daily life of them all: the teachers in all were drawn from the same class. It seems probable to me that amusing stories of dame schools colour too much our conceptions of the achievements of schools in the period before government grants were widely earned in village schools. We are apt to compare the failures of other times with the ambitions of our own. At any rate I have myself known very old ladies and gentlemen who received their sole education in village schools, not as yet grant-aided, who had imbibed there a love of literature and a respect for learning which could not easily have been surpassed. The widow who in 1869 could save three shillings to give to her son to buy books when she could never give him meat for his dinner could not I think have failed to be grateful for the schooling which had given her her faith.

For the first sixty years or so of the century the rural elementary schools were staffed almost entirely by people with no recognized qualifications. Little can be gathered of their calibre in the first quarter of the century, but by about 1846 there was certainly a sprinkling at any rate of excellent persons teaching in the villages. A literary example is that of the schoolmaster in Adam Bede who had taught Adam writing, mapping, and mensuration, and had an evening music class. There was quality in Bartle's teaching, though he taught his night school for 6*d.* a week per pupil. Love for knowledge and for imparting it was the lonely man's passion. 'I'll have nobody in my night school that doesn't strive to learn what he comes to learn, as hard as if he was striving to get out of a dark hole into broad daylight.

I'll send no man away because he's stupid. If Billy Taft, the idiot, wanted to learn anything I'd not refuse to teach him.'[1] We may hope Bartle's standards were less high for his day school for little children!

The autobiography of William Cooper of Gainsborough, the Chartist, gives an account of such another school under an exceptionally able master.

'My school was eagerly patronised by the poor; and I had a few of the children of the middle class—My school was a perfect passion with me for a time. I was in the schoolroom often at five in the morning until nine at night, taking my meals in a hasty imperfect way while the boys were gone home to take theirs. I had quill pens to make in great numbers, the first work in the morning; and for a time I had early classes each morning. Then again, in the evenings, although other day-schools broke up at five, I drew the elder scholars around the globe, and described the countries upon it, until a late hour, or talked to them on some part of history, or described the structures of animals, or to keep up their attention, even related a story from the *Arabian Nights*. . . . The sill within every window of the schoolroom was fitted up with small divisions so that the boys might have a miniature museum of pebbles, coins etc. I was intent on making their school room their delight.'[2]

This school was in a country town; but the fervour for self-education that Cooper's life exemplifies, touched the villagers too. 'Self-educators' reached their bookshelves, and 'Penny Readings' were held in schools and cottages. Probably most of the best teachers of this early time were men, but not all. In our account of the early National schools mention is made of one excellent woman (see p. 41). The quality of these early schools, of

[1] *Adam Bede*, by George Eliot, Ch. 21.
[2] *Life of Thomas Cooper*, by Himself, p. 72.

no matter what type, depended upon the personality of the teacher.

It is impossible to generalize about the calibre of village teachers before 1862, when the payment of qualified teachers became possible. We might as well hope for a generalization about that of blacksmiths or smallholders. In any largish village to-day there is a small number of men who get a living by any work they can find for their hands or brains to do; they are 'correspondents' to the local papers, rate-collectors, coal-merchants. With a greater expenditure of themselves, they earn more than the labourer. They may be very intelligent men, or may merely add to the labourer's equipment a little clerkly accomplishment, or a touch of ambition. Of this class the schoolmaster of the early nineteenth century was a member; he might belong to any of its numerous grades.

County directories of the mid-century, which one sometimes finds treasured in village houses, give a certain amount of information about the schools, and school teachers. In one (of 1851) we find the schoolmaster's position in the social scale clearly indicated. The scale used is that of squire, vicar, farmers, traders and victuallers, the schoolmaster—so that the schoolmaster's name comes after that of the village blacksmith. Salaries are clearly indicated too; several schools in that county had endowments of £20 per annum and we may take it that this, together with the tiny fees from the scholars, was the teacher's stipend. If that inference seems doubtful we may quote definite statements in certain cases. '£30 a year is paid to the schoolmaster for teaching all the children of the village from 5 to 12 years old—Besides this the schoolmistress

receives a gratuity of £5 per annum for teaching the girls plain work.' 'Gratuity' seems to suggest that the pay was regarded as ample. A part of this same entry reminds us that the functions of the schools were still limited by the idea that schooling was a part only of elementary education, since there was '£25 per annum for apprenticing children'. The schoolmaster seems often if not usually to have had another trade. One is registrar of births and deaths, another is 'land surveyor'. (Land surveying means that he would measure the farmer's ricks for him, when they were to be sold, or the acreage of a piece of turnip-land to be hoed as piece work, which was commoner in most parts of the country then than in these days of machinery.)

As has already been said, the National and Parochial schools of the mid-century succeeded two types of smaller schools, the private schools and the small endowed or charity schools. Taking the private schools separately, we may dismiss them briefly. The illustrations from *Adam Bede* and *Cooper's Life* show or suggest the better side of these. It is well known that there was a large number of dame schools of very poor quality. Thousands of them could never hope to afford a good living to any of their teachers, and as the century went on and the new National and Parochial schools offered certain employment to the abler teachers they grew poorer even than in earlier years. We may illustrate from the village of B——. An old farmer told my informant that he had attended school in a certain cottage and had sat on a different form alone because he paid *2d.* a week extra to learn manners. At another dame school in the village the children were told, on coming to a hard word in the reading lesson, to say 'wheelbarrow' and pass on!

The origin and fate of the small village Charity schools, of which there were hundreds, may be illustrated from the same village of B—— mentioned above.

This village had a Charity school set up about 1728 by the desire of Dame Elizabeth *X*, whose husband 'settled the schooling of 20 poor children and as his addition the cloathing of them, and a school to teach them and others in for ever'. The money for the charity was to be provided by the 'owners of B—— Hall for ever out of the rents of Sir *X Y*'s farm'. The schoolroom of the original 'Greencoat' school still stands, a tiny building which would not allow of many 'others' beyond the twenty, with its quaint greencoated figures of a boy and a girl standing over the doorway, and the motto 'Inasmuch as ye do it unto one of the least of these'.

After the building of the new and larger Parochial school Sir *X Y*'s descendant paid £10 per annum of the salary of the new schoolmaster, and the Charity school children attended it, being distinguished from the other pupils by their dress, by the extra pressure put upon them to attend Sunday School and Church, and by the opportunity of winning special prizes.

It was almost invariably the case that the village Charity schools were absorbed, as the private schools were ousted, by the new National or Parochial schools. The trustees or patron of the Charity schools saw no objection to their absorption; the National or Parochial schools would give a religious education similar to that their children were already receiving; the trustees' school would be brought into touch with a national movement; and the new schools seemed to show that with a little very inexpensive help their schoolmaster

could teach a far larger number of children. He was usually transferred with the children.

Neither Charity nor dame schools provided instruction for the average agricultural labourer's child. Wages were far too low, the price of bread too high, and families too large to allow the tiniest possible earning of the children to be dispensed with. An interesting attempt to supply the need of these children was made by the early Church Sunday Schools which existed, it is said, in some villages before Robert Raikes of Gloucester began his propaganda. Before the setting up of the public day schools their purpose was to teach reading, direct religious instruction being already provided for in the 'catechizing' which took place in church. The Sunday Schools were held in various buildings—cottage, barn, or parvis chamber. It is said that their hours were from 8.30 to 12.30 a.m. and from 2 to 6 p.m., including church services which the children had to attend. The masters were paid, one head teacher receiving six guineas in 1808 for his year's work.[1]

The National and Parochial Schools to 1862.

It would perchance be as well to say something of the national movement which led to the establishment of the schools now to be dealt with, though an adequate idea of it can only be gained by much study of the period. The French and Industrial Revolutions brought the majority of middle-class English people to the conclusion that the education of the masses must be guided, controlled, and therefore provided, by themselves. Many of these had no conception of education as for the sake of the child; their purpose was the protection of society,

[1] Conybeare, *History of Cambridgeshire.*

of themselves. The schools they established were to instruct, not to educate. In them the children were to learn their duty in society as it was at that time constituted; they were to learn to read that they might not be at the mercy of the revolutionary tub-thumper.

The subscriptions to the National Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the Sunday Schools have been paralleled lately by the subscriptions to *The Times'* Police Fund after the General Strike (1926). How easily was three-quarters of a million then subscribed by relieved citizens who felt that the police had stood, and might again stand, between them and the rest of the working classes. It seemed not to occur to them that the virtue of the Police was due to good wages and a species of continued education, and that these are the true preventives of violent disturbance. So the constitution of the child, his personal needs and desires, was nothing to the majority of those who supported education in the early nineteenth century, while the fear or robbery, violence, and revolution was much.

Education can never be liberal until it is education of and for the person educated, and this liberal element was lacking in the so-called education that arose out of the social panic of the early nineteenth century.

There was a small stream of genuine education, in volume only a trickle, that joined with the great stream of instruction that resulted; a trickle which has grown with the years. Robert Owen and a few other social reformers, Christians, and lovers of children, knew that you must start from the child and his nature. Whether Owen derived his ideas from Pestalozzi or not, there were others deriving inspiration and a knowledge of children from him and Froebel. Owen's school at New

Lanark took the children very young, and this fact and his theory of the necessity of a good early environment were the origin of the liberal, happy element that the education of infants contained almost from the beginning. This leaven in the infants' school was not, however, evident in rural schools till a late date, because infants had to be taught in the same room with, and to be subject therefore to the same discipline and even the same lessons, very often, as the older children.

It is an interesting speculation what might have happened if English elementary education could have developed out of the grafting of Owen's ideas upon the older education, and if schools could have grown in size and scope as economic conditions improved for the working classes; but there were causes for the social panic, reason for great anxiety and immediate action on a large scale, and the development that followed was inevitable.

Whatever else this nineteenth-century movement may or may not have done it made the first effective attack on the illiteracy and ignorance of that majority of village children who are not consumed with a desire for book learning. Universal literacy and a minimum universal standard of moral instruction were its conscious aims. Education has largely passed from the hands of the Church to those of the State, and to the State is due the achievement of the first of the two aims. Perhaps fuller co-operation with the Christian Church will have to come before the second is satisfactorily achieved. At all events, these were very great aims considering the social state of the country; it has taken a hundred years to make the populace literate. Twenty years ago it was possible to stand (as I remember doing)

in a large village church and count half a dozen old ladies who stood without a prayer book, and would no doubt have been glad to have the Psalms read out verse by verse as was done in the seventeenth century. To-day there would be no one in this state. The old Church had offered services to those who could neither read nor understand them for eight hundred years at least; most of that time it had tried to offer some elementary instruction, but for all its efforts gross superstition lingered in the minds of the people. Not all fear of witchcraft had left remotest villages till the eighth decade of the century. Now every one can read; superstition is a mere bizarre remnant; the channels are open for irrigation.

It was in 1833 that Treasury grants were first given to assist the 'education of the children of the poorer classes'. The method of apportioning the available money was to give grants to the National Society and the British and Foreign Society to help in providing school buildings where 50 per cent. of the cost of them had already been privately subscribed. About 1840 these two societies became active in the villages, and between that year and 1870 a very great majority of villages were furnished with a school by means of local effort aided and directed by one of these central societies.

The schools thus set up did not bring about a very rapid improvement in the *quality* of rural education. The subscribers were few and not usually wealthy, and the salaries to teachers were not much, if any, higher than those paid to the heads of the old Charity schools; £30 per annum and the school pence of the children was a common figure. Women teachers were paid extremely little. Stories are current of their being glad to accept good Sunday dinners from kind neighbours (such as, to

quote one case, the post-mistress) who knew of their privations. From 1846 Treasury grants were available for assistance in paying the staff of a school. But under the Treasury minutes a qualified head teacher must be already installed and in receipt of a salary before such a grant could be given, and by this time a qualified male teacher could earn in a town twice the amount that was usually paid in the country; in any case no grant could be earned by women heads. 'My lords', say the minutes of 1853, 'will refuse to make grants to a mixed school under a mistress only, if it is the only school in a village' —a particularly unfortunate ruling, seeing the large part women have always played in rural education.

Besides these financial difficulties there were two others. Many managers had a rooted objection to the receipt of Government aid, and to the inspectors and 'interference' which followed upon it; and a still greater number of managers simply did not know of the offered help and were in many cases too indifferent or too busy to make any inquiries. The upkeep of the school under the circumstances was difficult and indeed often in question.

Not till 1862 did a large proportion of village schools begin to earn annual grants. In that year 'My Lords' announced that they would recognize any one as head teacher for 'rural schools containing not more than 100 pupils, who had passed the pupil teachers' examinations'. Women were also recognized as heads.

The schools were now mainly staffed by ex-pupil teachers and by unqualified 'monitresses'; large schools would have a number of pupil-teacher assistants.

The accomplishments of ex-pupil teachers and pupil teachers may be gathered from a perusal of the table

of requirements issued by the Committee of Council. An ex-pupil teacher head would have undergone apprenticeship in a school for four or five years and would have received since his twelfth birthday some extra tuition—about an hour a day—from the master or mistress of the school. The examination passed would now be regarded as a very simple matter. 'Female' pupil teachers, for example, did not get as far as decimal fractions till their fourth year, and went no farther with mathematics. In their third year the history course was to learn 'the succession of the English sovereigns from the reign of Egbert with dates to the present time'. Other parts of the syllabus sound somewhat less modest but actually cover only very elementary work.

The salary of a male pupil teacher in his last year was £25. As head teacher such a person would not be expensive; he would earn five or ten pounds more.

But in spite of everything the new movement for education had effected much in the staffing of the school. The pupil teacher training, poor as it was, was a great improvement on none. Fortunate large villages of one's acquaintance had college-trained teachers as early as 1857. Abler and better people among the technically unqualified took to teaching because, though pay was poor, employment was certain. Nor was there wanting from country schools at least some examples of the professional ambition and nobility of personality to which a memorial stone in a tiny crowded school cloakroom bears witness:

To the Memory of
FRANCES BAINES
who died May the 19th. 1846
At the Age of 33 years.

She filled the office of Schoolmistress in this parish for nine years to the duties of which situation she devoted herself with diligence and assiduity beyond her strength, and in this cause having passed six months at an Infant School Training Institution, to qualify herself further as a teacher of the younger children more especially according to the most approved method,

'She suffered from the close application there required and ultimately fell a sacrifice to her praiseworthy exertions.

'In grateful recollection of benefits received, her sorrowing scholars have erected this monument.'

We may take it that the memorial expressed the heartfelt gratitude and sorrow, at least of the parents of the little scholars (they would all be under 12). Such memorials are most rare; Frances had made herself acceptable, and her office respected. Death helps, we know, in such matters, but her parishioners accept the desirability of 'training', of 'method', of 'skill', in teaching young children; how few teachers now can contrive to suggest so sympathetic a point of view to the parents of our children! Frances Baines knew much of education before she paid her six months' visit to the 'institution'; stories are told of her still—how, for example, each morning she examined the strap of the children's pattens, and if they had not been blacked that morning, home they must go to their blacking and polishing. Now there is only one small bit of a patten—the strap —that can well be polished, and one would not have supposed it greatly mattered. But Frances knew that she must begin by teaching self-respect. One feels that she was a bright particular spirit. She was succeeded in her office by her sister, who had been a lady's maid and could tell her pupils something of her travels in 'foreign parts'.

The Revised Code and the Education Acts of 1870 and 1902

In 1862 was issued the Revised Code which made all grants to schools dependent on attendance and on the passing of an examination in reading, writing, and arithmetic. In 1870 came the Elementary Education Act, popularly known as the School Boards Act, which ordained that the whole area of the country must be served by schools. Where voluntarily provided schools did not exist or were not recognized as efficient a local School Board must be elected, whose duty it would be to establish and maintain a school, levying a rate for the purpose.

These two measures had each effects of the greatest consequence which must be discussed, but also they led, taken together, to a great reform in country education. They made it possible and indeed necessary that there should be in every village a school with a qualified teacher, and they arranged the permanency of that state of affairs. The School Boards Act, by influence direct or indirect, brought a school to every village. The 'Board' schools were maintained by compulsory rates; thus there were the means of paying qualified teachers. The Revised Code set a definite standard of attainment, and if this was not reached a Voluntary school was threatened with the rivalry of a Board school. Thus in the matter of staffing, the Board schools set a standard that voluntary schools had to try to reach.

The products of the Training Colleges were by this time prepared to consider headships of large country schools, for the towns (whose schools, of course, were larger still, and headships better paid) were now sup-

plied. How did rural work and rural society strike these qualified, perhaps city-born, folk? To what conditions did they come? These questions are interesting to teachers because these conditions have not entirely passed away; we are heirs to much dating from this time.

The social position of teachers was unenviable. The school houses built for them were sometimes mean beyond belief. One consisted of two small communicating rooms on the ground floor; often they had rough brick floors, and the school lavatories (not then on the pail system) would be incredibly close to the windows and doors at the back of the house. Not any age could plead lack of knowledge of sanitation to excuse this. Mankind's nose is thought to have degenerated rather than to have improved. One's impression is that anything was good enough.

The worst defects were hardly deliberate on the part of official administrators, but there was the policy of keeping the teacher's social position and standard of life depressed. He must not, it was thought, rise above his pupils or he would not be able to set them an example as to how to lead their lives. In theory this seemed a sound principle, but translated into practice it must have seemed to the schoolmaster exacting, and, on the part of those who applied it immediately to himself, mean. He was isolated both professionally and socially. The vicar, whose office might have been supposed to be spiritually so similar, became his master as well as his pastor, claiming literally the bow of the knee from his pupils and his assistants. His Majesty's Inspector visited the school in the joint capacity of angel of light and of the sword; one who descended from the height of the uni-

versity, and Westminster, knowing nothing at first hand of the burden and heat of the schoolmaster's day, and coming, with few pretensions to give practical help, and few or none to give good fellowship, but, in his glory, to judge the quick and the dead.

Appreciative parents would have done much to make life tolerable, but compulsory or virtually compulsory attendance brought into existence a large class of parents of school children who did not frequently feel that way; to them the schoolmaster was a traveller in unwanted things. I have only come across a single expression of parental thanks in a log-book. But this type of entry is common enough: 'Mrs. Willis, the mother of 4 children attending the school, called to ask that her children might not be taught anything as she objected to their learning anything. She sent them to school to keep them out of the dirt and would beat them if they learned anything.'

Less explicit but similar in burden is the following: 'Mrs. Beavis called to complain that their daughter, Bertha, aged 10, std. II, was not allowed to do as she liked and was being unduly pressed in her work. The mother gave notice that she would not allow the child to attend this school any more.'

In one village the vicar and schoolmaster fear that the mothers will keep their children away on examination day 'from caprice' if they know that the schoolmaster's salary depends on their attendance.

Could the school teacher look to the local administrators of the school for support and comfort? We have indicated already that the vicars, who at this time occupied the positions of managers and correspondents and directors of the Church schools, tended to think of

the schools as buttresses of the existing social system. Joseph Arch, born in 1826, founder of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union, tells in his autobiography of the humiliation he felt on hearing that the vicar's wife had informed his little girl in school one day that she must appear no more in a hair-net, as it was above her position; one may hear of instances as absurd, and as galling, occurring within the last twenty years, of a vicar telling a lad to wear collars like the other boys and not soft ones; he would never be a gentleman and need not ape his betters: and of one who sent for a lad and scolded him severely for lifting his hat to the vicar's daughter (like an equal) instead of touching it (as an inferior); beside a vicar's lady who held that the village schoolgirls should have only a comb for their hair, a brush being above their station!

The country clergy were, however, possibly usually in a somewhat arbitrary way, props and stays to the schools. Some would visit the school practically every day, and give perhaps half of the scripture lessons. One devoted man taught arithmetic to the big boys, constantly examined the school, and, when the mistress was ill, taught the school for a month.

The elected School Boards did not look on the schools in quite the same way, but they too failed often to give the teacher sympathetic support. The members of the Boards in the country districts were mostly farmers and tradesmen. Usually they had no great belief in education, and when they had their belief was often an act of faith, for they knew but little of it. Stories still in circulation in scholastic families record their degree of acquaintance with culture. At a tea-party given by a recently formed School Board in 1874 (it is said that

they hoped to pay for the comestibles out of the rates) one of the members of the Board made a speech to the effect that he was very pleased with the way his children were getting on (in the Board School). They were learning readin', writin', and 'rithmetic, and also digdation; he hadn't rightly known what the last was; but he had since found out that digdation was the groundwork of eddication. (It seems ignorant, but My Lords the Committee of the Privy Council for Education seem to have been of that same opinion, as we shall shortly see.) School Board managers were not infrequently quite illiterate. In the early days of the Boards they paid frequent visits to the schools and after a first attempt to sign the log-book some of them gave it up, and got the teacher to sign for them. That they did not believe in schooling as education, proofs are common. One schoolmaster who is attempting to teach history and geography records on 12 April 1893 that 'Mr. H., Chairman of the Board, says it is all humbug to teach so many subjects. Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic are quite sufficient.' Many of the members of the School Boards were farmers, and some of these appear in the log-books as special culprits in keeping, and indeed fetching, the children away from the school to work on the farms.

Aug. 9th, 1889, Herbert Gibbs aged 7 years in the Infant Class employed by Mr. H., vice-chairman of the Board.

Aug. 19th, 1891, Walter Willis aged 10, passed Std. II, illegally employed by Mr. D—— a member of the School Board, who has twice been prosecuted and fined for illegally employing boys from this school (Aug. 10th, 1888 and Feb. 1st, 1889).

April 21st, 1903, G. B... Esq. The Chairman of the Board

frequently asks me to let a boy leave school to go to work. This afternoon I have sent him a note respectfully informing him that boys cannot leave school before 11.45 a.m. or 4.5 p.m. Mr. B——'s man shouted through the door to the boy who was wanted.'

To serve under a master who sets the example of thwarting your work and ignoring yourself must be one of the deepest humiliations. Imagine the life of the schoolmaster or schoolmistress at this time—parents mostly indifferent to the school, allowing children to stay at home for trifling reasons, encouraging their obtaining work; the school unpopular because of compulsory attendance (the provisions of Lord Sandon's Act of 1876, in so far as they were enforced, practically made attendance till 12 years of age compulsory, though later half time was allowed to begin at 11). It was possible for the only visitors to a Board school from year's end to year's end to be irate parents, the attendance officer, unwilling members of the Board, and His Majesty's Inspector. One log-book now before me records that no member of the School Board had entered the school for twelve months. This was of course an illegal abstinence. Country teachers still speak of their isolation and lack of visitors from the outside world, but at least they see at intervals the managers, the school doctor and dentist, the county librarian, the attendance officer (in some places his office has had the pleasanter functions of welfare officer added to it), physical training experts; and the infant class, at least, often attracts friendly and interested parents. There is also now a more comradely inspector and the possibility of a visit from the County Director, or a member of the Education Committee, besides, of course, the increasing number of the school-

master's personal and professional friends which have come to him with a wider life and increased prosperity.

One Board school from whose records I have quoted received very frequent visits from a duchess and her numerous daughters, who would examine the needlework, and take the reading lessons, and who were described as the school's best friends. But to know how to give good gifts without patronage is not common, and this sort of visitor is now rare, though leisured people could do very much still to refresh both teachers and pupils.

One of the pleasant paths in which my lines were laid of late led me to two ladies, still resident in the village in which their father, Mr. H., had taught from 1873 to 1923. By their help it is possible to see a typical country school through the eyes of the newly appointed master in 1873. He was a trained teacher from an urban district. His impressions were vivid and he was fond of recounting what he had seen and felt; and the log-book of the school for the ten years previous to his appointment which must have interested him keenly is there for us also.

During his first days in the school Mr. H. was surprised to fine that his assistant teachers curtseyed to the vicar and other visitors; and that on his protesting against the elision of R's in the children's speech one of them wrote on the black-board for the children to copy, 'There was a big burnfire [bonfire] on the hill last night.' On inspecting the infants' class for the first time he found that the only song they could sing was

> 'Keep on a-doin' on it
> Don't make a muddle on it'

sung over and over again to a sort of dirge with the

hands wrung up and down. Well might the wee ones wring their hands!

Before 1873 Mr. H.'s school had been a Parochial (Church) school and in that year a local School Board was set up which took over the conduct of the school. Working for a School Board was far from being all honey, but at least the two last items which he would read in the log-book would make him feel that it had its advantages. In the matter of salary his predecessor 'entered into a fresh agreement with the vicar to receive £10 per annum from Sir *X Y*'s Charity and the Children's pence'. That is, he was now to get some £29 per year. The salary had previously been greater by some 4*s*. a week, which must have been subscribed. The master who was thus paid was evidently unqualified. Of his work it is difficult to judge, for in twelve months he makes but two entries in the log-book. These entries are correctly spelled, written in a wonderful copper-plate hand, but such refinements as quotation marks are missing. The last entry is: 'The following Notice by order of the Vicar was published and hung up in the schoolroom. All children attending this Day School are required from this Date regularly to attend Church and Sunday School.' The new master must have been glad he had not to enforce this notice.

It was not till after the passing of the Education Act of 1870, which threatened to supersede inefficient Voluntary schools, that many bodies of managers set themselves seriously to earn grant and recognition. For example the teacher appointed to B—— School in 1864 was incapable of earning grants. He was what country people call a 'character' and had a passion for religious and moral teaching. Every day he enters the subject of

the scripture lessons, the prayers, psalms, and collects used. Psalms were read in the afternoon. Favourite morning lessons were taken from *Village Conversations on the Liturgy*. Even the dictation lesson was often from the Bible. 'The Parable of the Ten Virgins used for dictation lesson. The same to be committed to memory.' The day after that entry another class received a dictation lesson from *The Hymns of Zion*. Homework was given every evening and this was also a scriptural or prayer-book lesson. The First Class once learnt the whole of the 119th Psalm between 24 April and 21 June.

The relations between this Church school and the church and vicarage were very intimate. In later times the power of the vicar would have been found very galling. He calls at the school constantly, occasionally scolds the children, gives very frequent half-holidays, sends some children for whole days every Christmas for several years to help decorate the church for that festival. The sewing done by the school was done 'for the vicarage'. The scholars were punished in day school for absence from Sunday School. 'Charles Ralph with the consent of his mother has attended the Dissenters' Sunday School 2 or 3 Sundays in opposition to the wish of *X Y* Esq. and the rules of the school.'

The elder girls are sometimes entertained for tea at the vicarage and given prizes for sewing. Sometimes the neighbouring gentry give the children a 'treat', i.e. a tea. Oranges are distributed after the fateful grant-earning or grant-losing examinations. The children always had a hot-cross bun on Good Friday afternoons from one of the managers.

In the seventh decade of last century the country schools were, as has been shown, in flagrant need of

being definitely called upon to reach a reasonable standard of efficiency. Only parliamentary action could secure it. Pressure in itself was excellent; but the Revised Code which embodies the standard demanded was one of the most remarkable stumbles in English history. The prevailing ignorance of education, of child nature, of methods of teaching, was of course its cause. The length of time it remained in force seems remarkable even so; for thirty years it lasted, though not all that time in its first rigour. The Revised Code was arranged by what we should now regard as an amateur committee. There was at the time no band of experts, as there was no considerable body of educational science. During the reign of the Revised Code, however, these were being developed.

The 'instruction' of the labouring poor 'to fit them for their position' has now become the primary education of the nation's children to fit them for all that they can be or do. We have learnt that if we look too definitely to limited criteria or objects for our schools the pupils will suffer neglect in some essential. The Revised Code did good in its negative way by demonstrating completely, dramatically, everywhere, what happens if a narrow aim is set in teaching young children. Yet the nation seems hardly to be willing to cease once for all to look in schools for quick returns from a mechanical process. Here we propose to give as complete a picture as we can of the village school under a régime of 'payment by results'. There is plentiful material, for under the Revised Code every school must keep a log-book. Hence from 1872 onwards, when so many village schools began their career as fully fledged public institutions, we know their life in detail.

The first problem of the schools was, in 1877,[1] and for a good many years afterwards, to get the children into school. Laws prohibiting the employment of young children had brought it about that the names of all the children in the village were on the register of the school, but this meant little. They had still to be constrained to put in more than an occasional appearance. The children preferred every form of pleasure, excitement, work, to school. The teacher's first thought was 'How many children are here to-day?'

The children seem to have had fête-days as numerous as medieval saints' days. They went to all the village 'feasts' for miles around and also to 'club days'. They absented themselves to go May-poling, Valentining, St. Thomasing. A city-born head master meeting these customs for the first time notes the appropriate rhymes in the log-book. Girls beg gifts on St. Valentine's Day with the magic formula:

> So good morning, Valentine
> Curl your locks as I do mine
> Two before and two behind.

St. Thomas's Day and Plough Monday were boys' festivals, their begging formula for the former being

> Please will you give me a dole,
> Dip me head in a water bowl.

On the latter a decorated plough was taken round the village, whips were cracked, and there was shouting of 'Whoa there' to imaginary horses. At this latter festival the boys were spectators only, but that did not prevent them absenting themselves from school.

[1] Attendance was compulsory from 1870 in districts which had School Boards, and in all districts from 1876 (Lord Sandon's Act).

Some realization of the teacher's task between 1870 and say, 1900, may be gathered from a list of typical reasons for absence.

1. Snow and other forms of bad weather.
2. Lack of boots.
3. Chilblains.
4. Girls kept at home to help mother on a Friday afternoon (a widespread trouble).
5. Staying away to earn money for the village 'Feast'.
6. Staying away to clean up the house for the Feast, and to cook.
7. The Feast.
8. Club Feasts (quite a different matter).
9. The neighbouring villages' Feasts.
10. Truancy.
11. Minding home and babies while mother goes out.
12. Going to a wood sale.
13. Going after an engine.
14. Going to see a funeral (a very frequent cause of absence).
15. Going to see a wedding.
16. Going to see a fire.
17. Being 'sent on an errand'.
18. Boys treading chaff.
19. Boys 'beating in the woods' (recurs every autumn in many schools).
20. Taking meals to parents in hay and harvest fields.
21. Agricultural work: picking fruit, singling turnips, gleaning peas, gleaning corn.
22. Flint picking.
23. Two divisions of 5th Lancers passing through the village.
24. No money for school pence.

25. Children sent home for school pence and do not return.
26. Children stay on the ice.

Some special local excuses for absence have already been given and to these we may add absence on the 'two thousand guineas day' in the schools round a famous racing centre. Pressure of work culminated in harvest time and schools would find themselves dwindling to nothing before the commencement of the official holiday. At the end of the harvest holidays the schoolmaster would not infrequently, as one of them put it on 29 September 1879, 'open school-room and then close it again for want of a school'.

There were absences, of course, for infectious diseases, but these were no more frequent or I think numerous than they are now, though the number of deaths recorded shows that a certain progress has been made. It is comforting to feel that nowadays school is at least as exciting as a wood sale, an engine, or a funeral. The teachers suffered extremely for the dullness of the curriculum and lessons. The log-books of conscientious women show them driven almost distracted by the struggle to get attendance.

The North Wharnton Log-book for the years 1879–91 will afford illustrations of this fact. The mistress is a conscientious and capable woman who raises the standard of work immediately on her arrival at the school, and is always complimented on her industry by the Inspectors, and often on her achievements and discipline. For years she enters remarks on the attendance about every other day, obviously deriving pleasure and encouragement from every improvement, and accounting as hopefully as possible for specially poor atten-

dance. The highest percentage reached would seem to be about seventy, but the number of children is nowhere definitely stated. The maximum percentage was lower if anything. Here are a few typical entries.

May 18th, 1883. The three Fells after running the streets for five weeks have today returned to school.

July 13th, 1883. Third Standard stay away so much it is impossible to get them on with their work. Little progress is made, only 5 were present today out of 13, that ought to have been there. Average attendance for week 59 so few attend on a Friday.

Feb. 18th, 1884. Celia Molyon attends very badly indeed only 4 attendances this week. Have warned her several times to no purpose.

After ten years of this struggle the Inspector reports: 'This school is in very fair order and would no doubt be better if the attendance were more regular. Great pains should be taken to secure better attendance.' After the eleventh year, the report is very similar. Yet this teacher commanded the confidence of parents, who would help in punishing their children for truancy. Attendance was far worse in other schools than in North Wharnton. In the Revised Code days Inspectors must have been hard put to it to keep up their attitude of surprise at the poor attendance and poor attainments. Between 1875 and 1892 it was the same everywhere. At Bixton there were 50 children, and the average attendance is given typically as being 29, 23, 28, 19, 11. An able lady comes to the school for a short time who is evidently extraordinarily popular. She succeeds so well in getting the children to go to school that eventually she gets an average attendance of 48 one week! But by this time it is probable that the number on the books had risen; the new

teacher does not give the number. This lady did not stay long, and the next teacher gives a list of weekly averages for 17 weeks which varies between 12 and 34.

There can be no doubt that the unattractiveness of the curriculum and school routine accounted for the children's distaste for school and determination to stay out of it whenever it was possible. Only the oldest children, big enough to work, were kept away on the initiative of parents. The first improvement in North Wharnton is noted in the report for 1891, the year after considerable modifications had been made in the method of apportioning grants, a subject to which we shall shortly return.

Discipline, not seldom a somewhat difficult matter in rural schools nowadays, was far more difficult forty or fifty years ago. The North Wharnton log will serve again to show the struggle in a typical school, probably above the average in the ability and conscientiousness of its head, in the variety of subjects taught, and in the quality of the relationship between parents and teachers. Nowhere in this log occur any records of disagreement between teacher and parents, though the teacher clearly used the log to express her feelings.

The hard drive under the Revised Code, the unpreparedness of the teachers, the large number of children of different standards to be controlled and taught, brought about great unhappiness for both teachers and scholars. Punishment was given many times in a single day. In this very typical school the children were 'continually', to use the teacher's own word, being kept in throughout play-times and after school, even, once, two boys had to remain at school the whole day, going on dinnerless to afternoon school. Occasionally they were

given 'hard stripes'. They are frequently 'admonished' by the vicar and another 'gentleman manager'. To read of all this going on for eleven years, in other schools for twenty years, according to the teacher's stay, wrings one's heart with pity, the more acutely if one has oneself been forced at some time to adopt somewhat similar methods for the sake of temporary peace, and seen their full futility, and the atmosphere they bring. The North Wharnton teacher had the beginnings of criticism of the régime. After repeatedly keeping in one idle girl she adds desperately to one record of punishment that 'punishment seems no good to her'. 'And still he does it' is quite a refrain in the entries recording punishment. The full misery of the time perhaps comes home to the reader when he learns that in this village, well disposed as its folk were then, as they are to-day, small boys should have gone the length of giving their devoted teacher 'several blows on the chest', and of kicking her 'most cruelly' and this not only while the first adjustments between teacher and pupils were being made, but after years of mutual knowledge and of work together —under the Revised Code.

Here follow a few typical entries to be seen in the log-book; but first we will give the inspector's witness to support our view that the school's discipline was typical or above the average. The entries after the first were all made by the teacher, except where it is otherwise indicated. The punctuation, &c., is accurately copied.

May 4th. 1882. 'This little school is in good order. H.M.I.'

March 30th. 1880. George Miller threw a stone while the girls were assembled in the Playground and struck Julia Arless behind her ear. I sent him home until I've seen the

Managers. He is one of the most mischievous boy's (*sic*) in school.

May 4th. Thomas Crick behaves very badly in school is kept in continually after the others have gone home.

April 28th. 1881. The last lesson was stopped owing to an Infant wanting his way. He screamed in a frightful manner and would not give over for a long time.

Oct. 22nd. 1884. The Vicar writes that he had 'admonished' three children who had been 'most impudent and refused to do what they were told and disturbed the working of the school by their conduct'.

Feb. 21st. 1885. William Barless and Edward Simkin gave a great deal of trouble over their work. The former insulted me most shamefully after he left the schoolroom I went to his father about it.

1885. John Fell and Samuel Snitchett played truant on Thursday afternoon were kept in all the dinner time. Parents were well satisfied with the punishment, and Mrs. Snitchett would not allow her boy to have anything to eat; Fell had a piece of bread sent by his mother.

Nov. 18th. Mr. De Veuille visited the school this afternoon, spoke to the boys urging them to be good and get on with the work. (The mistress had resolved to beg that 3 boys should be expelled.)

1886. July 13th. Miriam Barless gives so much trouble over her lessons, has constantly to be kept in after school. Punishment seems no good to her.

Nov. 3rd. John Crick has kicked the teacher's legs most cruelly.

The mother came to say she was very sorry her boy should do so, she severely punished him.

Nov. 24th. Nancy Ward I sent back came in after the last lesson was over, had not been anywhere for her mother, she frequently does it, have kept her back after the others have gone home, punished her with the cane, and still she does it.

1890. March 19th. Robert Gault gives so much trouble

over his lessons; sets my authority at defiance, that I am at a loss to know how to act with him, it is always the same.'

Of course such disciplinary measures linger still in the schools. As we shall see later, a few schools have never emerged at all completely from this old régime. But very few women head teachers now resort to much 'staying-in' or corporal punishment. It is harder for a master to throw off physical mastery because he really can secure it, but the children are less and less treated as guilty when work does not appeal, and teachers feel more and more responsible. In the best schools the work and discipline afford the children much freedom and delight.

We must now see what was the curriculum that kept school-life so depressed. From 1870 all the 'elementary' schools in England were working under the Revised Code. The Committee of Council, whose power was that of the purse, had imposed the Code in 1862. Previously grants had been given for buildings (1833); later, to help in providing school houses; in 1846 grants began to be given to pay for extra tuition to pupil teachers and salaries for pupil teachers and monitors; for pensions to retired schoolmasters and mistresses (1846) and for salaries to assistant teachers after their apprenticeship (1852). In 1853 a capitation grant was offered to rural schools upon certain conditions, which included the appointment of qualified head teachers. Grants had been paid 'for hiring field gardens, erecting workshops, and providing school wash-houses and kitchens'.

The principle under which these grants had been arranged was that of encouraging or enticing the managers of the schools, all of which were the result of private initiative, to take the next step which the Committee of

the Privy Council had seen to be necessary. Naturally grants so arranged became somewhat elaborate to administer. It was not that difficulty, however, which brought about the change of 1862, but the general dissatisfaction with the results of schooling. It was hoped that the simple administrative procedure of giving grants for each scholar who attained a certain 'standard' would at once assure a minimum common achievement in practically all schools. Hence were arranged certain stated standards which the children of each class must reach if grants were to be paid. There was one other condition of grant—attendance. Each child to be considered for grants must have attended 200 morning or afternoon sessions or he might not take the examinations. The result of this was that only about half the children were qualified to earn grants for the school, and the teachers were very strongly tempted to give their chief energies to this 50 per cent.

The 'standards' set in reading, writing, and arithmetic, for each of the six classes for children between the ages of six and twelve, was given in a chart, in the Minutes of the Committee of the Privy Council, which is printed as an appendix on p. 272. This tiny chart was the only scheme of work to be found in the schools. It is sufficient to add here that, in reading, the ordinary school books were to be used for the test except in Standard VI: but many children never reached Standard VI. Hence the aim and object in reading was not fun, or information or experience, but ability *to read the school books*. Writing comprised only copying, transcription, and dictation. 'Dictation' became part of the 'groundwork of education'. Not a child in the school was expected to express anything in his own words.

Imagine determining the quality of a school for young children without ever letting them talk! But in this examination the children are not to be allowed, even, to attempt to express themselves on slate or paper.

The arithmetic, again, was to be all written, and went no higher than 'A sum in practice or bills of practice'. The precise kind of sum which each class was to be given was stated.

There is no need to dwell further on the horrific nature of the 'inspection' to which the schools were subjected. This has already been done by every historian of nineteenth-century education. Interest and keenness left the work (our Bible enthusiast was crushed), and their place was taken by dry, hard effort on the part of the teacher and compelled obedience in the child. Generations of children regarded school quite simply as confinement with hard and meaningless labour. You may hear parents talk outside the school gates to-day as if school were still that. A child may have begged to stay in school to finish a model or an essay, and a rough indignant mother be saying outside, 'Keepin' the children in like that! Why don't they let 'em out at the right time? When we went to school we were always out before the clock struck and glad too I can tell ye. I don't want *my* school days over again, no I don't.'

The child's view of his work between 1862 and 1892 and even later may also be inferred from the poor attendance and the distressing discipline of the schools. The remaining dame schools never stirred the bitter dislike that the public elementary schools did, and, if their standard of work was even lower, the Revised Code did not wholly account for the superiority of the grant-earning schools. The inspector's lot from 1862 to 1891

could not have been a happy one. The marking of the children's sums and dictation must have been a task of sickening ease and repetition. Everywhere they record that the reading they have to listen to is monotonous. The log-books give far more space to attendance than to what was learnt in school, but in the very rare log-books for 1862 to 1870 one finds a few significant entries, e.g. on arithmetic.

'Renewed the attempt to work the upper classes in "common sense" questions in arithmetic, but found them so backward in the mechanical part that think it better to work them in it.' Standard IV were learning compound long division. It seems a pity when common-sense practice was going to the wall.

On 1 August of one year we find the entry 'Adopted plan of reading the same lesson all the week'. It seems only logical that shortly after (18 September) the following should occur: 'The monotonous tone of the reading pointed out.' On 20 February the 1st and 2nd classes (the two highest 'standards'), 'commenced transcribing into books'. All writing except that in copy-books had hitherto been done on slates. Of course there was always Scripture in addition to the three R's, and it must have been a great mitigation to the ills of life, though great stress was laid on the learning by heart, and the explanation, of the catechism. Religious teaching did not have the effect of making the children's school lives moral; school routine was 'the devil' and proved too strong. A certain log-book gives on one page the names of two boys who won First Prizes for 'Scripture'. Two pages later the same two boys are punished for unruly behaviour, including stone-throwing on the public road. The riotous behaviour of children let loose from school

is sufficient sign of the unsuitability of the work; stone-throwing, boys hitting little girls with sticks, the stealing of fruit and flowers, were almost daily occurrences, whereas now a teacher would be self-critical if they happened once a month. To return to religious instruction; the visits of the clergyman to help with this subject provided welcome variety. Written work was expected by the Diocesan Inspector, and this must have been either writing from memory, or the answering of questions—either more interesting than transcription or dictation. There is a pleasingly different tone in the Diocesan Inspector's report from that of H.M.I. The former is usually encouraging, finding something or other to appreciate. Possibly the partial responsibility of his brother clergyman may have helped to make sympathy with the teacher's task fairly complete.

Sewing was not in 1862 recognized for grant-aid, but it was made compulsory for girls and thus never ceased to be taught. The practical nature of the subject made it almost impossible to adopt completely perverted methods of teaching it. The sewing lesson must have been a welcome interlude to the girls; not so for the boys, for until drawing became a recognized subject they had an extra lesson in one of the three R's while girls sewed. The importance of the sewing lesson was clear to managers, and women visitors paid much attention to it. The sewing mistress often taught this subject only and was well paid. The girls did not sew for themselves or for their homes; perhaps parents could not afford to run the risk of the girls spoiling the material. Often large parcels of sewing came from the vicarage. In one log-book a full list is given of garments received from the vicarage to be made and mended; the children

hemmed cloths, made chemises, drawers, night gowns, and check shirts, turned sheets, repaired pillow-cases and 'flannel gowns'. Large parcels were received and returned fortnightly. The size of these suggests to those who know the rate at which children sew that the sewing mistress did a good deal herself, but at any rate the children must have seen the methods of making and mending a variety of materials and garments.

The first rigours of the Revised Code were gradually modified. As early as 1867 it was possible for schools to give a three-years' course to individuals in Standard IV, V, and VI in any one or two of the following subjects: geography, grammar, and history.

In 1871 drill and singing were encouraged, together with other subjects which were seldom taken up in rural schools. Thus many rural schools established after the passing of the School Boards Act have always had, with the exception of occasional lapses when suitable teachers were not forthcoming, at least a wider curriculum than that of the three R's.

In 1875 the famous 'class' subjects were introduced. Grants were given for the satisfactory teaching of grammar, geography, and history, if these were taught to the whole school. In the case of these subjects, the whole class was examined, not individuals.

From 1876 English literature became a 'specific' subject. No doubt it is due to this fact that it is possible to find here and there an able old labourer who knows, or has a vague recollection of, a couple of hundred lines of Shakespeare. Drawing became compulsory for boys in 1893, but by that time 'payment by results' had come to be recognized as a mere substitute for education,

cheap and nasty if not useless. The narrowly utilitarian curriculum had gone.

No 'standard' was set in the Revised Code, naturally, for infants, but neither was any grant paid for teaching them till 1871. From that year a grant was paid which varied with the accommodation provided. The infant class was popular from the beginning. The importance of the school as a kindly and efficient nursery is, and always has been since infants were accepted, recognized by parents more fully than that of its other functions.

The first of the 'specific' or 'class' subjects to be taken by a school was usually grammar. But this subject was no corrective to the dry unstimulating school diet; neither, strange as it seems, was recitation when this came to be taken. The number of lines of verse to be learnt by each class when English literature was a 'specific' subject was stated in the Code, and often several classes would learn the same piece—Standard IV 40 lines, Standard V 60, and the top class 80. Apparently the instructions were interpreted literally, for the log-book of a much-praised school records the day on which the teacher decided that the classes must terminate their recitation so as to 'make sense'. The method was to learn the piece aloud with the 'expression' dictated by the teacher. For months a regular passer-by on the road outside the school might hear the first eighty lines of Browning's *Pied Piper of Hamelin*, or of *The Lady of the Lake*, being droned or shouted in unison. Happily for the children, the Pied Piper remains a cheery companion however you may treat him, and the 'stag at eve that drank his fill' a romantic picture to little south country boys and girls.

Singing, almost universal from about 1874, must have been a joy too, even when the songs were such as:

'Close the Shutters, Willie's Dead',
'Come home Father' (from the public-house),
'Ring the Bell, Watchman',
'The Flower Girl',
'Those Evening Bells',
'If a Body find a lesson',
'Always Cheerful'.

These and other songs were used all over England for twenty years. No doubt some Training College taught them. There was a sprinkling of better things: 'The Blue Bells of Scotland', 'White Sand and Gray Sand', 'O who will O'er the Downs', Gatty's 'Little Songs for Little Voices'.

Geography was often introduced fairly early, but consisted largely of the learning of definitions, and of strings of names.

The first introduction of really interesting subject-matter was usually in the object lessons to the younger children, which began to be generally given about 1884. Strange animals and common objects were here described, and pictures shown. The procedure was analytical; the animal was taken part by part, after definition, the lesson closing with a statement of its uses. The cow was not so much the local source of milk and profit as a ruminant, a quadruped, and a mammal.

For all their unreality and detachedness there must have been moments of fascination about lessons on the lion, the elephant, the dog, the daisy, the ass, the hare. (Like the cuckoo, object-lesson animals never got into the plural). These lessons had no connexion one with

another: a lesson on 'The Pin' might follow a lesson on 'The Face'.

Some schools did all that could be done. The mistress of Shilswell village school with seventy children in her charge, including infants and all the standards, with only unqualified help, taught three subjects beside the minimum three R's from the opening of the school in 1872.

It is a good exercise for the imagination to take a Revised Code time-table and compare it with a modern one. One dated 1883, for a school which was apparently taking grammar as a class-subject, is given as an appendix on p. 273. Without a time-table it is difficult to imagine how the five hours of the school day could be practically filled with the three R's. Not only do the children to-day have physical exercises and games, several forms of handwork, geography, nature study, history, literature, but the modern teacher has also at his or her command an infinity of modes of approach to the subject of a lesson, and of class organization.

As to methods and detailed content of lessons during the period of the Revised Code the paucity and restrictedness of these passes belief. One mistress notes in her log-book, as if a revelation had come to her, that she saves time, and the children are less difficult to control, if instead of spelling out aloud every word of a dictation, she writes up the passage on the black-board before the lesson, and allows the children to correct each others' efforts from the board. The only schemes of work used by the schools was the examination schedule. In thousands of schools now the schemes are short and poor and show little or nothing of mental and spiritual consequences hoped of the work, or of logical sequence in what is to be done, but at least there are schemes for

every subject in every class. In the nineties schemes began to be used. Their importance was that they led on teacher and pupils from point to point of interest, suggested that overmuch repetition was undesirable, that there were new fields, new paths lying open to the class if only they pressed on. One mistress who began to use schemes in January 1894 notes in October 'Still working by Scheme. Children seem to be making rapid progress. It seems much nicer for the children in many ways.' A few months ago the writer met an old lady of 74 who began teaching somewhere about 1868 and had continued till 1923. She talked of how distressed and worried she had been by the new methods of the head master who arrived about 1907. Asked what struck her as most different from old ways she said it was being given a scheme for the year's work. She thought she would never get through it. So distressed was she by schemes and new subjects that at last she had asked His Majesty's Inspector if she might speak to him in private. She had said to him that she could not teach the ornamental subjects—physical exercises, drawing, and plasticene modelling—but she could give the children a thoroughly sound foundation; she could teach the three R's! Schools and teachers are sometimes accused of bookishness and over fondness for the clerkly subjects—unjustly, but naturally not untruly, since they have been brought up in a system with so unpractical a bias.

It 's an ill wind blows no good, and the low and narrow aim bestowed upon the schools by the Revised Code was at least a national one. Managers who would not have arithmetic taught lest the boys should take too much interest in wages were defeated by the School Boards

Act. At least sheer illiteracy and inability to use coins became so abnormal as to be shameful. Allotments were being denied to the agricultural labourer; he was not allowed to share in the prosperity that agriculture experienced during some of these years; but the day will not soon come again when farmers can be fairly prosperous while the labourers must be content with a diet of 'skim' cheese, onions, and 'kettle broth'.

The very excessive simplicity of the test for the schools was useful occasionally in convincing some managers of the abnormally poor quality of their schools. The log-book of the Wortleton School bears witness to this.

Jan. 10th, 1897. 'The instruction of this school is very poor, especially in Arithmetic. No children were presented above the Second Standard and even in that standard little work was done.'

An unqualified teacher, who was also the village herbalist, was removed after this.

The comfortable fact that the somewhat miserable attainments of the public schools were at least higher than those of many of the remaining dame schools has already been alluded to.

1885. H.M.I.'s Report. 'The numbers of this school have been swelled by the breaking up of a Dame's School in the village and Mrs. Fellowes has taken very great pains with the ill-taught children thus introduced.'

It has been suggested that the National or Church schools had certain defects as such. Often the Board schools were better provided for in the matter of buildings; but Church and Board schools alike suffered extremely from poverty of equipment, and in some cases the Board school buildings, good enough in the first

place, were not enlarged or modified when the number of children was doubled. One small country school, where a record of receipts of stationery and other equipment was kept, received in twelve months only one dozen pieces of chalk, one bottle of ink, and one dozen pencils (log 1867). In another the pupils had to provide their own copy and exercise books (log 1876). The following extracts from a Board school log-book (1877–98) will show how one school had to struggle and wait for desks (the children must have been sitting on the little low 'forms' or benches one sometimes sees in schools), black-board, pens, pencils, paper, needlework materials, clock, and dustbin. At the same time an extension of premises was called for. A school which now seems small for twenty, though a huge new window has been put in, in recent years, to afford light and air, was then being used for over fifty children. Even the inspector's threats of withholding of grant do not provoke action. (At first His Majesty's Inspector writes comments in the log-book, but afterwards as a rule he sends formal reports. Other entries are comments by the teacher.) The years in which entries were made should be carefully noted.

1877. April 8th. 'Some pictures are needed for the infants and a board and easel. F. W. H. M. (H.M.I.)'

Between this date and the next the school suffered many vicissitudes. One unqualified teacher after another was appointed; for one period the school was closed; for another the elder children were sent to a neighbouring school.

1882. Aug. 2nd. 'I am glad to see the attendance so much better, and the children in good order. Some desks, a black-

board and easel and a table are needed. The question of the enlargement of the school must be considered. F. W. H. M. (H.M.I.).'

1883. Jan. 19th. 'Have not yet received any desks for children.'

1883. June 3rd. 'Some more desks and an easel are urgently needed. The question of the enlargement of this school needs consideration. F. W. H. M. (H.M.I.).'

1884. June 13th. 'Miss H—— has raised it (the school) to a very high state of efficiency in spite of the drawbacks of irregular attendance and an over crowded schoolroom—A classroom is greatly to be desired. A clock is needed for the schoolroom. F. W. H. M. (H.M.I.).'

1885. June. 'Miss H. obtains results as good as unfavourable circumstances will permit. The room is most inconveniently crowded—This should be at once remedied otherwise the whole of next year's Grant will be withheld.'

1886. Report in almost identical terms as for 1885. Classroom and clock pressed for again.

1886. May 7th. 'Children languid owing to the hot weather.'

May 21st. The clock arrives.

July 2nd. 'The heat makes the children very languid.'

1887. The Merit Grant is withheld from the school in spite of Mistress's good work because of over-crowding.

July 8th. 'The heat is so oppressive children are disinclined for work.'

1887. H.M.I.'s Report. 'No attention has been paid to the frequent comments made on the overcrowding of this schoolroom, nor has any step been taken to gravel the playground or to improve the access to the school. No member of the Board appears to have tested the register during the whole year—More reading books are needed. There is no attendance officer. On the other hand the Mistress (who is now leaving) has worked with great skill and energy and the children who have attended with any regularity are particularly well taught.

'The school yard offices are in a discreditable and dangerous state. The cesspool is without covering and in a foul condition.'

N.B. The School's grant was reduced *because the registers had not been checked.*

1888. H.M.I.'s Report. 'The separate offices for the girls mentioned last year as greatly needed have not yet been provided. The infants are fairly well taught but somewhat restless.'

June 6th. 'I am glad to hear the offices are completed.'

H.M.I.'s Report. 1891. Nov. 3rd. 'If the room is not at once enlarged it will probably be my duty to recommend that no grant shall be paid—Warnings have now extended over some years. H.M.I.'

1892. March 18th. 'The room has been so full of children this week that proper lessons were not carried on, there was not room enough for the children to sit comfortably. The Board at their last meeting consented for me to have another desk.'

March 29th. '59 children present this morning. No pen and ink work could be done as the children could not sit conveniently. I could not use the board as there was no room for it to stand.'

1893. H.M.I.'s Report. 'The children are wanting in smartness and vigour.' 'The children are orderly but very listless. The access to the offices for boys and girls must be made separate.'

1894. Oct. 12th. H.M.I.'s Report. 'I am glad to see some improvements but a dustbin is still needed and the accesses to the offices are not yet quite satisfactory.'

1895. March 11th. 'A dustbin and a chair or box to sit on and cut out upon are needed. H.M.I.'

1897. July 1st. H.M.I.'s Report. 'No further delay should occur in providing the required dustbin and the fence for dividing the boys' and girls' offices.'

1898. The renovation of the premises has been very satisfactorily carried out.

It took two years of pressure to procure a clock from the Board, three to get a dustbin, sixteen to enlarge a school with a distinct resemblance to the Black Hole.

Such, in all fairness of statement, was the chrysalis state of our schools. Unloved by pupils, unhonoured by parents, patronized rather than supported, the schools needed in many ways rather to begin afresh than to develop.

The time for new birth has come. Perhaps the butterfly's head came through at the passing of the Education Act of 1902. By that time there was more or less general recognition of the fact that a science of education was needed. In America and elsewhere educationists were conducting experiments; scholars were applying the comparative method to historic systems; psychology had new methods, and new types of persons pursuing them. Following upon these developments, and upon reflection on its own experience, the Board of Education had grown a body of knowledge of English educational experiments and a corps of experts to apply the knowledge. The Act of 1902 (though it failed to make a satisfactory settlement in regard to the related problems of Voluntary school buildings and religious instruction, the former now proving in large numbers insufficient in size, unsuitable, and with little prospect of financial support), made a great success of the administration of rate-provided schools and of secular education. The County Councils Act had provided a local authority of size sufficient to make more or less equitable rating possible. The County area was far more like a genuine unit for educational purposes than the 'School Board' districts. It was large enough to make possible the employment of an administrative staff, with a capable

officer at the head. The greatest advantage was perhaps the new kind of personnel of which the new education authority was composed. The School Boards consisted largely of such men as might now be managers of Voluntary schools—excellent men for the conduct of parish affairs, but often not men of leisure, education, or wide thoughts. On County Councils are a proportion of leisured and educated persons. Elected for many purposes, and not *ad hoc*, the County Council has attracted and retained the interest of some able, public-spirited folk. These have understood the value of an expert staff. The Directors of Education (sometimes given, less liberally, the title 'Secretaries') whom they have appointed are perhaps now the most important education officers in the country. With a limited, yet sufficiently large, area to nurse, they have the opportunity of studying and modifying the schools in detail. They can and in many counties do make life worth living to the teachers in their area, giving help, encouragement, recognition, as well as the first essential, consistent administration.

Since 1902 there have been a number of important events affecting rural education; to choose two of them: —the introduction of handwork, which has at any rate in theory given us a balanced curriculum, and the Education (Administrative Provisions) Act, which provided for the medical inspection of school children. The latter is a sign that we have begun to think, not only that the rural elementary school's business is education rather than mechanical instruction, but that the physical aspect of the child's nature must be considered in his education.

If the butterfly of rural elementary education had its

head out of the cocoon in 1902, it was a little weak from malnutrition, and is taking time to spread its wings. Perhaps it will soon fly, however, if administrators and the public will only watch it sympathetically a little longer, and not step in and offer it, as the former have recently proposed to do, a little tonic containing an element of 'payment by results'.

III

SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND THEIR RELATION TO REORGANIZATION

THE unsatisfactory nature of many rural school buildings has received much attention of late. Some very frank language has been used about them even in the most responsible quarters. The Minister of Education has said (November 1926) that there are schools which are not 'fit to house a pig', and the Parliamentary Secretary has expressed the same sentiment more precisely, saying that there are school buildings which contribute to the degeneracy of their pupils. The general facts being so often reiterated it is not proposed here to dwell upon them, but rather to give a homely picture of the various ways in which a large number of schools hamper the effectiveness of the teaching and lower the physical and mental tone of teachers and children.

What is the proportion of defective premises to satisfactory ones? I suppose no one knows unless it be His Majesty's Inspectors. Certainly the Board's Black Lists issued to the local authorities in September 1925 do not comprise even a high proportion of the unhealthy school buildings. Not a single school alluded to in this chapter

is on the Board's Black Lists, A, B, or C. In making the lists the Board have looked first for thoroughly bad premises 'incapable of improvement' and then for schools which afford insufficient accommodation for the number of children they contain. But most of the rural schools were solidly built; the numbers of children have decreased and there is often sufficient space. Many a defect could be remedied without enormous expenditure.

There is, however, no denying that the remodelling of the school buildings to ensure that all were healthy and gave a suitable physical background for modern school life would be a great expense to the community. The buildings problem is often thought of as being part of the problem of religious education. So for the moment it is: most of the defective buildings are Voluntary schools. On a County 'black list' that lies before me, every school is a Church of England school. But then, the Local Education Authority, responsible for few premises, has been able to set its houses in tolerable order with comparative ease. When, however, ways have been found through the difficulties between the owners of the Voluntary schools and those responsible in the long run for our national education, this problem of buildings will become part of the general financial question, 'Is the nation willing to pay for the essentials of a good elementary education for its children?' If the Local Authorities find themselves called upon to take over the charge of the great majority of school buildings in the near future, some additional degrees of difficulty will accrue to this question. For that reason one could wish to address this chapter to the parents of our children, since they decide in the long run how urgent are good buildings, how far worth paying for.

Perhaps, too, parents could help dissolve the deadlock which has been the result of even the best efforts to find agreement between the protagonists for the schools. They could at least provide both parties with stronger, more urgent motives for finding common ground. The average parent, assuming him sufficiently independent to reveal his views, would surely not rest satisfied that his child should remain in cold, draughty rooms, or play in wet grounds, that he may learn the tenets even of his own Church, and of course many of the children in 'Church' schools are the children of Nonconformist or indifferent parents. The parent would somehow cut the knot, though one does not know how. No parent who clearly realized that his child's health suffered from preventible unhygienic conditions would accept compulsory schooling. There is crude wrong done, when the child is compelled to come into schools and there exposed to foul air, insufficient light, damp clothes. Yet this is the position. Those of us who regard moral and religious training as of the first importance should feel it of greater urgency that a solution of the problem should be found than any who might be satisfied with a solution tending to reduce the chances of effective moral and religious training.

Parents are not at present so ignorant of the defects of buildings or so silent about them as might be supposed by those who do not know them intimately. They may be heard at home, though they seldom raise their voices —sometimes because they hate to be conspicuous, at others because they cannot afford to be so, the managers of schools being employers, or possible employers. They are tolerant beyond belief, all too willing to suppose that the managers 'cannot help it'.

The historical explanation of conditions is perhaps worth recalling. The schools are practically all some fifty-five or sixty years old and many have undergone very little modification in all that time. They were built not to educate, but to instruct children, so that they were at first, and some remain still, just barns or halls. They were built at a time when the imitation of the good seemed the whole of architectural virtue, and so most of them are reminiscent of churches. They have heavy stone-framed windows at such a height that much of the floor space is necessarily in shadow. They were perhaps built rather with the Church and its needs, than with the children and their needs, in mind. It is no change of fashion, no mere rapid rising of the educational standard which is in question. In 1870 primary education was not generally understood at all. Now its fundamentals are becoming clear.

Apart altogether from methods of teaching, some of the schools were not, and still are not, even hygienically successful. There are schools whose log-books recorded fifty years ago that the temperature attainable on cold winter days was too low, whose log-books still record the same fact.

We must remember at this point that there do exist very fair, partially remodelled buildings; it is not forgotten, but the percentage of country schools suffering from the defects instanced below is high. The daily life of some schools could be improved immediately by the expenditure of fifty or a hundred pounds, but managers cannot afford to put in a single window or erect a screen to separate classes.

Maxwell Steeples School, for example, is so built that the Infants and the Junior Class (Standards I, II, and

III) in the Upper School must both sit in draughts all the winter. Try as the teachers may they cannot set the children so that they may escape or so that they do so themselves. In the infants' room this might possibly be effected if the 'gallery' were removed and desks unscrewed from the floor, but the managers will not have this done. They have so far declined to allow the head teacher to do the work himself, though he has offered to do it in his spare time, for the sake of his school. A gallery, perhaps it should be explained, is a series of broad steps, on which desks were set with the object of enabling the teacher to see every child without moving. Galleries were built on the assumption that the children rarely moved. Such an arrangement is of course totally incompatible with the proper training of the child. These galleries linger in quite a number of infants' rooms. The Maxwell Steeples School is a voluntary one, and the chairman is a difficult person. To do him justice I cannot think that he has been clearly and often told what are the extreme defects of the school. The teachers, for example, have not clearly told him that their own illnesses are due to the system of cutting draughts between door and door which are felt even in warm weather. I have heard a mother whose children attended this school say 'My Bertha and Willie have colds all the winter, through that draughty school'. I suggested she should write to the managers about it, and give me a copy of her letter to take to the Education Secretary, but my powers of persuasion were insufficient. In notes on other schools which will be given, allusions to hygiene and to educational defects are mixed. Some of these defects elude the eyes of parents, and must until they give thought to the children's education as such, not only

to their physique. The chief of these educational defects are small and ill-drained playgrounds, small infants' rooms, and the sharing of rooms by two classes. Hygienic defects are darkness, poor ventilation, crowded cloakrooms, inadequate heating.

Mornford School (one not hitherto mentioned) provides instances of all three types of educational defect. The infants' room here, too, suffers from a 'gallery'. Here are some short notes written after a fortnight's work in the school:

'There are two rooms; the larger contains two classes—Standards I to III—and the smaller one, the infants. The former looks fairly satisfactory at first. It is light and the space per child is sometimes less in other schools, *but* the lavatories are just outside two of the windows and there are only three in all. Now the weather is cold and if one didn't *see* the lavatories every time one looks out of the windows one wouldn't know where they were, but in summer it is intolerable to open any windows but the one in the end wall. Merely to knock windows in the other side could not be done without demolishing the school house. The playground is gravelled and terribly painful to fall on; its size is fair; after a shower of rain there is a large pond of water all along one side, and the ground picks up as if the world were coming away with your foot. Physical exercises are therefore very frequently put a stop to.

'The infants' room—I may be brief about it—is horrid. It is narrow and ascends in a gallery, steps and desks spanning the width, not the length of the room. The teacher has all the infants from 5 to 7 years old. (Usually children are allowed to come at 4, as the school is at the "poor" end of the village and parents press for the entry of their children, but just now not till 5 because the room is full.) Movement is all but impossible for the children. The teacher cannot arrange them in any way but all directly in front of herself,

so that they can practically never be divided into 2 classes, though some work is done individually. Those who fare worst here are the babies. They do not have a sufficient variety of occupation and are called on far too often to share the work of the bigger children. (Consideration of the shape and arrangement of the room will show that this must be so.) Two classes share a room in this school, but nevertheless the children are well taught and sometimes magnificently entertained.'

In numbers of rural schools drill must almost cease during the winter, for the playground is soaking and there is no space in school. The children thus lose not only their systematic exercise but fresh air, and also one of the activities that make school popular and that ease discipline by affording the boys an outlet for physical energy and animal spirits.

There is an even simpler aspect of this playground trouble, however. Schools exist where there is not a well-drained patch in the whole playground and which are neither more nor less than a danger to the children. See for example my notes on Brenton School, which will illustrate all the main defects with which we are now concerned. So far from the premises being condemned, it has recently been arranged that the elder children from another school shall attend there. The language in these notes is stronger than it is my wont to use; but I do not propose to interfere with comments made on the spot.

'The school building could be worse, I think, though its "porches", which are the cloakrooms, are abominable, and the playground execrable. The boys' playground is thick with mud—there is a good inch of stiff-to-slimy, according to the degrees of wetness of this January weather. Part of the girls' and infants' playground is a pool, at present. The infants' room presents a problem at playtime. Either the

children must go out and get their feet wet, or the next lesson time must start in confusion, for there are 33 children of from 4 to 7 years, who if kept indoors at playtime fill the room with themselves and with noise. Preparation for the next lesson is impossible. Of course this must happen on very wet days; but here it happens when there has been rain at all recently, for the wet does not drain out of the playground. Just now the children's outdoor clothing too seems permanently damp. The infants' porch, which serves as cloakroom, is so very thin of wall that it is as cold as the outside air.'

In this village I knew a mother who had recently come from a city to settle there. She told me of her visit to the school when she took her children to see the head teacher for the first time. 'I couldn't believe my eyes,' she said. 'That playground is one of the wettest places in the village. The whole place is dirty and dull. You should have seen the school my children used to go to. That *was* a school.'

We may contrast these notes with two lines on Wilmton School: 'The playgrounds are small, but they are cemented and really well-drained so that it is practically always possible to drill and play out of doors.'

The effect of a bad playground on the day's work is seen in another school: 'The playground is too wet in winter to allow of physical exercises. These are on the time-table for every morning, the fifteen minutes after Scripture, but have not been taken at all in ten days. The rooms are too small for drill and in the top class the furniture too cumbrous to be moved.' One more note on the subject of lavatories: 'The infants' room is large and light but far from well-aired. Two windows open on to lavatories; these (of the "pail" type) are not more than 4 yds. away. The teacher says they are smelt in

her room in summer and the "big" room is dreadful on summer days. Nor could it be otherwise. The original schoolroom has had one part (for Stds. I and II) cut off by a wood and glass partition, and another part (Stds. III and IV) is cut off by an ineffective curtain only.'

The following is an illustration of what has been said about the warming of some schools: 'The temperature of the rooms in school this morning (a snowy day) was 32 F. and I gather this is not infrequent. This afternoon the babies' room grew acutely cold but there chances to be an oil cooking stove there, and we lighted that.'

A matter that I have no notes on, because I found it in so many schools and came to take it for granted, is the lack of water for the children to wash in. Some years ago nearly all schools were provided with bowls and large cans and towels. But several difficulties caused them to fall out of use. There was no suitable place to set the wash-stand; a movable wash-stand is unsuitable for children—they inevitably knock it over, occasionally; only *one towel* a week is allowed by the Authority for small schools. The lack of a place for the wash-stand comes of the small size of cloak-rooms—often mere porches before the doors.

Not long ago a certain ex-Inspector of Schools wrote to *The Times* to point out that the elaborate equipment of schools was unnecessary. Wonders, he said, could be done with four walls and a few good books. But what a large proportion of our teachers have only *two* walls each! The 33 schools in which I worked for 2½ years recently are staffed with 104 teachers. Of these 48 have a room to themselves and 56 share a room with another teacher and her class. Perhaps if a fair sample of country schools were taken, including some of the larger schools

with 'centralized' senior classes and a correct proportion of one-teacher schools, the percentage (in my sample 53) of teachers sharing rooms might be reduced to somewhere about 40 per cent. Here at any rate is an extract which shows how difficult it can be for two classes to pursue their avocations satisfactorily in one room.

'It has been impossible to make many suggestions to Miss W. as to better methods, because her class is in the same room as the head-mistress's. The latter's voice is very powerful; and when her class is really quiet, then it is embarrassing for the young teacher to talk to be heard by the upper class, and for the children to answer. Indeed the younger children will not speak audibly under these circumstances because the head-mistress often interposes. This school could perfectly easily be divided by a screen, but it is a church school and there is no money.'

The difficulty of teaching two classes in one room varies with the size, shape, and acoustic properties of the room, with the personalities of the teachers, and with the methods used. I have myself taught fairly happily with only a curtain to divide my class from another; but it is very possible that my fellow teacher was less pleased with the arrangement. Satisfactory teaching under such conditions is not to be looked for: children must be quiet a good part of the day; group-work, essential for Standards I, II, and III, cannot be carried on; children must be kept from laughing, from any expression of excitement, from saying verses with spirit, even from moving from their places. But young children who are to work with zest must do all these things.

What is our ideal, our hope for the rural school building? We may take a modest, yet shining example. Not

long ago I was walking in a midland county, through a remote village lost in one of a score of little valleys among lumpy hills, and came upon the school. The cottages and farm-houses around were gracious seventeenth-century buildings with carved doorways and windows with stone mouldings. The school, too, had its touches of graciousness. The doors and the steps were wide and low, inviting to children, and the windows were large. It is not often one positively wants to go and look inside a village school, but this was definitely attractive. I knocked at a cottage door and asked who kept the key. An old lady came with us and unlocked. There was a wide passage with, on one side, long cloak-rooms with low basins for washing hands, and pipes to dry the clothes. There were windows in the cloak-rooms to let in light and air. One could imagine children here loving to keep clean and tidy, and developing the ordinary courtesies in meeting and passing each other. Between girls' and boys' cloak-rooms was a sort of housemaids' cupboard with brooms and cloths tidily hung. On the other side of the passage were class-rooms, one for the infants with a sound floor, so that the babies could sit upon it, a window reaching both high and low so that the sky was visible. The room was thus light in every corner, and the children, when tired with reading or modelling, could see the flight of birds, the trees in the wind, or the falling rain.

There were two other class-rooms, one for Standards I, II, and III, and one for Standards IV to VII. There was a movable partition between two rooms so that there was a good, though not very large, hall for singing, dancing, and parents' days. In the playground was a shelter for wet playtimes or out-of-door lessons, and a

patch of asphalt for drill. This sound little building was obviously well deserved. Evidences of the children's work—baskets, drawings, gardening charts, models—revealed sound teaching, happily occupied scholars.

'This', I said to my guide, 'must be a Council school.' She answered that it was. But it is precisely in such remote villages that one is certain there must have been a Church school. 'Was the Church school,' I asked, 'burnt down?' It seemed the only explanation of the children's present good fortune; and so it proved to have happened.

Adequate buildings and furniture that allows of individual movement and work might help our country education in unexpected ways. They would help to popularize the school with parents, as a well-kept and pretty school garden does. It is more than likely that they would bring the farmers' children into the school, and perhaps others. A good many country middle-class folk already realize that the teacher of the village school is far abler and better qualified than the governess they are able to employ. The coming of middle-class children to the school would not be clear gain, probably, in every way, but might we not hear less, if it happened, of the cost of the schools to the ratepayer? There are of course many schools in a middle state, with plenty of imperfections yet capable of being the scene of excellent work. The school building at Wixenham is one of these and yet illustrates what has been said as to education not being what was in the minds of the founders of our schools.

'It is a very ecclesiastical building with a terrifically high roof and huge high grouped-lancet windows. It could not have been a cheap building as it is substantial, the floor good,

the doors well fitting, etc. Also it is at present beautifully kept. There is obviously an excellent cleaner, who starches the curtain that divides the only room till it is as dainty as a Victorian lady's skirt, and scrubs the desks till they are quite delicious like kitchen tables, and all the cupboards are extremely neat. The school is roomy for 40, or would be if the children had a natural kind of seats instead of these long, cumbrous, iron-legged desks. With all the difficulties, one feels children *could* be educated here.'

A very average sort of building, that one would not put on a list for urgent work is that of Elmington.

'The whole building does not strike one as actively unpleasant although there is no space whatever but what is covered by desks and what affords narrow passages and spaces for black-boards. The infants' room is somewhat darkened now by large trees. The babies' room has been very dark this afternoon. I tried to think of ways by which all desks could be brought into the light patch but, as one usually finds, they are in as good places as they well could be. Pull them left and they are in a draught, right and it is darker still, and there's no room at all fore and aft.

A school whose comforts are far above the average but might afford a good ideal for an average is Wexwick.

'The school is not large, having only a staff of 3 (graduate head master, certificated teacher with City and Guilds certificate for cooking, and an uncertificated teacher in charge of Std. I and infants). But the building is, comparatively speaking, excellent. There are classrooms for each class; one room unsatisfactory as an ordinary classroom has been turned into a cookery, woodwork, and book-binding room, and a new infants' room has been built. A tiny old cloak-room has become a teachers' room. The new infants' room, with its plenty of low windows and its little tables and chairs that allow one to group the children, is a joy to teach in.'

There are of course a few much finer buildings than any mentioned here, but they have not fallen within the writer's experience. There is the 'Staffordshire' type of building, with corridors open to the air, that one has seen in country towns; and there are the open-air schools that are being built by Mr. George Widdows in Derbyshire, of which one or two have been opened.

No general standard can well be drawn up for small schools, except the hygienic standards of plentiful light and air. So much depends upon the number of children to the space. For larger schools, a certain minimum standard of convenience may reasonably be suggested. In a pamphlet published by the Oxfordshire Education Committee, a standard is indicated as follows:

'(*a*) Separate class-rooms for each group.
(*b*) A simply fitted Science room.
(*c*) Workshop and Domestic Subjects room, available for school dinners.
(*d*) One classroom suitable for use as a library and quiet room.
(*e*) Adequate sanitary and washing arrangements must be provided and the question of the provision of a bath might well be considered, it having been shown elsewhere that this is not an impossible, or even expensive, proposition, and is of decided value in the teaching of hygiene.
(*f*) A good garden.
(*g*) A safe playground and a playing field.'

The provision of shower baths is easy and inexpensive where schools have central heating, and in the hands of a wise and clever teacher, warm baths would add enormously to the popularity as well as the usefulness of the school.

The question of school buildings is bound up with two others, the amalgamation of schools or centralization of upper classes, and the problem of religious teaching. It is difficult to find any simple approach to this trinity of problems. We have seen that the physical conditions are in great need of improvement, and it is clear at once that the abandonment of very tiny schools and the concentration of upper classes would help in this matter. Fewer schools would have to be remodelled; the new or improved buildings would cater for a sufficient number of children to ensure a rapid return, in use, for the capital expenditure. But at present there are two authorities for school buildings—managers of Voluntary schools and local education authorities, and it is usually impossible to concentrate the 'eleven plus' children, except where the children of the district under consideration are all housed in Church schools, or all in provided schools—the latter an extremely rare case. It is easily seen that this difficulty is a real one. If the managers of a Church school do not close it to 'eleven plus' children, the Local Authority's plans for concentration are defeated.

Frequently managers are quite unable to recondition their buildings but are extremely reluctant to hand them over, fearing that when the schools become 'provided' or 'council' schools the religious teaching will be less good and less frequent. Of course, in many council schools excellent religious and moral teaching is given, better suited perhaps sometimes to the ages of the children than religious teaching with a considerable doctrinal element. But there is no guarantee that the religious teaching given will be permanent, and there is a tendency for religious teaching which is cut off from a

church to be vague or over-intellectual. For these reasons, the managers do all in their power to retain the parish 'national' schools. It is probable that the lay managers, though less interested than the clergy, have an additional reason for wishing to retain the schools. They are often natives of the village, and in their capacity as villagers dislike greatly to see their village lose its school, or the school lose its elder pupils. It has been said that a village always 'loses caste' when this happens. On the other hand, the educational authorities—the Board of Education and the Education Committees of the County Councils—have decided that the gathering together of upper classes into efficient schools is essential. As far as they have been able they have already acted and are acting in this conviction.

Every week 'concentration' of upper classes goes forward, and any statement as to what has been done is immediately out of date. It may be briefly stated, however, that one county has already a complete system of 'senior' (or post-primary district) schools. Another with 250 schools has over seventy senior schools and departments, and several counties have complete grouping schemes with which they proceed as opportunity occurs. Other counties have no settled scheme, but group schools as and when they see their way to do so.

The educational reasons for transferring the elder pupils to larger schools have always been clear not only to educationists but also to intelligent parents. Ever since the opening of the schools, in some districts where a large village is surrounded by small ones, a few of the bigger boys of the small villages have walked or cycled to (as they used to put it) a school with a head master, that is to say, to a larger school, where the classification

of children made better teaching possible. I have myself seen such boys trudging off three miles from school to home nearly thirty years ago.

Tiny village schools, served by one or two teachers only, have never been able to keep the children fully employed to the limit of their capacity till they left school: time has always been to some extent wasted in the higher classes. Now that the leaving age has been raised to fourteen plus it is more than ever difficult for teachers in charge of several standards to deal adequately with all the children. It is universally recognized now that the teaching of handwork and crafts must be developed, but the equipment for these subjects is expensive and it would be impossible to provide it in every village. A further reason for centralization becoming yearly more important is that central schools, unlike village schools, may be able to give effective help with the education of adolescents (see Chap. VIII).

The other reason for centralization is financial. The rising cost of teachers' salaries and pensions is adding enormously to the cost of education, and it is impossible to provide such buildings and equipment in every village as will enable the community to get full value from the increasing skill and knowledge of teachers; and larger schools enable certain economies to be made which can be set against the rising salaries.

If we are, then, to keep down costs to a reasonable level, and yet improve village education, concentration is inevitable. Yet concentration has itself great disadvantages which can only be overcome by carrying it out in the most systematic way possible. The grouping of villages needs to be done with full regard to the distances to be travelled by children, and to any tradi-

tional connexions and relationships between the villages. Still more important, the central school to which children are sent must make special provision to meet the needs of the children coming from distances. The 'muddling through' sometimes enforced by the lack of agreement between managers and Local Authorities leads to disadvantages for, and deterioration in, the children and to some bitterness and resistance on the part of parents. For example, Brenton School, on which some notes are given above (p. 82), has had the children of a neighbouring parish transferred to it. Here there is no provision whatever for midday meals, and the cloakrooms are disgracefully crowded. This is only one instance among a number in my experience. Such cases are not limited to Church school buildings (an instance is given elsewhere of a council senior school where no arrangements are made for the midday meal) but these are chiefly concerned, and it is dual responsibility which prevents a systematic attack, county by county, upon the problem.

The parent has already been referred to in connexion with the problem of centralization. Sometimes he has been a great thorn in the flesh of Education Committees and directors wishing to proceed with centralization. Compulsory attendance for children at a school two miles from home is not popular, and parents have occasionally stubbornly resisted it. To this is due the fact that chairmen of Education Committees, and directors who have schemes for senior schools to cover their whole county, sometimes do not publish them, fearing that the combined opposition of managers and parents may defeat, or indefinitely postpone, the whole thing. This proceeding is tactical, and no man can be a successful

director without the exercise of extraordinary patience and finesse. But because the best of the parents are our most needed ally, and because without their aid as well as the teachers' the children's problem must continue unsolved, it is extremely desirable that the reforming administrator should carry them with him, rather than be content with their tardy admission that his reform had points. It will probably be a long time before parents give their full confidence to educational authorities; the compulsory aspect of education has made the latter seem rather forbidding. Nevertheless a certain percentage of parents believe in education, and would be enthusiastic about any scheme that they believed would benefit their children. As we have seen, some of them believed in centralization long before any scheme for it was mooted. The conversion of the majority of the parents must perhaps await the solution of some other problems. A modest beginning could be made in this connexion by meeting some of their criticisms; by refraining from centralization of schools until certain of their objections can be fully met.

A great deal of the dislike of parents to the transference of the upper classes to senior schools is due to fear of physical consequences to the children. The children's clothes are not suitable for long journeys to school, whether walking or on provided bicycles, nor can our poorest parents make them so. Many central schools have no provision for the drying of clothes. The children are absent from the home midday meal, and sandwiches are not suitable food between two arduous school sessions. Teachers and pupils alike need the kind of meal that refreshes and rests. The accompaniments of the meal are as important, of course, as the food. The

children miss the settled and civilizing routine of the home meal, and the change of scene from school. They may spend the hour and a half or two hours between morning and afternoon sessions with rough and unmannerly children and the results of a great deal of patient training vanish with a rapidity incredible to those who do not know children. (Of course some children hardly suffer in this way—those who habitually eat bread and margarine and jam in the street for their dinner.)

In general, it may often be seen that children go back in their general deportment on being transferred to the senior school. Parents say they 'lose' their children. The pupils do not receive in a large school that close individual attention that was given them in the junior school; if the classes in the new school are large the discipline may be of quite a different nature. Certain it is that after transference they often become rude and uncontrolled. One teacher writes to me on this subject:

'When the elder children leave their own village there is no one to keep an eye on their general behaviour in the village out of school hours or at public entertainments etc. The teachers of the school they attend cannot know of their doings as does one who lives amongst them and can do such an enormous amount by talks to the children and parents when ill behaviour is noted. The whole character of a village is thus almost bound to suffer in time.'

The supervision of the midday meal, provision for the drying of clothes, and in addition the interest in and watchfulness of teachers over the physical well-being of children who are away from home for as many as eight hours (8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.), are the *sine qua non* of successful and popular centralization. Country teachers will never feel, it is to be hoped, as some small groups of

urban teachers seem to do, that care for the children's physical needs is outside their functions. At the same time, some of the solutions of the meal problem involve too much voluntary work and sacrifice on the part of teachers. The preparation of a meal sometimes falls upon teachers when it might better fall upon parents; but where there is a domestic subjects mistress arrangements are easy.

A cheap meal for the children (which might be free in very necessitous cases) would perhaps help to cut the vicious circle by which poor wages lead to poor physique, and poor physique to incompetence and poverty. The midday hour is more than a meal time, however, and there should be some choice of occupations, some responsibilities and jobs for the children. It should be possible to pursue hobbies, and read in quiet, and there should be freedom to play indoor games on wet days.

Conveyance to school ought to be on a more liberal scale. The reluctance of labourers to take up work on farms in villages without a school, or even with only a junior school, is becoming a real difficulty for farmers, besides the inconveniences and hardships the situation brings to the labourers' families. Transport from the old school doors would meet the great majority of cases.

For the break in discipline, the cure is effective communication between the tributary schools and the central schools. Aims must be cognate; schemes must be co-ordinated; pupils must be interpreted a little by the teachers who already know them and their homes and parents to those into whose charge they go. The teachers of the junior schools should thus be able to interpret the aims of the central school to parents, and help them to discover the advantages of the new régime.

The objections of villagers as such to the loss of their school's senior pupils have more justification than is often thought. Many villages will exchange a certificated college-trained teacher, a man or woman of good education, varied experience, and social confidence, for an uncertificated teacher possibly lacking all these, and certainly of far less use as a villager. The combination of two parishes into a single cure for Church purposes, which is also proceeding now to some extent, together with the centralization of schools, may leave some villages without a single educated resident who feels a duty to the village as a community.

The reorganization of schools undoubtedly breaks in upon the unity and self-containedness of the village. How serious a matter this is it is difficult to say. Certainly no substitute can be found for the village as a unit of social life. One has listened to visionaries who would carve the country into new units, but it cannot be done. The village, the market town, and the county remain the social entities to country folk. It is in the village, and here only, that the humblest of us can make a perceptible contribution to the community's economy and government. If the central schools subtract something from the individuality of villages they can only make it up by sending back improved villagers. They must on no account be run, as the secondary schools have sometimes been, for the country-*leaving* section of their pupils. The head teacher must be a man or woman who has a thorough understanding of rural life. It is then possible for him or her to approach sympathetically the view of the parent who dislikes centralization, and to meet the strongest of his or her objections. If the central schools which are opened are satisfactory we

shall be able to demonstrate to parents the educational advantages which they have not been able to foresee. When they visit the schools we can say: 'This is the sort of education your children ought to have, do you not think so? See the space, the movement, the children have; see their alertness; look at their lively faces, free-moving bodies (those come of physical exercises and dancing); look at their practical capacity for sewing, cooking, woodwork (those come of the workrooms); look at the gardens (you yourselves need not leave these without some useful information); think of the general knowledge the children have (they get that from the school library); listen to the singing; see the acting (are those possible in your tiny schools?).'

Parents will not, do not, resist so practical an appeal as this. The problem of interesting and satisfying the parents must some day be tackled; our education will continue to be half a failure till home and school have a vastly better understanding.

We now come to the third of our trinity of problems—that of religious education. It is the Church's duty to safeguard religious education, and this is the cause of her reluctance to hand over the buildings, her retention of which seems the only guarantee that religious instruction will find a permanent place in the curriculum.

The difficulty of adjusting matters satisfactorily between the owners of the buildings and the authorities responsible for education is immense. It is possible, however, to state it in simple terms: it is that of adopting a new degree of specialization of function. The Church in the past supervised all education, besides many other departments of life. In the early part of last century it was still providing education for many thousands of

children. Its interest, however, in the development of the children as citizens, as young animals, as denizens of the modern industrial and social world, was not sufficient, and the State, for which these matters are all-important, took over the control of the standard of secular work and the curriculum. Since 1902 the Church has retained only responsibility for buildings, for religious instruction, and—but for the power of veto—the appointment of teachers.

But the Church's only real interest in the schools lies in the religious teaching. The Church (in some sense or other of that term) is certainly the right authority for religious education. The State as such, alone, can never adequately provide and administer it. If the dead-lock is allowed to continue until an impatient public presses to a solution by political means the children will be left to suffer from the buildings now, and—most probably—from inferior arrangements for religious education later. It would be better that the apportionment of functions between Church and State should be thought out by those with special interest in and knowledge of both.

Two things seem clear; first that religious education in Council or 'provided' schools is dependent upon chance connexions between the specialized religious world, and the specialized educational world, and therefore is less constant and on the whole less good than religious education in schools with a definite connexion with the, or a, Church; second, if religious education is to be real it must be linked with the children's whole life, and Sunday and evening schools and confirmation classes cannot achieve this correlation. The retention of the 'Scripture' lesson with its invitation to teacher

and pupils to view life steadily and whole, to give consideration for a time to ultimate values, to get the school and themselves into touch with whatever greater realities and powers they can reach, should be one of the chief aims of those anxious about the quality of our education. From what we have said follow the corollaries that in 'Church' schools the buildings are in the wrong hands and the guidance of religious education in the right ones.

Buildings are the background of the whole of school life, and should therefore be controlled by those whose function it is to know the necessary physical background for all the children, and all the subjects, and all the methods of teaching. If the Church could right its buildings now, they would need small modifications in ten years' time. Profit from improved buildings will mainly accrue to the State, and only the State will be able and willing to afford the progressive improvement and modification of the schools.

One may illustrate the fact that those who best understand and most care for the true function of buildings find ways of equipping them by visiting Church schools and churches. No buildings are better cared for now than English village churches. They are cherished and provided for at almost no matter what cost because they are guarded by those fully alive to their function and importance. It is not only that their beauty is retained; they are furnished, warmed, and decorated, while school precincts remain hindering and debilitating. Yet it cannot be doubted that the rural public will see the school's needs as clearly as the church's when they have been adequately demonstrated by those who understand them.

On the way to a reasonable redistribution of functions, the State to care for the building and the Church for religious education, lie many sleeping dogs, as for example those who fear and dislike sectarian religious teaching; the churchman who would drive the hardest possible bargain by means of possession of the schools; and the teachers' organizations in fear of an arrangement likely to raise dissension in their ranks. The only way to avoid awakening any of these is to confine the problem to the narrowest limits. Every settlement attempted on a large scale has so far failed.

It is not proposed here even to describe these larger schemes, since none seem to afford any hope of settlement. It will perhaps be best that no national settlement should be attempted. Perhaps permanency need not be sought even in arrangements for particular schools. The Church might perhaps lease its schools to the Education Authorities one by one, for varying periods, such that the improvements made by the L.E.A. might be held to have been paid for in use, the L.E.A. taking over the appointment of teachers, but leaving the managers to make their own arrangements for religious instruction much as they do now. The schools most difficult to arrange about would be those intended to be used as central or consolidated schools, where a considerable amount of building must be done. Where leases have to be long, correspondingly careful and elastic arrangements would have to be made for the conduct of the schools.

A temporary solution would leave us all time and opportunity to modify our views in peace; for views on religious matters, and not least on religious teaching, are in a state of flux. The emphasis laid upon various

matters in the creeds of the Churches, and in some cases the creeds themselves, are changing. It is precisely the most thoughtful and sensitive ministers and teachers who least wish to be challenged as to the truth of, or desirability of teaching to children, some of the more difficult doctrines.

In the interpretation of doctrines and narratives the Churches grow nearer each other, and unattached but thoughtful people nearer to them. What the Churches may effect in the matter of religious teaching, if only a co-operative attitude can be developed in the parties to the difficulty, no one can say. Already joint committees of representatives of various Churches and educationists have produced joint syllabuses and service books in the Cambridge, Oxford, and Leicester counties. In Church schools the books published by the National Society and the new Winchester Syllabus are broadening and liberalizing religious education. The work has been simplified to the teachers' minds, and anxiety removed, by the frank admission of difficulties and suggestions as to how best some thorny subjects may be treated in school. The scripture lesson is now in numbers of schools a favourite subject—a position it has not often occupied in this century with either teacher or pupil.

But religious controversy would be frost on this development; and any attempt to force or press religious teaching on schools not at present giving it a high place would depress the chances of the very development sought. There are curious facts in the situation, e.g. that many of the teachers whose teaching is the most spiritual and the most attractive to the children are not the least agnostic on many points; that the parents of

perhaps half our children have little or no religious conviction. The sceptical attitude, less forceful perhaps in the middle classes now, has filtered down to the country working classes.

If the Church should retain her present influence on the religious teaching, without friction or overmuch discussion, would it not be best for the prospects of religious education? Might not a great co-operative voluntary movement spring up from this nucleus, and spread —as it has begun to do—to all schools in the country, a genuinely spiritual movement? The content of scripture lessons would have to be more general under such conditions than Church members would at first sight wish, but children under fourteen are not yet ready to be convinced on the subject of creeds. Also where parents do not respect creeds it is rash to teach them before the children can be prepared to defend them.

The scripture hours are a great opportunity, at present very imperfectly used. Much time is given, at any rate technically given, to scripture—more than to any other subject except Arithmetic. The technique needed for scripture—reading and writing—is taught in other lessons. There is a grand opportunity for cultural, influential work—at present thrown away in a good number even of Church schools. To a large extent there are still the teachers to convert to the enthusiastic use of this time. Some still teach with one eye or both eyes on the Diocesan Inspector's visit; some still teach babies of five the Ten Commandments (Thou shalt not murder —Thou shalt not covet); some use the time in part for odd jobs, and a general tying up of loose ends. If a teacher is to do more than tell stories, and set tasks in learning by heart, he needs great knowledge.

If the numbers of country clergy are to be reduced by the joining of two parishes to make a single cure the Church will depend more and more upon teachers for the work done in school. In any case it might be better if the work with young children were left more to them, and the ministers kept their energy for dealing with the sore needs of adolescents. A genuine intimate knowledge of children and their religious and moral selves would reveal the vain solemnity of some of our discussions of work in elementary schools. The latter can only be places of preparation for adolescent and adult religious training and leading; they are too much regarded as places where children can be given the religious instruction to which they are entitled without undue trouble, because in school they are already assembled and under discipline.

Where the clergy help with day-school work, the help could usually be far more effective. More knowledge of psychology and educational method would treble the value of their work and the warmth of their welcome in school. For though like every one, except irate mothers, the vicar already gets an unvaryingly courteous and patient reception, he is not often welcomed for his teaching alone. The teachers 'would as soon he didn't come'. He usually lectures the children too much, or else, but this is rare, over-excites them. In either case, when he has gone the discipline is 'ragged' and the teacher must proceed to correct the atmosphere by means he does not regard as desirable. The vicar's work in school should be, on the one hand that of the Scripture expert, to feed and freshen the minds of the rest of the staff on this subject, and on the other to learn, and to help to forward, the general aims of the school, as conceived by

its head teacher. A recent letter in *The Times* from Miss Cordelia Leigh says that the chief need of the clergy is the training of a teacher, and there is much in this view. But much could be learnt from the trained teachers that are already in the villages.

IV

CURRICULUM AND METHODS TO-DAY

THE Revised Code of 1862 narrowed the curriculum to the three R's, Scripture, and plain needlework for girls; from that date it has gradually widened till, from four subjects, the ordinary time-table now contains about ten, classing all English studies as one.

The new or revived subjects crept into the time-table in approximately the following order: singing and physical exercises, grammar, literature (in the form of recitation), geography, history, drawing, nature study, handwork. The last, if we except needlework and drawing, has achieved its place since 1906. But the change in the curriculum is much greater really than the multiplication of subjects in the time-table shows. English, for example, in the worst days of the Revised Code included only writing, dictation, and reading. A child in a good school now will, before he leaves, have worked at English in almost a score of forms. His powers of conversation will have been developed first; he will have written compositions, learned poetry, acted in plays, made speeches, tried his hand at writing verse, learned a little grammar; he will have read scores of books—some of which will have contained ancient legends, some mere stories, some geographical descriptions, while some will

have been accounts of exploration; he will have read or consulted books on practical matters. Handwork too will have taken a number of forms—frequent drawing, modelling, and weaving in the infant school; raffia, cane, and cardboard work in the junior department, with possibly also short spells at stencil-cutting, toy making from oddments, and other minor crafts, and in the four highest standards, at least one, and probably two, technical subjects—gardening and wookwork, cooking and sewing; the child will also have done several kinds of drawing in his passage through the standards.

A yet greater change than that in subjects taught has come over school life in the last fifty years. In this matter, we may contrast even the best schools of the past with the good schools of to-day. It is difficult to put the difference in a word; it is a difference of atmosphere—the minutest intercourse between teacher and pupil is of a new kind. The best evidence of the change is in the increased happiness of the children. They are released from a life whose chief recognized virtue was obedience to the command of another, to a life of natural response and activity. Not very long ago I heard a young schoolmaster advise an assistant who had played a wrong note on the piano and apologized to the children for so doing, never to admit herself in the wrong! This is possibly a too bizarre illustration, but it sheds light on one-time, and not quite extinct, teacher-pupil relationships. In these days, the admission of a mistake is too good an opportunity to be lost. It is the chance to claim and receive the comradely smile of understanding, to show the worth-whileness of a great effort to retrieve a blunder, possibly to speak of the mental effect of uncorrected mistakes. The change is the result of the

development of the new science of psychology. Few teachers have as yet a wide or deep knowledge of this subject, but new facts and a new attitude filter through, not only to the schools, but to family life. Their general effect is to release teachers from fear of children; to bestow at least a vague feeling that if a child is naughty it is because his nature is being ignored in the work or the routine imposed. Not long ago I saw a teacher handling a class whose regular teacher was ill. A small boy was distinctly rude, and obviously doing experiments to discover the teacher's saturation point as to noise. The infection began to spread. 'Jack', said the teacher, perfectly nonplussed, 'I don't know a bit what to do with you'. 'Oh, Miss,' said a little girl, 'he is always imperent to everybody.' Jack subsided, having obtained for himself an undesirable label instead of lots of illicit fun. From that moment the peculiarities of everybody's behaviour were explained by the other children with reference to their disposition, or brains, or home. Cyril refused to settle to his book and the teacher was told 'He never can sit still'; another boy came to school dirty and before any step could be taken somebody volunteered that his mother was away. A belief in the fundamental reasonableness of human nature has spread, not only to teachers, but to the children too, and co-operation is effected, not only in the carrying out of pleasant work, but in the maintenance of just and considerate conduct.

Another result of the spread of psychological knowledge, together with the accumulation of records of teachers' work and experiments, is the change in methods of approaching subjects and carrying out work. We have seen how fifty years ago barn-like schools were

built, and furnished with long straight desks, both equipment and building assuming an active vociferous teacher and a silent, passive class. In these days, where a school is so fortunate as to have an enthusiastic staff, mere listening is not often exacted, and action, or endurance, in a unit so artificial for most purposes as a class is reduced to a minimum. That this is happening is not always apparent at first glance. In arithmetic children work quietly, all at the same time, but they are taught in small groups. The slowest children are allowed to work out the processes concretely and restrict their activities to the simpler examples of types of sum, and thus get a firm grasp of method. The quick children, or those with powers of abstract thought, are only bothered by too many concrete examples and they are given an explanatory text-book and work on, largely alone. It is not uncommon to find such children a whole year ahead of the normal achievement of the class. In reading, where this is soundly taught, the class method is scarcely at all used; children work in small groups such that the members' rate of reading is approximately the same, and a child can endure to wait till his turn comes; or methods may be almost entirely individual from the beginning. Many children, helped at home, make very rapid progress in reading, and can read independently from an early age. One country infant school visited recently has as many as 147 sets of readers, mostly in half-dozens (not, perhaps one should add, extravagantly bought, but the result of care of books ever since the foundation of the school and the teachers' and their friends' generosity). Some children read all of these. Yet this is not a bookish school, but one where handwork of all sorts flourishes.

History and geography lend themselves to any degree of ingenuity in teachers and pupils. Entertaining time-charts are made, expeditions and school journeys used, narratives of events dramatized, and many matters illustrated by models made by the children.

Where enthusiasm is backed by some specialized knowledge in the teachers, the subjects are correlated; the history teacher suggests to the musician that Elizabethan music shall be heard or sung. Geography and history cease to be divided and are temporarily made one in a scheme which links up the children's artificially sundered ideas. For young, or dull and backward children, all bookish methods are occasionally put on one side in favour of getting at subjects through a job or a 'project'. A large doll's house is built and equipped by the children; walls are papered, rugs woven, furniture made and upholstered. The costs are worked out, materials are bought in real shops; household hygiene is discussed, as are a hundred and one other matters. Older boys make bookshelves for their own school, bicycle sheds for their own machines; girls cook and serve school dinners. There is in fact an infinity of choice of what to teach and how to teach it. Of course, there is such a condition as surfeit of variety; the young child's nature craves a strong frame, as it were, of certainty to life, a large measure of fixed routine. But these are commonplaces of the teacher's life which the children do not allow him to forget.

How general is this varied effort and happy environment? How often in touring a typical rural county would one perceive in the schools the high degree of life that is possible in modern schools under good conditions? We have seen that buildings hinder.

In the larger schools with a head master who has settled with his family, who is earning a good salary, and has grown roots in the village and county, there are usually some bright spots in the school's life, though even these schools, of which we hope so much in the near future, vary very greatly.

The life of many small rural schools is, as to quality, a perpetual seesaw. The women teachers in small villages change fairly frequently; they are hard to obtain in areas which pay Scale I salaries, and their place is taken by temporary supply teachers; there is great wastage from the class of uncertificated teachers, by marriage and by leaving for college, and the head must be continually training raw recruits. Perhaps not the least advantage of the transferring of 'eleven plus' children will be that their new schools will maintain their equilibrium for much longer spells, since they will not be disorganized so often by change of head teachers and staff.

Public opinion is, as voiced in newspapers by societies of farmers and professional men and employers, frequently hard upon the schools. Frequently the hardest critics of all are members of education committees. A constant reader of the reports of committee meetings in the local papers or the *Times Educational Supplement* may not infrequently come across this kind of thing: 'The Rev. A. B. C. declared that nothing like value was received for the money spent on education to-day, and that the children were not so well educated as 30 or 40 years ago'; 'Alderman X. said children had less idea of arithmetic and spelling than they had 30 years ago.'

It would seem to be the plain duty of education committee members before making these vague, though

sweeping, criticisms to see the best schools under their authority, and then to ask themselves why the other schools fall short of the standards there achieved. They will find plenty of weaknesses, but possibly causes that had not occurred to them. But for the moment we may set against their criticism a letter from a day-labourer to a head teacher received in a school during the writer's recent visit there:

'I too am glad that Marjorie has been successful in the written Test, and whether or no she passes the Oral Test, I should like to take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to you and all the teachers for the excellent tuition my children have received.

'The method of teaching nowadays seems to be an improvement on that of the time when I was at school. Instead of being—as I fear it often was—a drudge, schooling seems now—to my children at any rate—to be a pleasure which they are anxious not to miss.'

Perhaps the description of some typical passages of rural school life which is now to follow may serve, either instead of visits to the schools, or to bring about such visits.

Practice in the Junior school

The discussions on methods and subjects for rural schools centre round the work of the children of from eleven to fourteen years; the assumption appears to be made that changes in this later stage will make all well with rural education. But the disappointment with the results of schooling, which has been so strongly felt in the countryside, will only become hope yet further deferred if in reforming upper standard work we do not at the same time also maintain interest, and make the due changes,

in the junior school. The child of 4 or 5 may still be regarded as raw material; by the end of his eleventh year he is very largely 'worked'. In another chapter the nature of the raw material presented to the country school is discussed. It is there concluded that our schools contain a high proportion of mentally underdeveloped children, and that their first need is skilful mental feeding and stimulation. They are by no means ready for mere instruction. The writer's experience suggests that many of the dull and backward children in rural schools are made, not born. Their numbers will be found to be high wherever the school loses its teacher or teachers frequently, and wherever teaching is unsympathetic, particularly where young children are taught by what used to be called 'good disciplinarians'. A similar opinion was voiced to the writer recently by an experienced and extremely competent head teacher who said that when he first took over his large school it contained a number of children unable to read, who were regarded as deficient. It now contains no one above the early standards who cannot read.

When apathy, induced by home conditions and by the child's physique, has touched a child's mind before five and continues through the school career till eleven he is by then probably a 'dull and backward' as defined by Mr. Cyril Burt, retarded a couple of years, as compared with the normal standard of attainment. Yet the chances of inferior school conditions are considerable. In all except the largest and the smallest rural schools, children under seven are taught by uncertificated or supplementary teachers, as are also a very high proportion of those between seven and eleven. The Board's 'Statistics of Public Education' for 1925 to 1926 gives

the number of such teachers as somewhat over 19,000 for rural parts, of whom 6,700 are supplementary. No one regards the supplementary teacher as a permanent factor in our educational system, though her numbers have not declined of late, but on the contrary have risen in some counties. She works rather as a nurse than as a teacher and should survive as the former if at all. The uncertificated teacher, however, is, as will be shown in another chapter, a very different matter, and will doubtless do yeoman service for many a year to come. Her retention indeed may well be necessary to the next step ahead. (Cf. Chap. VIII, The Rural Teacher.)

In this chapter none of the very best practice under good conditions, which I have seen, will be described. That is reserved to give ballast to the chapter on the future of the rural school. But the practice so reserved is rare; what follows here will, it is hoped, give a fair impression of what is offered our children in middling schools with a wide range of quality, but always above the worst, and below the best.

Children usually come to school at 4 or at 5. In most villages a certain number of mothers send their children as soon as the school will take them. They feel that at school there is a special room for the children and a person whose work it is to look after them, whereas at home they must be taken everywhere with mother as she goes about her work. There is no suitable place for the child to sit and play by itself for mother cannot keep the door of the only living-room closed while she goes to and fro. In villages where it is the custom for women to do seasonal work in the fields—fruit picking, or potato gathering, &c.—the head teachers are besieged about June by requests to take the little children. Sometimes

the three- and four-year-olds are taken very gladly because there is plenty of room, or to enable the head teacher to keep his present staff-strength or to keep up the numbers of the school. The compulsory school age is, almost everywhere, five. Sometimes the restrictions of space are such that no choice is left to parents or teachers as to sending or receiving them before that age. In one county (Cambridgeshire) the parents' choice has been extended, the compulsory age having been raised to six; choice is here an excellent thing; but in the discussion that led to this new by-law much was made of the idea that children should not attend school till seven or thereabouts. If every home were ideal, and school mere instruction in the three R's, this might be true. But if many of our country mothers are to be fresh and happy for their children from tea to bed-time they must be free of them for part of the day. Housing conditions also make it desirable that children should have a change of circumstances for some part of the day. Raising the standard of all cottages is impossible of rapid achievement; but there is but one school in a village and it could be made comfortable. There are psychological reasons, already indicated, why no hindrance should be put in the way of children attending school. The teacher can supply, especially in the winter months, a richer environment, more profitable occupations, than can the home.

The typical infants' room contains some dozen or two dozen children among whom Standard I may or may not be included. Till recently uncertificated teachers were prevented by the Board from being placed in charge of more than thirty-five children, but of late this regulation has been withdrawn in favour of an arrangement by which inspectors criticize the whole teaching

staff of an authority. The new method has already led and will lead to some uncertificated teachers being left with very heavy work. Numbers up to twenty-five seem to allow a teacher to do good work, even though her children range from five to seven. Twenty-five children of such a range of age must either be taught by individual methods or else in at least three divisions. If some of the children are less than five years old, to keep everybody profitably employed is of course more difficult. And usually it is the babies who are ill cared for. The best thing for the under-fives is to be sat upon the floor to play, allowed to change their toys themselves at reasonable intervals, and to share in the games, talks, and songs of the older children when these occur. But our floors are almost always too draughty for the children to sit upon them; desks often prevent free movement; and there are not nearly enough toys suitable for little children. Private kindness can be helpful in the matter of toys; many children of well-to-do folk get so many toys that a good number are abandoned before they are worn out. Any and every country infants' teacher could make immediate use of toys in a reasonable state of preservation.

On the infants' room in S. School I have the following remark in my diary:

'The little children have only 4 picture books, and practically nothing else that is suitable except bricks; but there are eight children too young to do more than play.

At B. school I noted:

'Infants' Room fairly spacious but for 9 ft. long desks in which even babies have to sit. I have set them on a rug on the floor but there is no really suitable spot because the length of the desks determines the arrangement of the room. Children of 4 are often unoccupied—need toys. Teacher has not dealt

with infants before and is ignorant of how to proceed with four-year-olds and any children at all abnormal. . . .'

The I—— School is that of a very large village:

'In this school there are 3 teachers for the children under seven, which makes a very great difference indeed between the rate of progress here and in other county infants' schools. The children read with great facility at 6 and write well too. The infants' rooms are rather dark, though otherwise one is good and the other fair. Miss M—— who teaches the babies is an interesting example of an uncertificated teacher who has had a good deal of guidance. She works under a trained and enthusiastic teacher of wide interests; has attended a handwork course at Saturday classes, and a *short* course on the teaching of reading. Some points of her teaching are definitely good. She is interested in the children's cleanliness and in their pronunciation. Her counting lessons are fairly interesting. She is very patient with the children, with a touch of humour on occasions, and I think both patience and humour are due to suggestion as to how to treat the children and to consequent knowledge of them. When I first knew her she was harsh. The whole of this school, including the babies' class, is handicapped by ancient furniture. The babies cannot get out of their desks without difficulty till the table-front has been turned over on its hinges and this the children cannot safely do for themselves. The desks are very heavy. The next thing Miss M—— needs to learn is how to allow the children to take what movement they require, but this as far as I see at present is impossible. Thus this furniture will make a defect in the teacher. She will be accustomed soon to this rigid class-formation for babies, do what we will.'

How the babies fare in C—— School may be left to the imagination.

'A supplementary teacher has been newly appointed to the infants—the task is to teach 33 children of from 4 to 7.

They need to be divided into four sections at present; there is practically no material to teach them with. There are horrible, torn books to read from—primers, and one set of "readers" beside; there are bricks; there are rolls of Scripture pictures provided by personal generosity of managers; and that is all. Why this scanty equipment I cannot say.'

Nor could I hear any important reason why a quite unqualified girl had been given that very heavy job.

There are of course happier spots. H—— School is one that has decreased in numbers very much. Twelve infants have a room long since used for twenty-four or thirty, so that now it gives ample though not at all extravagant space. Three long desks accommodate the children, but they are set round three sides of the room and the children can freely tumble over or creep under them, into the space in the middle of the room. The teacher is young and inexperienced, but she has had help in Saturday classes and from a friend, and has worked hard. She has filled the cupboard with toys and apparatus and accustomed herself and the children to change it as frequently as reason suggests and yet to keep it classified and arranged. There are two children of three and a half here who are perfectly happy. They play on the floor and walk round at times to watch the other children; there is a well-drained pebbly playground, so that out-of-doors games are nearly always possible, and the little ones have gardens:

'The older children have turfed a big lawn belonging to the school house which the head mistress has given up to the school, and the tinies have flower beds shared between two. The flowers on them seem to prove the indestructibility of matter. The children race over the garden at play, flowers are picked every day by the little children and yet the gardens are well kept and quite gay with blossoms.'

What the garden really proves of course is that the children are learning to move with precision and to care for the flowers. Children could not be happier than in this little school, or learning much more quickly the things essential for little children—good personal habits, control of muscles, attractive manners, tidiness. For that difficult subject number, the apparatus provided is all too varied, but thought and experience will bring a remedy for this shortly. In another infants' room containing a more normally large number of children—about twenty-five—a devoted teacher has solved the problem of occupying the tinies. A low cupboard is kept for them and they change their toys at will, or at the suggestion of the teacher. The toys are not exactly expensive—seed catalogues are the picture books, for example; there is a great deal of quite beautiful home-made apparatus. The problem of movement for the children remains; but in a few months a new class-room in being added to this school and the infants will be moved to a larger room.

The teaching of hygienic matters varies greatly. When I began my acquaintance with the country babies I felt strongly that the first thing provided by the Education Committee should be paper handkerchiefs. Children from some of the worst and poorest homes cannot or will not bring handkerchiefs and teachers give up the effort to persuade them. As to cleanliness of hands and face the facts may be inferred from what has been said in the chapter on buildings (see p. 84). It is sometimes said that any motherly person can train little children in good habits, and it is inferred that women of little education will do for the infant classes. But it is our most cultured teachers who peg away at these trying matters most constantly and with least nausea. Many

give up the struggle, and concentrate on 'work', especially the three R's.

One of the extracts given above refers to an uncertificated teacher whose work with normal children was not without a certain value, but who failed utterly with children who departed in any way from the usual. This is naturally common with teachers not trained to study children. A type of child at least one of which occurs in most rural schools is the rebellious, the Cainish child. Such a child is an object for 'social work'. His conditions from the beginning have been poor; his thin, bitten neck bears witness to an unclean, unmade bed; he wears so many clothes that the air never penetrates to his skin; discipline for him has meant the shout and the slap. His person is dirty and his eye is sullen. The teacher is repelled and shrinks from contact. He feels this and shrinks in his turn into sulkiness. School becomes another of the many impositions upon him. Playtime brings relaxation of restraint and he rushes into the playground with a shout and wreaks his unhappiness there upon unoffending but, in his eyes, pampered little ones. The teacher's momentary respite is spoiled. She comes to regard the boy as beyond her power to touch, and to look forward to the day when he will take his departure to the upper school. Meanwhile he is of course not progressing with his work. His hand against everyman's, he naturally declines to learn from teacher or scholars. Dullness becomes his chronic state of mind, and backwardness follows from his unteachableness. There may be only one of him, or there may be a touch of his nature about a whole section. The disease is in such a child's emotions, and the cure must be applied there, in the form of warm, patient, unshrinking affec-

tion. Of course the best preliminary to the cure would be a hot bath, but that is beyond the tact or ingenuity of a teacher to procure him.

In general, the need of our little children is a life more full of things, of speech, of play and toys, and little practical tasks. But at present the time-table often consists almost entirely of lessons that assume silence and motionlessness, in spite of all that is known and said in some quarters as to the evil of this. Once or twice in the week 'nature' or object lessons appear, when the teacher, very often, takes a single flower and the children examine it in detail, out of its surroundings, away from its associations. Not infrequently one has seen young teachers draw a kind of huge diagram of the flower on the board, and the children have spent a drawing period upon copying it. A sad waste of time when one remembers what charming impressions of flowers and other natural objects little children can give in crayon or paints, without adult interference.

It follows from such imposed 'nature' lessons that conversation has not its right place yet. Many infants' time-tables contain one or two 'conversation' lessons. For twenty minutes teacher and pupils are supposed to converse on some unspecified subject. Sensibly enough, teachers evade this artificial, impracticable conversation by telling a story, or allowing children to retell one. But the need for talk remains.

The need of movement, contact with things, of sensory experience generally, and of the development of powers of expression and self-directed action are common to all the infants. With the children of from $5\frac{1}{2}$ to 7 come some of the problems of instruction, education in the narrower sense: when the children reach this

period reading and number begin to loom large in the teacher's mind. Psychologists sometimes advocate the postponement of both these subjects till six years or later, but there is a conclusive reason for beginning reading in small schools as soon as the children are able. The mistress who takes the class next above the infants has usually children ranging from 7 to 9, or 7 to 10 to cope with. She cannot be dealing adequately with Standards II and III if the 'Ones' can never be left to read privately or in groups. Hence the practice of allowing children to begin to learn reading at 5 or 5½ is substantially right, though certain children begin to read too early, before books have acquired a meaning for them. Because of the need to begin early it is most important that the happiest and most effective methods of learning to read should be adopted.

These are becoming more widely known and spread, yet this sort of thing is very common:

'When I entered the infants' room the children were all in rigid class formation, the whole class reading from precisely similar books, 29 following while one read, all busy keeping their places, 30 reading as one. The children are very backward in both reading and number. Morally speaking, the discipline is kindly enough but it is both rigid and ineffective. I think these children are kept in order by routine and dullness, by the avoidance of all departures and excitements; and also by some affection for their young teacher.'

Methods and discipline are part and parcel one of the other. Of those thirty children some could not read at all, had not even reached a wish to read, others were accustomed to read with their mothers at home and were ready to read books quite alone, with here and there help with a 'hard word'.

The school to which the following refers, however, is not typical; this instance shows, not what we do, but what we shall slip back to if extravagant 'economy' is persisted in.

'The uncertificated teacher of infants gives reading lessons of almost an hour and defends herself very strongly and coldly when it is suggested that this is too long; and this, although there is already an hour a day of reading in the time-table, in half hours, for the six-year-olds. She thinks that the more time spent on a subject, the more the children necessarily learn. The reading-book in use contains what to the children (as to any one) is pure senseless rubbish. Here are a few of the words it assumes in a child's vocabulary: fiddle-faddle, comfit, random, maxim, buxom, tittle-tattle; and, in the later section of the primer: cassock, beckon, quickset, shuttlecock, shackle, bashful, lavish, cavil, havoc. Its notion of logical sequence is shown here: "Ned had a fiddle, but he is in a muddle." The method of teaching involves that the children shout out the sentences all together. The time-table is ill planned. One day affords the children no relaxation in the form of play, or handwork; the lessons deal almost wholly with the abstractions, words and number: Scripture (Story and Hymns), Conversation, Reading, Writing, Number, Reading, Recitation, Spelling, Story! The young woman in charge here has 40 children, and before the promotions had 50. Soon she will have 50 again. H.M.I. has been to see the school recently and in his report congratulated the teacher on her "management of the children". Except in being congratulatory he was right. They are "managed" or repressed, not taught. The teacher has an excuse for the way she drives at reading and writing. Only a robust, experienced, and most expert teacher could possibly keep all those children suitably employed, ranging as they do in age from 4½ to 7.'

The importance of method in teaching is not of course

understood at all by the laity; it is greatly underrated by many of our administrators and directors, and even sometimes by inspectors. Head teachers too not seldom fail to understand how fundamental to true education is a knowledge of method and allied matters. They almost always teach the eldest children with whom refinements of procedure are certainly less important than with young children; they have usually never taught little ones and have seldom studied the psychology of the under-sevens or read the method literature relevant to junior children. Yet they could save themselves from much anxiety and vexation by expecting right habits, and adequate achievements in their infant department. The writer was in a school recently where reading, composition, and spelling were poor throughout. It had been so for years. Comments had been made by inspectors and other officials, and the head master was exasperated by their criticism. No one had traced the faults to their origin, and the head master was seeking difficult sociological explanations of his children's backwardness. Children in that village, he said, had always been bad spellers! The matter was simple. Reading was very unsuccessfully taught in the infants'; the teacher of 'junior' standards could not cope with Standard III's demands while she taught Standard I to read, and the consequence was that children of ten were slow readers, and had read nothing except two or three small school reading books.

The loss and waste of time in the teaching of reading caused by lack of knowledge of method may be illustrated from a school where the children were eager and able to learn. I was acquainted with a class whose reading was complained of by the inspector, as well it might

be. The custom was to read from torn, uninteresting books, the whole class following a singer reader. Some of the class had been through the books more than once. A new teacher took the class in hand. She took in a collection of penny books, all different, illustrated with small bold attractive line drawings. Each child was given a book and told he could change with some one else as soon as he had finished his own, if teacher found he knew the words. They were cunningly written books, containing good stories involving much repetition of words. There was one boy who read much better than the others, and he ran round telling the hard words to those who asked for help, while the teacher read with a small group of the poorest readers. In a fortnight no one could have said that the children read poorly. Remedies are not often, of course, quite so quick in action as that.

Number is perhaps the subject our uncertificated teachers find most difficulty with, and consequently that in which there is most frustration and discouragement throughout not only the infants' classes, but the whole of the 'junior' stage of the school. By the end of their year in Standard III the children have at long length stumbled to some clumsy methods of performing sums and solving problems of a formal nature, but a 'number sense' and the beginnings of mathematical interest are rare indeed, as is also any considerable facility in dealing with the arithmetical problems of daily life. There is seldom any practical experience of number, weight, and measurement of length given before formal number work begins. The subject is formal from the beginning in many classes. Counting material is of course used often, but a number of teachers do not realize its

importance and tire of giving it out. Often teachers have not themselves grasped the importance of 'counting in tens' or of grouping numbers in any way, so that it is little wonder the children learn laboriously to count to a hundred in units. Even shopping games are unfamiliar to many children. Division sums are struggled with before the children have any practical notion of what the process means. In a great majority of schools division is taught far too early. By the time they enter Standard I the arithmetic lesson has already become to the children a difficulty to be daily endured; face it they hardly can, for they have not the necessary knowledge.

In hundreds of country infant schools the life of teachers and pupils has grown richer and more genial through the ministrations of a certain journal, which introduces the teachers to suitable stories and verses and handwork exercises. It has, however, scarcely affected the teaching of number, because the teachers' own sense of number needs developing; only skilled personal teaching of the teachers is likely to effect much in this direction. Of the more recent introductions to the infant school, plasticene modelling has brought more joy to scholars and ease to teachers than anything else. Here as in other matters the teachers need to give more skilled suggestion. But even failing all help, the children enjoy and gain from their modelling periods. Bricks are another never-failing source of joy to be found in every school, only there is a sad lack of generosity in the way they are used. Instead of building on the wide floor with every available brick, the children too often have to be content with half a dozen bricks on a narrow desk —even when, as the writer has sometimes seen, a whole wheelbarrowful of bricks lies idle in the cupboard. In

many of our mediocre infant schools now there is a fair variety of occupations, the weekly or twice-weekly story gives pleasure to both teacher and taught, and the Board's pamphlet[1] on physical education is widely used. But work is not consciously directed to the needs of the pupils; often the teaching is more pleasant than efficient. Pleasant it very often is. In many infants' schools at least we have accepted the child's pleasure and interest as guides to suitable work. But at present much of the work tends rather to entertain than to absorb the child; we need to know his nature more deeply so as to get more of his whole self into school, into the work.

Work in the junior standards of rural schools is less good than in either infants' rooms or senior standards. Here, as a rule, charge is taken by uncertificated teachers; but they are not assisted to the same extent as infants' teachers by a good tradition. The method of the infant school is more liberalized as yet than that of any other part of the school. The junior standards fall between two stools; the children composing them are not so simply and demonstrably responsive to suggestion as little children, nor are they regarded as responsible beings as are the children approaching leaving-age. The children have their characteristics at this age, but these, and the methods following on a knowledge of them, are not well known. Hence unmitigated class teaching of an old-fashioned type is the frequent fate of the children of from eight to eleven.

The handwork of the first three standards is an interesting subject. It is a comparatively recent introduction, of which much was hoped. Children, if they could

[1] *Physical Exercises for Children under Seven Years of Age*, Board of Education.

be articulate on the point, would certainly voice approval of its entry upon the time-table. For them almost any form of handwork reduces the strain of school life. A head mistress remarked to the writer the other day that the children liked sewing and raffia lessons best because in them they are allowed to walk about to collect their material. This is an elementary satisfaction, but considerable. Much more than this relief of strain, however, was hoped of handwork. Vastly more has been achieved both in the infant school's 'free' work, and in the technical work of the senior classes, but success has been very limited in Standards I, II, and III. The more usual kinds of handwork are here clay-modelling and raffia. Too often the clay-modelling follows the lines of the infant school. A teacher has little knowledge of the technique of modelling and often does not learn, even by modelling with her children. Sometimes she cannot do this because she is engaged in teaching the girls of the class, sometimes of the whole school, to sew, the head master being out with a gardening class of senior boys. Modelling is often discouraged by the total lack of any place to retain models even for a day. There are usually no schemes for this subject; some object is modelled each week which has been discussed in nature study or some other lesson. Often the plasticene is very scanty indeed, and uninviting, or even dirty from long use. Clay is seldom used, as there is often no convenient place to keep it and the teachers have not learnt how to keep it in the right condition. In a small minority of schools the modelling is used to illustrate history and geography lessons. This is an excellent use of the lesson if pictures and models sufficiently good for the children to base their work upon are forthcoming. Too often the

pictures are small and vague and the children know nothing of the detail of the construction of weapons or utensils they are engaged upon.

Raffia is perhaps the form of handwork most frequently taken in the classes under discussion. Under trained and certificated teachers this work is usually excellent; but it is only in the Training Colleges that this art is practised with a high degree of technical knowledge and consequent success. Frequently our young unqualified teachers have seen very little finished work of this kind and do not know what constitutes beauty in it. They have not produced good work of this kind themselves and do not know what to expect of the children. Raffia does of course encourage manual dexterity; it permits of a little movement and a little conversation, but there, quite often, its value ends. Often the children make napkin rings they don't know the use of, followed by baskets too pliable and weak to serve any useful purpose. As a subject, it is often almost as formal as, say, memory exercises. It links on nowhere with the children's real life and vivifies no part of it. It would often be better to separate knitting from sewing, and to teach both boys and girls to knit and net instead of doing raffia work which gives no training in ingenuity or in the appreciation of colour and form. Good work in this medium is not absent, where teachers have followed a course in it on Saturdays or even industriously learnt of it from books. At its best, it is a lesson in which children are exceptionally quiet and busy, using their ingenuity in adapting some shape to their own purposes, and developing their fancy by inventing patterns. But work of such quality is rare.

The root reason why both these forms of handwork

are disappointing is that in both the teachers are, often, attempting to divorce handwork from mental work and from ordinary life. The girls' sewing lesson, however poor, is never dead. The materials used are common to both home and school life, and the uses of the processes are obvious. Handwork divorced from the training of imagination and reason can never bring life to the schools.

Drawing, in the early standards, is another subject in great need of more reasoned schemes. It is a subject eminently needing a specialist, and lacking this, as it must, special precautions need to be taken. It would be difficult to compute the time wasted by the children in drawing objects without beauty, arranged with no relations except a vague one to the child's powers. Often some dull, habitually seen object is set, with scarcely a space cleared on desk or table. An unfamiliar object, a coloured background, some contrast of shape or colour, give stimulation at once, but the need for them is not realized. Fortunately, nature drawing appears on many time-tables and the children bring their own beautiful coloured 'copy' and there is interest at once; where good paints or crayons are forthcoming, delicious fresh work may follow, with no more trouble on the part of the teacher than some cherishing or display of the drawings. But far more can be done than this, even by a person who is herself no draughtswoman or artist, if she can only get some inspiration from some person of taste.

The teaching of nature in the junior standards brings us to close quarters with the question of the adaptation of the curriculum to the rural environment. It forces us to ask how this is to be done by the present staffs.

An environmental reference that begins at eleven is far too late. It is the young children who most need sensory experience as the basis of their work.

No subject is more inadequately taught to the younger children. In some schools the subject is practically abandoned—a far better course than teaching it without a feeling for it. Few of our young teachers, country born as they mostly are, have considerable knowledge of any aspect of nature.[1] Faced with nature on the time-table at, say, 2 every Tuesday, they find it very difficult to decide what to do. A certain young friend of mine falls back upon one of those numerous books, spoon-feeders for teachers, to enable them to spoon-feed the children, containing ready-made lessons. She read one day a lesson on the hedgehog, consisting of a story in the form of a dialogue between the hedgehog and some other animal. She never once asked the children if they had seen hedgehogs; and the impression gained—if gain it were—by the children who had not, was that the hedgehog had the same sort of reality as a fairy. Another young lady gave a spirited account of the fox in which he met his death by gunshot on the hunting field; at other times ancient pictures of the commonest country animals are produced and tiny children asked to follow an analytical lesson on the rabbit, from pictures of its teeth, and jaws, and a magnified hair.

The teaching of reading shows some of those simple reforms of method which would do so much for all subjects, although the old method of class reading, so murderous of the children's love for reading, of the literature read, of the life of the class, is common still. But some silent reading is usual, and one sometimes sees 'group'

[1] Cf. p. 233.

reading. By this method a class is divided into groups of five or six, each with a reader, according to the capacity of the children to read. It is so simple a change from class reading, but it multiplies the amount of reading done, by the number of groups; allows of the children's private jokes and smiles without disordering the class; gives an opening for the children's desire to lead and organize, to 'boss' or to submit, according to their natures; it removes discouragement from the backward and offers a stimulus to those who work through little ambitions.

Reading books for children of this age are often good, but as yet the schools have usually not nearly as many books as the children might well read. The County Library boxes have solved this problem with the senior standards in a number of counties, but 'silent' readers for younger children should be provided from the allowance for general supplies. One junior school known to the writer had a large library of well-chosen small books to fit its small people, including not only fairy stories and tales of adventurous children but also descriptions of the life of birds and animals. But this school had an able certificated teacher, and the books had been obtained from the proceeds of an entertainment.

Of our uncertificated teachers it should be said here, that there is no lack of capacity. The soil is good enough, but ideas as to teaching need to be planted in it. This is proved in dozens of cases where excellent work is being done in one subject while in others the teaching involves a terrible waste of time. For example, Miss S.'s children are hopelessly muddled and backward in their arithmetic work, but she has gathered some good ideas as to setting the children upon handwork. One may see her

dull and backward boys, hopeless, as she says they are, at reading, composition, and arithmetic, making in plasticene a fine detailed model of a Norman castle, with knights on horseback, tilting in the courtyard. They go on from one detail to another, looking in every available book for pictures of weapons, details of architecture and armour. Taken out to see some small Norman windows in their own village church, they made excellent models of them from rough drawings and memory. They had memory and sense and could certainly have learned to read and number well enough. One of the young ladies quoted above as having so scanty a knowledge of nature was yet telling stories of the siege of Troy and the wanderings of Ulysses so that her children were wild with joy: she had received suggestions as to suitable stories and how and when to tell them from a teacher of literature.

One of the difficulties of our uncertificated assistants is the very vague schemes from which they work. Four or five lines give the work for a term; there is no real scheme at all, but only a vague statement of aim, often.

On extremely rare occasions one finds detailed schemes containing suggestions as to the method by which the work shall be done, and which take into account the knowledge and tastes and available material of the teachers. Their value is clear at once in the increased amount of information imparted to the children and in the more logical development of one lesson, or piece of work, from another.

Little has been said here of the work of certificated teachers in charge of junior classes, partly because they are not numerous; where they do occur they are usually in charge of the whole school or of all the standards,

and something will be said of their work in the next section.

Practice in the senior standards

We come now to that department of the school which the critics and reformers of rural education have usually in mind—the senior standards from IV to VII, containing the children of from eleven to fourteen plus. Here are the children who are said to be wasting a large part of their time. It is these who are cited in the controversies about rural bias as needing to be trained in agricultural crafts and processes. The view held in these pages is that this period is not of exceptional importance; but it is of special interest just now, in view of the 'concentration' of senior pupils. Something has been said elsewhere about centralization from points of view other than that of curriculum ; later will follow some reflections on rural bias. Here it is proposed only to give some notes on the state of affairs in the upper standards of some typical small, and some typical fairly large, schools.

Great numbers of village schools containing all the children of school age have only two teachers, and a high proportion again only three—in spite of the daily progress of concentration. It was said of Oxfordshire in 1923:

'The village schools can be divided into three almost equal groups of:

1. those that have one assistant;
2. those that have two; and
3. those that have three or more assistants.'

Not more than one-fourth of the schools have more than three teachers. In some counties there linger a good number of single-teacher schools responsible for

children of every stage. These are the first to be made into junior schools where it is possible—a development to be whole-heartedly rejoiced in. Those who fare worst in such schools are the very young children, and after them the eldest. Except where such schools are very tiny indeed the task is impossible, and the sooner they become junior schools the better. Yet even these schools, and to a far greater extent the two- and three-teacher schools, have had their value for their older pupils, and the new centralized schools when they become general will have the great responsibility of conserving the good qualities of the small schools. The headships of even small country schools have always attracted a good type of woman teacher, women who have tried town life and found it wanting, who have resources within themselves and live and teach contentedly, in isolation from folk of their own kind. Often they are without amusements or society, but rich in suitable work and in the fulfilling of numerous small responsibilities to the village community. They are usually women of some intellect who like responsibility and the teaching of their elder pupils. It remains to be seen whether under the changing and changed conditions of rural education the same type of woman will be attracted. In the junior schools the women teachers will miss their elder pupils, and in the central schools their authority and initiative, unless the authorities and the head masters keep an eye on this point, and contrive to give scope and dignity to the staff by specialization or some other means.

Naturally schools taught by these women have had some advantages even in the instruction given, and much greater ones in the general training of the pupils. Few oral lessons can be given; children have worked

alone on what are called 'modifications of the Dalton plan' from twenty years before that plan was invented. This independent work was for training, though not for the acquisition of facts, a gain. The children learned to read alone, to set themselves on work, to know something of their own natural degree of industry and idleness, to sample the subjects of the curriculum by themselves and thus to discover their own tastes without being stimulated to artificial appreciations. Handling these schools in districts where economic conditions are fair, one finds the children fresh and individual; it is easy to discover their real selves; the mob spirit is almost entirely absent; big children, both girls and boys, develop protective tendencies towards the younger ones and take on responsibilities in the running of the school, and therewith a healthy sense of importance. These things happen to some extent naturally, and whether the teacher is a good 'methodist' or not, because circumstances to this extent dictate good methods.

A special virtue of a good proportion of these schools is the industry of the children. School work has become to them a fully accepted duty; this is of course an attitude which has been successfully suggested to them. The women teachers not infrequently tackle their school work in a religious spirit, and because they give interesting and suitable work the children are able to respond to the suggestion and adopt the same attitude. These schools have travelled a long way from the state of affairs alluded to on p. 63, where we saw the winners of scripture prizes as rebels and throwers of stones. Crude rewards and most of the crude behaviour have gone. It is little wonder that some of these women achieve remarkable moral successes in the atmosphere of their

schools and the development of their pupils. They might be royal governesses with budding sovereigns in charge, so carefully, not to say prayerfully, do they consider every child and its future.

Whatever the advantages of small schools, it is certain that only in the rarest cases can all the subjects be well taught. The children often cannot be taught any of the technical subjects or pushed to work at the top of their powers. Sometimes teachers very conscious of standards achieved under different circumstances become very sensitive about their own shortcomings, as had the lady who said that she could not teach singing, and hated to try because the children's faces fell, now, whenever she mentioned the singing lesson. The periods for physical exercise are the opportunities for much heroism on the part of women heads; it is touching in the extreme to see frail elderly women, to whom physical exercises can hardly appeal, directing the drill and games of great rough fellows—not once a week only, but daily, in no matter what weather. The results are not the best, of course, but they are profitable to the children.

Some of the mixed quality of work is perhaps due to people becoming heads of schools too early in their professional life. In the case of men, centralization will remedy this. This reflection occurred to me in a school with a very young head who could teach beautifully the subjects his heart was in; his children's singing would 'draw hearts from tailors', but for his discipline he relied on ceaseless carping, though he himself described his children as 'the mildest children he had ever known, and extremely pleasant to work with'. Very generally a tremendous standard of quiet and stillness is exacted of the children; pupils in more modern schools, from

a different type of home, would surely burst if so repressed.

However, this type of discipline is not always a fault of the young alone; sometimes when a school and a head teacher have known each other for ten years, punishments and scolding are constant. In one school of which this was true the punishment for doing poor arithmetic was to go on with the work till the sums were right. Suggestions, from whatever source, of a change of method were here refused on account of the scholarship examination, for, said the teacher, 'the examination is regarded as a test for the school. If you do not get a certain number of children through, it reflects on your school'. The Education Committee in her county had a loyally kept agreement not to use the 'scholarship' results in any way or degree to assess the merits of schools. But there are fell examples still of what 'payment by results' would bring about, even now, in however apparently reasonable a form it might be instituted.

The large central school will most certainly save our children from one grave risk, that of spending their whole school life under one teacher, or in one school under the guidance of a teacher who is a misfit. There are a number of small schools whose life, for this and occasionally other reasons, develops oddities and mannerisms, and sometimes, of course, worse qualities, such as cannot be developed in a large school, influenced by many personalities. The oddity may take the form of ancient practices, as in the school where the children sang their arithmetical tables to monotonous tunes with loud, harsh voices, and where the children learned to multiply by 34 (to all appearance and on paper) before they could multiply by 5, 6, or 10. There was in that

school much effort and kindliness; but it is a pity the children should be in these hands for *all* subjects for six years.

A quaint experience of a school which had adopted odd ways, and one that made me realize how exceedingly patient children become of people and routine to which they are accustomed, was to see children kept standing still and quiet on their 'natural posts' for no reason whatever for a quarter of an hour. The children thus standing held in their hands unsealed papers addressed to their parents. Naturally as time went on they grew intolerably curious to know what was inside. When one or two looked down their arms to try to glimpse a word, they were very severely lectured on the evils of curiosity! Several children were called out to learn to spell the word 'quarrelled' while every one else waited. 'Q-u-a-r- quar r-e-l- rel l-e-d- led—quarrelled!' This rigmarole was spelled out loudly for some minutes. There is a story of a Quaker who was one minute late for Meeting and who was chidden for having wasted fifty-nine minutes, there being fifty-nine people present; computed in this way, how much time does a lack of knowledge of reasonable methods mean in a school during say, the life of a school generation, twelve months —a single day?

In the larger schools work achieved in the senior classes is of course better on the whole than in smaller schools. The children are better graded. As a general rule the man at the head is an able person and well qualified. A certain number of these posts are now filled by university graduates. Frequently on being transferred to the class of a man head teacher both boys and girls feel that they have been brought into contact with

a wider life; the greater interest of men in politics (in the proper meaning of that term), in economics, bring it about that they link up school life more with the children's future life, than do women with their more frequently aesthetic and rather personal moral outlook. This intellectual quality is not necessarily a clear gain for the children transferred from smaller schools with women heads; but we may set it against the finer spiritual atmosphere women often produce. It seems true also that a smaller proportion of intellectual women than of men find their way to the country service.

Few even of the larger schools arrange for teachers to specialize, so that even here there is great unevenness in the teaching of the subjects. It is of course a mistake to think of all the schools to which handfuls of scholars are transferred from neighbouring villages as large: there are many where only the head teacher is certificated. The advantages of the transfer are limited by this circumstance. Specialized teaching, for example, may not be possible, for the staff will generally include a young uncertificated teacher, who may be unable to cope with either the big children or the infants, so as to relieve her seniors for work with other classes. Frequently, in such schools, the head teacher is unable to concentrate upon his work in garden or workshop because of anxiety for the classes left in the main building, without his eye upon them.

However, in the schools of 100 children or more the big boys are almost always provided with instruction in gardening or woodwork or both, and sometimes, though not always, the girls gain cooking.

We may conclude in general that the larger schools have now a balanced *curriculum*, but that almost every-

where the reform of modes of teaching needs to proceed. The untrained teacher is one of the points for first attack upon this problem.

It is easy and natural to assume that the reorganization of the schools will solve all the outstanding problems of rural education. But it will leave with us the untrained teacher and a large number of single-teacher junior schools. Some of the latter will have untrained teachers in sole charge.

Of itself reorganization will not bring about the rapid spread of specialist teaching. But some degree of specialization should be obtained wherever it is possible, for only this can raise the teaching of all subjects to a high level. Everywhere and always good teaching method is essential if the children's time is not to be wasted.

V

THE COUNTRY CHILD

Let the children first be filled. . .

. . . . . .

Hast any philosophy in thee, Shepherd?—*As You Like It.*

If I am diligent shall I have leave to build a cottage? If I am sober, shall I have land for a cow? If I am frugal, shall I have half an acre of potatoes? You *offer no motives*. . . .—ARTHUR YOUNG.

THERE is an immense literature of studies of people in relation to the country environment. It is recognized that country life, with its quiet and its many elements of permanence, tends to produce strongly individual characters. Some of the finest and most extensive of

these studies are recent.[1] It is still true that ideas filter slowly through to many villages. The work of the farms, sometimes calling for skill and speed, sometimes slow and mechanical, often taking a man away from society for hours together day after day, still exercises a man's faculties and leaves him time to think too. The somewhat narrow range of thoughts and experiences, combined with the lack of distraction, tends to produce strong 'types'.

But these studies of adult character do not greatly help the teacher except as making him more ready to discover interest in his neighbours. Artists select their material and emphasize its qualities in a way not useful for educationists; Bernard Gilbert's studies are too coarsely outlined; the characters of Masefield's *Reynard the Fox* too much heightened in colour, of *Our Village* too fine-spun, of Hardy's novels bent too much to the novel's central mood, to add directly to our knowledge of our children's futures and possibilities. More realistic studies, which are not so common, would help us more. A short study of the psychology of farmers has recently been published by the Agricultural Economics Department of a University College.[2] A study of the psychology of the parents of our children, whether farmers or labourers, dealers or domestic servants, would help us to understand our raw material better. What would help most is to know the psychological effect of economic circumstances upon the various classes of country

[1] Bernard Gilbert's *Old England*, Collins. George Bourn's *Change in the Village*, Duckworth.

[2] Welsh Studies in Agricultural Economics, No. 3, University College of Wales, Aberystwith, *Human Motives in Farming*, by A. W. Ashby.

folk, rather than the narrower study of the effect of close contact with nature on the characters of mature shepherds and carters. Though the lonely shepherd sensitive to the beauty and sublimity of the scene of his life is not even in these modern days extinct, teachers have no professional interest in him. He is one of the grand accidental products of life, and school can do nothing to multiply his kind. But one of the functions of school life for every kind of person is to supplement home life; the more we know of the latter, then, the better. For the present, however, we must leave the parent of the child, and the child as parent to his future self, and study the child chiefly as he is known in school, with only references to his life outside.

The object of this chapter is to give young teachers and administrators some idea of the material they will have to handle if they choose country schools. It can only be a very general study, a preliminary survey of the ground. Teachers need very much more than this. Many rash general statements are made as to the mental quality of rural children. Even very responsible educationists will take up the position that the rural schools are mines of undiscovered talent; and there are inspectors who have asserted that they are full of defective children. There may easily be a grain of truth in both statements; it is important, however, that the statements when made should be qualified. It would be a very serious matter for this nation if the country population were exhausted mentally, for the villages still renew the population of the towns; and on the other hand, if our schools are full of good material we have not the excuse for the poor results of our teaching with which we have sometimes comforted ourselves. No general statements

can be relied upon to apply to a particular school; to get a true idea of the quality and personalities of his children, a head teacher should closely investigate local conditions, and keep records of individual children. Perhaps no full and reliable knowledge will be forthcoming until each Local Authority employs a skilled psychologist for a few years. It is certain that if they did so, the teachers' work would be greatly illuminated.

Country children must be studied regionally, for undoubtedly they vary from village to village and district to district. Some factors in this variation can be discovered by the naked eye of the spectator who is neither psychologist nor sociologist. For example, the characteristics of the school's raw material vary with the type of village. Four main types of villages may be distinguished, each having a school of which it is reasonable, judging by experience, to have certain expectations. First, the fair-sized 'open' village. The term 'open' in this connexion means that ownership of land is distributed among a good number of people. There are probably a number of small farms, some small holdings, and a shop or two. There may be a doctor and some residents of small independent means. The village is something of a microcosm. In school there will be the children of farmers, of tradesmen and dealers, of agricultural labourers.

Secondly, there is the village of large farms. Here, not infrequently, the school is an almost pure sample of agricultural labourers' children.

Thirdly, less common than either of the above types, comes the large village of market gardens, or of numerous small holdings.

Lastly, a group of villages with this in common,

that they have a mixed population, a part of which is not strictly rural at all. There may be a factory in a village, or a large quarry; and there are villages to which the suburbs of some town are reaching out, containing new villas and residences, where chauffeurs, gardeners, and electricians are employed.

In the village school of the first type there is a considerable range of intelligence, with varieties of type as well. The children of shopkeepers often have lively wits like town children; farmers' sons are not so quick or lively, but often there is a certain square-jawedness about them and they have a splendid sturdy physique; they make a secure conquest in school of whatever subjects appeal to them. Farm labourers' children, whether in the first, second, or fourth of our types of village, include in the writer's experience every degree of intelligence from the very good to the severely defective, but always some of them are physically and mentally depressed. The schools of our second type of village contain almost exclusively the children of agricultural labourers. The large farmers send their children away to school, or it may happen that they have none. Mostly these schools are small, containing a score or two of children only. In such a school there are few or no children of first-class physique, very few really warmly and cleanly clad, and there are usually several children who are at least apparently 'dull and backward'. There may also be one or even two high-grade mentally deficients, but the proportion of these is much less alarmingly high than is sometimes suggested.

The most remarkable psychological characteristic of the children in our second type of school is their almost total lack of ambition. If some of the boys dream of

having a motor-cycle, driving a tractor, or being a policeman, they preserve their dreams in silence from contempt, as closely as if they were wicked fantasies. They have been discouraged and prevented from expressing desires, so that the humblest ambitions are as much out of relation to their life, and incidentally to school subjects, as the silliest extravaganzas could be. No one who has not taught in these schools can have any conception of what this state of affairs means to a teacher. Slum schools in cities offer no parallel, for there the children have been stimulated by much contact with people. They all want to read, add, and cut some sort of figure among their fellows, but, with our labourers' children, teachers have to create the wish for learning and the habit of expressing thought or feeling. The school's gifts often seem to the children to be that worst form of lumber, unattractive luxuries. School is an island in life cut off from home and the real work of wage-earning by seas of unreality. In a word, the children bear the marks of severe poverty; inferior physique and clothing, slow rate of development, and usually some feeling of inferiority resulting often in suspicion of their teachers and contempt for the school. On the other hand, occasionally one finds such children pathetically grateful for the pleasant school times. School is an island still, but something of a romantic one, in the pacific of their feelings. But, even so, it is unreal to them and they look forward to reaching the continent of wage-earning life.

Perhaps the happiest sort of rural school to work in is that of the villages where fruit-growing, small holdings, or poultry-keeping occupy most of the people. Here we have the rural school which most resembles the

well-placed town school. The teachers generally tell one that there are no poor children, by which they mean that none of them lack the absolute necessaries for a healthy life. Food being home-grown is plentiful and fresh. The children almost always have good boots too; their other clothes may be long or short or even torn, but were good once and *corruptio optimi* does not apply to clothes. Of course, labourers' children are present in such schools, but they are able usually to practise the local industry in their own large gardens, and wives and children join in the seasonal work of fruit picking, thus earning considerable sums.

There is an interesting psychological quality about these children which distinguishes them from the school-children of large farm districts. It is simply that they positively look forward to the future. They do not envisage it as a mere cessation of the strenuousness of school, but as a second, more important, scene of work and opportunity. The youngster whose father has a bit of land or a tiny surplus of money over the family's daily needs has some vista before him; he hopes to do as well as or better than his father on the land; or he intends to get a scholarship; or he has decided against the country, and made up his mind to watch for a job in a shop or garage where he can 'get on'. Consequently his school life is motivated; he could not envisage life without a certain equipment of powers—of reading, of writing letters and summing—and without a certain knowledge of geography and other common matters. Small holders' children will need all these for the conduct of their business, and parents inquire into their progress in obtaining them. Indeed, the children often already keep the household or garden accounts, and

learn to follow the market prices in the papers. They often work hard on their fathers' holdings or in the home after school hours, but feeding and tending animals and gardening are jobs affording plenty of interest and variety. These children are helped, too, by the greater density of population and consequent greater variety of occupations and human types. There are shops in the village; there are small co-operative societies; buses run more frequently; there are children attending secondary schools; probably all three political parties are represented in the village and Nonconformist churches are strong and active, stimulating each other and possibly 'the Church' as well; emissaries come from the County Agricultural Staff and the Board of Agriculture; there may be adult educational classes. There are, in fact, in such a village a great number of cultural agencies, or to put it more simply, sources of ideas for the children.

The teacher's work here approximates, at least in part, to that of simple instruction. He will not have to win the children or parents by continually demonstrating the practical bearing of school work. In fact his difficulty with the latter is that of convincing them that the 'practical' activities of raffia, gardening, carpentry, are useful, and not occupying time filched from academic work. The antagonistic parent, common among labourers, is very rare among these more independent workers.

Our fourth type of school is from other points of view a conglomeration of types, but all schools classed together here contain two groups of children, first those of agricultural workers, and second, those of servants of well-to-do people, or of the employees in some factory or mine. Of course, the factory or mine workers vary

greatly, and any of them differ from domestic employees. The children of the last are, usually, intelligent, well fed, well clothed, and well disposed towards authority. One head mistress of a school containing them told me how much easier they were to teach than the children of farm labourers; she had, she said, given up the effort to gain the confidence of her labourers' children: they and their parents were so suspicious, whereas the other children and their parents were grateful for everything she did for them. The proximity of another class naturally heightened the feelings of inferiority in the farm labourers' children.

Children whose connexions are with the wide world of industry may be well or ill nourished; and may be ambitious children anxious to accommodate themselves to the world, but are equally likely to be slightly 'Bolshevik', anxious to accommodate the world to themselves, and will accordingly be responsible or difficult pupils. We may generalize about them, as compared with farm labourers' children, to the extent of saying that they may easily be worse tended but are almost always better fed, and usually better housed. In a certain school about half of whose pupils were the sons and daughters of more or less skilled workers in a printing works and the other half of labourers it was obvious at a glance from the bright cheeks and dainty clothes of the one, and the sallow shabbiness of the others, which were which.

A question that inevitably occurs is, whether the children of small holders are more intelligent, or at any rate more open to the help and inspiration that school can give, because of the extra food and space and stimulation afforded by their father's business and his

independence, or whether the fathers owe their position, and the children their gifts, to the inborn superiority of the stock to which they belong. How far do they owe their blessings to themselves and how far to their opportunities? Such a question can probably never be adequately answered, but it is clear that the conditions under which a good proportion of rural children spend their early childhood and school life militate against their taking full advantage of the education that is offered, and make it very necessary that school life shall be so inspired and directed as to meet the children as far as possible.

The present physical state of a too-high proportion of rural children is unsatisfactory. The reports of school medical officers have well ventilated this fact. In 1924[1] an investigation was made in twenty-two rural districts. Of the 9,476 children examined 19·9 per cent. suffered from impaired general physique. The causes of this wastage are given as chiefly wages, purchasing power, and economic circumstances generally; and secondarily, large families, housing, insufficient sleep, and unsuitable and inadequate food.

Figures as to the number of children suffering from malnutrition are very interesting. For a rough figure to bear in mind we may say that 10 per cent. of rural school children are ill fed. This figure, however, is not a constant one. There seems no doubt that the percentage has varied with the amount of the family's weekly income. An extract may be given from the Cambridgeshire School Medical Officer's Report for 1924.[2] 'In the

[1] Cf. *Report of Medical Officer of Board of Education*, 1924.

[2] *Sixteenth Annual Report of the School Medical Officer, Cambridge County Council Education Committee.*

pre-war years 1912–1914 the proportion of such children (i.e. those of subnormal nutrition) recorded in the three successive years was 21·7, 19·5, and 19·4 per cent. respectively, then falling more rapidly to 16·3 and 12·6 in 1915 and 1916. Figures for the war years 1917–1919 are not available, but on resuming full medical work in 1920 the low proportion of 4·1 per cent. was recorded—more recent records suggest a far less satisfactory state of affairs, the proportion of subnormal children having very definitely increased, the percentages recorded being 8·7 in 1921, 10·6 in 1922, 12·5 in 1923, with a slight drop to 11·4 in 1924.' In 1925 the percentage was 12·6.

These figures refer to the whole school population, the proportion being calculated on the basis of children examined during the year of entry to school, at 8 years and at 12. Figures for the children of agricultural labourers would be far higher. There are schools where a self-respecting parent could not find a child whose physique he could wish for his own. A visit to such a school is more impressive than figures; but it would be useful if medical officers could compile tables such that the physique of labourers' children could be compared with that of other rural classes. The drop in the figures for malnutrition at the end of, and just after, the war are accounted for by the Medical Officer for Cambridgeshire by war allowances, which were on the same scale for town and country, and were wealth to rural recipients. Wages must have played their part as well, for under the arrangements of the Corn Production Act, inaugurated in 1917, and allowed to lapse in 1922, they were considerably higher than they have been since.

In most typically rural counties the weekly wages of an agricultural labourer are now 30s. For nearly all

farm-workers the attainment of this wage at 20 or so represents their economic pinnacle. Supplements in kind are extremely rare, and many farmers either dispense with a skilled shepherd and carter or pay them no more than the minimum wage. Of course in favoured spots, near mines or an extensive district of small farms, wages may be as high as £2 for a skilled man, but this is infrequent. From the amount of the normal wage, it follows directly that many children *must* be underfed. The proof takes the form of a little sum—30 divided by 5 or 6 or 7 or 8, according to the number of persons in a family dependent upon the wage. It is very common to suppose that the average labourer's wife has a cruse containing more than wages will buy. It is true that there are heroic mothers; and that nature comes up smiling in an enormous proportion of little children; but that the children must suffer in health before they are many years old is shown both by the sum suggested and more elaborately by the specimens of agricultural labourers' budgets that have been published.[1] It will usually be found that the budgets include nothing for clothes and boots; these must be bought out of harvest money, or out of the money needed for food and coal. One of Mr. Weald's budgets is for a household consisting of a labourer, his wife, a girl of 6 and a boy of 4. The man earns 35*s*. Only half a crown a week for meat, and only one hundredweight of coal is allowed.

'Mrs. Giles' golden rule for approximate solvency is that she must never on any account devote more than 10*s*. per week to her grocery account; in winter they will keep a little

[1] 'Two Farm Labourers' Budgets', by Geoffrey Weald, *The New Statesman*, Aug. 14–21, 1926. *Farm Workers' Budgets*, by A. W. Ashby, pub. by University College of Wales, Aberystwyth.

warmer if she can keep groceries down to 9*s*.—Giles is shod and clothed out of the harvest overtime money, which averages about £3 for hay and corn harvest. Mrs. Giles dresses on the cast-off clothing of kind relatives; she avers that in the last 5 years she has spent precisely 12*s*. on the adornment of her own person, most of which was expended at jumble sales organized by the local gentry.'

Life on such an economic basis is bound to degenerate; at the best there is not quite enough of anything—food, fuel, clothes; at the worst there is great privation. There has been improvement of late years; wages are worth somewhat more than in 1914; the husband's health is insured, and if he is ill medical attendance is forthcoming; and there are Old-Age Pensions at 65. But still, the basis of a sound life is not there.

'Giles, fortunately for himself, is not too imaginative, or even very observant. He apparently does not notice that the pretty girl whom he married seven years ago is being prematurely aged by incessant work and worry; or that his children are under-nourished, and compare unfavourably in thews and complexion with the offspring of better paid neighbours.'

Since 1926 prices have come down a little, but if the depression in agriculture continues[1] wages must come down again. The Giles family is fortunate in two respects: it is small and its bread-winner is in work. There is of course now (1928) a good deal of unemployment in the villages.

Wages, happily, are sometimes supplemented. In districts where the mothers do field-work, in spite of all the domestic and other disadvantages of this, the pro-

[1] This was written before there were clear signs of improvement in agricultural markets.

portion of underfed children is less. A teacher in such a district said to the writer, 'Our children's homes are poor and ill furnished. The table-cloth put on the table on Sunday stays there all the week; but there is food to put on it! The children get plenty, and it includes cooked vegetables, for the women who work must have good meals.' The children's shoes in that school were good too.

It is a pathetic fact that the better housekeepers, more sensitive or 'respectable' women, sometimes do less well for their children than careless mothers who spend their weekly thirty shillings in a slap-dash way entirely on food. The former insist on decent clothing and shoes for the children and these must be, as it were, made out of the children's food. The hungriest time for the labourer's child is from 11 to 14. After that he is a wage-earner and must be fed. Before 11 his 'share' of a meal may be nearly enough. Boys seem to suffer more than girls. In the first chapter is a reference to a schoolmaster who took a detailed interest in his children and had records of boys of 12 and 13 who had only put on $2\frac{1}{2}$ lb. and $5\frac{1}{2}$ lb. respectively in two years. This same gentleman used to beg the mothers to give the children 'green-stuff': some families used to sell their cabbages and bring up the children on a diet of bread. A woman head teacher who knew her children's lives most intimately said that she thought it wrong that children should be kept at school so long whatever the state of the labour market; they should take their chance of work, so that they might also have a chance of a sufficiency of food during those important years of growth, 12 to 14. This lady had the children's interest entirely at heart, and gave them the finest

intellectual training that the complete sacrifice of her time and energy made possible. But she thought food at a crucial age came first. It is to be hoped that we need not choose between food for body and training and nutriment for the mind.

The effect of unsuitable food is reinforced in many children by the insufficiency of fresh air which is due to the quality of the children's sleeping quarters. Statistics at all precisely to this point do not exist, but a considerable percentage of rural school children are housed in cottages which can only be described as miserable.

The quality of housing varies extremely from district to district. There are villages where the Crown, or the Oxford and Cambridge colleges and other public-spirited landlords, hold or have held a good deal of property in which nearly all the cottages are roomy and decent, with gardens attached. There are also large parishes where a good number of the cottages are the one-time homes of the yeomanry displaced by enclosure and the industrial revolution, where there are comparatively few unfit houses. On the other hand, e.g. in certain eastern counties, there are hundreds of ancient cottages that have never been, and never can be, fit scenes of the rearing of children. It is possible in one district to stand at the front door (occasionally the only door) of cottages and touch the thatch with upstretched hand; the windows are so low that practically no light direct from the sky gets in at all. Sleeping in a room in such a cottage, as I have now and then had occasion to do, is like sleeping in a bag; there is no through ventilation, and the air simply does not come into the room. For one person these rooms are unhealthy. I have once or twice slept in rooms in which it was barely possible to

stand upright. Yet cottages often contain only two small bedrooms, and the whole family sleeps in those. Every rural teacher knows that for some children the nights are times of great misery. Sleeping several in a bed under coats and other clothes worn in the day-time scarcely bears thinking of. Of course when evenings are long and warm the children will not go to uncomfortable beds and close rooms. The fields are in every way a better place.

Rural housing has been plentifully described, though figures are lacking. That spirited volume, *England's Green and Pleasant Land*,[1] gives lively and far from exaggerated pictures of rural cottages.

It is worth notice that even the ugliest brick and slate cottages built since 1840 are better to live in than most of the 'sweet' cottages with eye-browed windows and grey-brown, deep, reed thatch! Perhaps the authorities who built cottages after the war were too fastidious in providing laid-on water, three bedrooms, and other modern comforts. Perhaps a greater number of very plain brick cottages with a really good-sized living-room and two airy bedrooms would have helped more. A later generation would have execrated our taste but would have been themselves better set-up!

The reduction in the birth-rate will perhaps in time cure the worst ills of overcrowding. A fairly high standard of living has up to now been the necessary precursor of smaller families; but perhaps in the future that may not be so. Statistics already seem to show that the age of marriage among farm-workers has risen during the last few years, and that families are being limited. The Housing (Rural Workers) Act (1926) will effect something slowly, here and there.

[1] See Bibliography.

One of the defects of many cottage homes most interesting to teachers is the almost total absence of room to play. Some have no gardens, no sheds. The living-room is small and everything must be done in it, even, sometimes, the weekly wash. The most good-natured mother is bound to bid her children frequently to get out of her way, and to turn them into the road. There is one period in a boy's life when he insists on living in the street, but for most purposes and most periods it is a very poor playground. In the country it is only in the winter and when the fields are wet that this defect of the cottages is an acute one; but winter is very long. The road is specially unsuitable for little children, who must nowadays keep on the alert for on-coming motor vehicles. It is impossible to read in the street, to follow any hobby or make any collection, or to use tools there.

Until the children get sufficient food and air the progress of rural education must remain very slow. We cannot even know the capacities of children who are ill housed, ill fed, ill clothed, and under stimulated. There are many dull and backward children in the schools, but till their physical condition is improved we shall not know how many of these are so by inherent defect. Those who are convinced that the apathy and dullness of all backward children are in the grain should consider this quotation from Mr. Robertson Scott (*The Nation*, 18 September 1926):

'But try the effect of living in conditions quite other from those you do live in. Suppose you could very rarely have freedom to strip. Suppose every drop of water used in your house had to be brought into the dwelling in a pail after having been carried, in good or bad weather, from down the road. Suppose you had to wear, day after day, clothes you

had worked and sweated in. Suppose you never seemed to have anywhere to put your things. Suppose you had to sleep always two, sometimes three in a bed, in a narrow, low, stuffy room. Suppose that in your home you were absolutely without privacy by day or night. Suppose you had continually to share the physical and mental life of other people. Suppose you were frayed by being without the necessary space for children's lessons and play, for cooking, for washing day, for conversation or reflection, or rest, or for decent protection against visitors. Suppose that there were in your life, things not only angering but grossly unhealthy and disgusting. Suppose that even a home with all these limitations, and, as like as not, leaking in the roof, would be lost to you, if you complained or changed your employer. How would *you* be affected by such an environment, not for a time, but for years on end? There can be no question how you would be affected. You would sink.

'It is no good talking palliatory rubbish about poor people not minding so much. It is no use repeating the lie that they know no better. They do know better. They have always known better. Have they not provided the servants who lived in the houses of people who were enjoying a more civilized life?'

Having thus shown that conditions do not allow of sound generalizations on intelligence, and that they will for the present defeat attempts to measure innate intelligence accurately, we may return to the question of the mental quality of the rural school's raw material.

The writer's belief that much of the slowness and apathy of many country children is due to lack of stimulation and mental furniture was confirmed in an interesting way. Having voiced this belief to a friend very experienced in town schools she took the latter to a school entertainment; her comment was, 'If you think those children would come well out of an intelligence

test, I'm afraid you're mistaken.' The next week intelligence tests were given to all the children in the school under 12 (who numbered twenty-two), with the result that the children were found to have an average Intelligent Quotient of 108. The highest I.Q. was 132 and the lowest 83. Two children had I.Qs. of 127 and 123 respectively; six others had an average I.Q. of 97; eight of 108; four of 117. The child with the highest I.Q. (132) was the son of a labourer with nine children. This family has defied every disadvantage—low wages, a tiny cottage, large numbers—and thrown up not only the apparently most intelligent child in the lower school but others of good average ability. Thus it illustrates the statement that a very considerable range of intelligence is found in labourers' children; but it contains at least one child (I am not acquainted with the whole nine) pale and tired and with little mental grasp, who has not been able to withstand the strain of the conditions.

It will be a good day when a psychologist with a grasp of rural social conditions makes a thorough study, by means of intelligence tests, of rural children. At present little work has been done along these lines. Such tests would be of immediate value; their results would affect our thoughts upon rural curricula; they would be a guide to teachers, enabling them to be more justly satisfied or dissatisfied with their work; inspection must remain amateurish until inspectors can themselves use psychological tools.

Psychological tests would throw much light on the distribution of intelligence according to the occupation of parents; they would verify or disprove the suggestions on the point made in this chapter.

One of the few published results of intelligence tests in rural schools affords interesting confirmation of ordinary observation of children. We may quote the paragraph headed 'An Experiment in the Use of Group Tests of "Intelligence" in 16 "Elementary Schools" in the West Riding of Yorkshire' given in *Psychological Tests of Educable Capacity*.[1]

'A point of special interest in the survey is the well-marked difference found between children from areas of different types. The results obtained from the rural schools are of peculiar interest. In the rural schools the most noticeable feature is the greater range in the distribution of intelligence. Further inquiry shewed that the villages, where a disproportionate amount of dull and backward children were found, were for the most part villages near a port or city—villages, that is to say, from which the brighter families had already migrated. Other villages, however, in a similar situation showed a disproportionate number of bright and average children; in such cases it was found that the less intelligent families had moved to the large industrial centres owing to the demand in the latter for unskilled labourers; while on the other hand, the village itself offered a desirable place of residence for better families such as skilled artisans.'

Of course there are in the schools a certain number of born, incurable, little brothers Juniper, less pleasantly known as mentally deficients, who will be with us to the end, and probably always present in the rural school, since residential institutions do not seem right for them. Their number is not so large as is sometimes thought. No reliable statistics as to their percentage are forthcoming, as the tests applied by medical officers vary greatly, some authorities making little attempt so far to discover the numbers of any but such children

[1] *Psychological Tests of Educable Capacity*, Board of Education.

as it is impossible to deal with in the ordinary elementary school. Brother Juniper is not perhaps a pressing problem. Modern methods make his presence in school tolerable to his fellows and school hours tolerable to him.

A curious thing about such psychological tests in rural schools as the writer has seen given is that the younger children always do better, on the whole, than older ones. Little children are tested individually, partly by 'performance tests' requiring no previous knowledge and no use of words. But tests for older children contain a large element of language; the child's vocabulary and general knowledge and experience make a difference at this stage, and here the rural children seem to do less well. This fact is related doubtless to the lack of perfect correspondence between the children's needs and what school provides.

From what has been said of the children's background it will appear no wonder that, in the rural school which is taught by one who regards himself or herself as a mere instructor, the children may be found suspicious and loutish. But the mere instructor is rare in the country; the schools are often the scenes of the devoted service of 'social workers'. A teacher who has realized the fundamental needs of her pupils (women are normally better than men in these matters), frequently starts the day by warming and drying them and coaxing them to a knowledge and practice of elementary manners; she corrects their postures, their decadent vowel sounds; at lunch time she supplements their diet by hot cocoa. She gives thought and energy to the school's relationship with the children's homes, for the parents often find school as meaningless as the children do,

since they learnt but little when they were at school, and enjoyed that little not at all.

In the adjustment of school to the actual mental and physical condition of the children we need to go much farther. School work is apt to proceed as if there were an 'educational child' just as once science assumed the 'economic man'. Lack of space, of toys, of all that a good nursery means to the children of the well-to-do, bring about what has already been called the understimulated state of many of our children. They come to school at five with the tiniest vocabularies, unaccustomed to use their hands at all, slow and clumsy in movement, shy in the last extreme. Many rural cottages contain nothing except a broken doll upon which children are invited to use their hands. Of course, if the better parents realized the needs of a child they would make shift to improvise play material, but they at present regard toys as luxuries for which their children must not look. Another section of parents have capitulated so far to their own poor circumstances that such an idea could not be expected to reach them. But the 'educational child' has learned at home to talk and to move, to know the names of all common things and of many of the more remarkable and interesting ones; he has a leisured parent at home to give him opportunities to taste and smell and touch and use. In fact, however, the school must afford these things to many of the children, if its work is to have any solid foundation at all. When it does not afford them it is only natural that children who have never learned to talk fail to write, and that children who have only images of a very limited environment (and those images vague because unused), are bored by books that range the world for subjects.

Those who love the country and have cherished memories of enlightenment received from some village naturalist, or of a quickening of their sense of beauty by some penless poet, will be for asking, 'Can one lack a playground with miles of country around?' 'Can one lack stimulation with nature's infinity of shape and colour and individual creatures all around one?' An affirmative answer to such questions has been given, and must now be modified. From about 8 to 11 boys have an adventurous period; they are strong and can resist weather; mothers have dropped their fears for their safety, and they are largely free. At this stage some boys do become very knowledgeable. They know the extent of the farms and the use of the crops; the farm machines are as it were their standard of the interesting and beautiful. This knowledge is frequently completely overlaid and hidden in school by their ignorance and ineptitude in other matters. I remember going to a school one day where the boys were such louts that they stood and stared at me lifting my bicycle up four steep steps without so much as a grab at the front wheel, and where great lads of 12 were found reading with almost unendurable slowness and artificiality, who became reasonable beings on being asked who owned the farms and what was done on them. In another tiny school of which I was temporarily head mistress the boys talked one morning of some uncouthly named vegetable that I, coming from the Midlands where it is not grown, had never heard of. In the afternoon two small boys of 10 arrived at 3 p.m. hugging huge specimens of kohl rabi, which they had walked miles to fetch, braving wrath for truancy to correct my ignorance.

The following extract from a school journal written after a visit of a fortnight or so to a school containing only typically rural children will illustrate three points: how children tend to be well informed in districts where there are avenues for mild ambitions, in this case, large gardens and the example of poultry-keeping; that some villages have most valuable traditions of skill or accomplishment, in this case it is a 'musical' village; and thirdly, the point under consideration, how completely teaching can ignore and overlay the children's knowledge.

'The children of Std. I, II, and III are very pleasant to teach. They like all the work they do; the battle of interest is not to win. (Till a few months ago these children were being taught by a stimulating, experienced teacher.) No introduction of new method surprises or worries them (given of course that such introductions are not too frequent). They talk freely and well about out-of-door things, and the boys show themselves extremely observant of nature, and most interested in farming. I read them to-day some verses in which the different kinds of fowl are mentioned: Rhode Island Red, Barndoor, Light Sussex, &c. I received a wonderful amount of information subsequently—what good layers Bantams are, how good their eggs to taste, at what age the various kinds begin to lay, how the chicks of one breed command a price and those of others none, in spite of similar qualities; leghorns are a nervous breed! One boy admired one of his neighbours as a poultry-keeper. "She takes such an interest in her fowl. She knows them one by one." All the boys (ten-year-olds) knew exactly who kept which breeds. To-morrow Charlie is to give us a lecture on Birds and their Eggs. This is a big clumsy boy who seemed to me heavy and stupid when I came and who now reveals himself a particularly sensitive lad full of farm and nature lore, though almost painfully slow at writing and summing.

His knowledge of farming includes machinery; he explains very clearly the use and action of various machines.

'A lesson called Hedgerows in Autumn flooded me with information. I had proposed to give the lesson, but the children did. A wheelbarrow load of most varied specimens was brought. Yet on the second day I spent at this school, I saw a lesson on Riverside Trees, without a single specimen or drawing, consisting of a tenuous logical thread spun out of the notion held by the youthful uncertificated teacher that large trees cannot grow beside a brook because the water would interfere with their roots!

'This is a prosperous village of good traditions. With the exception of a family who are "strangers", all the children are clean. There is a total absence of the cloakroom smell that is often so repellent; the children give their confidence easily; there is a tradition of fine singing in the village and even in these times there are evidences of considerable prosperity. Gramophones, motor-cars, and wireless figure in the children's lives. There are boys in the class I have written of that one could gladly adopt—Harry, Francis, Jim, and Giles—certain that they would make good in a modest way, that bodies and minds and affections are in a fair state of development.'

Perhaps it should be made clear that this school suffers from many of the ordinary disadvantages. Its building is described elsewhere and is one of the worst the writer has ever worked in. There are mentally deficient and unwell children in it. Some of the children's knowledge and their power and willingness to reveal it must be ascribed to the lasting effect of pleasant and stimulating teaching in the children's early school life. How widespread is this knowledgeableness among rural children? Is it present everywhere to be used and aided by schools? Not, is my experience, in the most depressed villages. In many schools the children are not

only ignorant of the names of common flowers and birds, but have an almost incredible lack of curiosity. I have set rows of simple flowers in jars labelled with their names, and the children would not go to look at them unless one as it were supplied the energy to do so by a definite command. Little exhibitions of pictures in connexion with geography and history work were found to be, in some schools, completely ignored, or if any one looked at them it would be one or two children with exceptionally good homes. Even when the children have seemed to enjoy subjects very much while one has been directing them, the interest in some schools has dropped from them so completely that they would not look at specimens, much less bring to school any relative objects, though these lay thick around them.

When the relationship of the rural child to the rural environment is under discussion little is generally said of girls.[1] Those who advocate the rural bias in school have generally boys in mind. Girls see less of the rural environment, for they are more at home; they seldom become rural workers unless they are farmers' daughters who remain at home, and even then their work and environment are usually almost entirely domestic, and very little agricultural. Our thoughts of the countryside have too strong a practical bias. The thought of girls will occur more often when we give other aspects of country life their due place and proportion in our minds, for example, its aesthetic and emotional aspects.

[1] There is now the Report on *The Practical Education of Women and Girls for Rural Life*, H.M. Stationery Office (April 1928) which touches upon the curriculum of rural schools in relation to girls; but it deals only with practical training, and does not discuss at all fully the actual destinies of girl-pupils.

The sensual and aesthetic response to the country-side, though certainly present in both boys and girls of less than 14, is only incipient; but when we plan the rural curriculum we ought not to forget it. Already at 13 girls will often write moving descriptions of sunrise and sunset and flowers; they will love and read quantities of short descriptive poems.

The aesthetic sense is of extraordinary value for the countryman as for every one. In the country there is always food for it; there is not a month, not a mood of weather, aspect of cloud or tree, which have not been seen as beautiful by poet or draughtsman; artistic interpretation is ready and able to make every day yield pleasure. That such pleasure is of national value in retaining and bringing back people to the villages there is no doubt. Boys are more concerned with the practical aspects of things than with their reference to feeling. Early life gives them only the material, as it were, for a sense of beauty. Fire must fall on it and transmute it at some later time. They do not care for the beauty of the parish church, but are interested in the various stresses in the stone; they rarely talk of shining clouds or twilight colours, but a late or early walk once in a way supplies experience which will take on beauty in the memory and under contemplation. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote that there was 'nothing Wordsworthian about the boy Wordsworth'; that he 'took birds' nests —for the eggs; hired and rode horses—for the sport; and read books—for the story'. He was like other boys; but other boys are like him in their later life, in measure; they have more of potentiality of a nature-love like his, perhaps, than we can know till the dense economic shadow that has lain so long over the lives of some

country folk has passed. At any rate, one's letters show that the most matter of fact—to all seeming—of youths, parted from country scenes and experiences will long to walk through dew-wet grass again, or even to get a 'proper feel' of sleet and wind. Sometimes even during school days there is sensitiveness where 'school' does not discern it. Long errands before breakfast are willingly done for the sake of gold ribs of clouds in the east; the long job of guarding cows getting an evening feed by the roadside, while the fields are shut for hay, is not dull at all but a time made exciting by the colours intensifying as the sun sinks lower and lower. One girl I taught—she was slightly over the ordinary leaving age—would read the Psalms on the top of a windy hill on Sunday mornings, and having read all she could (chiefly, it is to be feared, in books not too severely based upon research) of the Druid nature-worship, haunted the hills and ancient monuments of her district, re-living the pagan emotions of her ancestors, to the best of her imagination.

In all children, as in this girl, the aesthetic emotions are closely related to religious feeling and to other tender growing points of adolescent nature. The wise teacher does not attempt to touch or turn them, directly, with the pedagogic hand. He feeds them with literature and history; with drawing and decorative sewing; with music and dancing. He would never allow them to be ousted or belittled by a curriculum over-estimating the 'practical' side of human nature. He knows that the aesthetic side of us is supremely practical. It is when people have the feeling for the unseemly, the ugly, the unfitting strongly developed that they struggle hardest for the clean home, the decent meal, kind and reliable

personal relationships. The aesthetic sense has also considerable practical value in modern farming. Developments in the grading and packing of produce, now becoming important, require of farmers and farm-workers an understanding of the attraction that daintiness and beauty of form and colour have for their customers. To their lack of such understanding and of the training of their own aesthetic faculties is due some of the difficulty they experience in competition with foreign produce.

Whether the sense of beauty of children brought up below the real poverty line can ever be more than a bud that never opens may be doubted, but the bud is there. They are capable of loving to see and hear, especially it seems to hear, the best. For example, I have read Yeats's *Land of Heart's Desire* to breathless audiences of embryo labourers (I am aware of the chance that they would have been even more breathless had the reading been of Geo. R. Sims).

The best music seems to make a surer appeal than the best literature; perhaps it depends less upon the children's previous experience and mental content. I used to take my gramophone to one of the very poorest schools of a whole county, the school to which the following note refers:

'One high-grade mentally deficient and several thoroughly backward children out of a total of 50. Two boys of 13 in Std. III. Four families of children have, or have had, one parent in the X— Mental Hospital. Yet even these facts do not give a correct impression of the school. The number of backward and socially depressed children is so considerable that they greatly retard the children of normal background. Thus, in spite of kindly discipline and a good amount of

stimulus in school the children as a community reach a low standard intellectually, morally, and in their manners.'

A note on one of our concerts reads:

'The children sang interesting songs—Rutland Boughton's Faery Song, The Year's at the Spring &c. with a beautiful zest. They listen to the gramophone extremely well; with great pleasure and absorption, for example, to one of Brahms's Hungarian Dances and a Country Dance by Beethoven. On being given Purcell's Golden Sonata they sat in perfect quiet, most children even in Std. II sitting utterly still, with absorbed eyes. I thought it a very severe test, and asked who would have liked to talk if they had felt it would be right, and six out of 40 put up their hands. It is not much use to ask children that sort of question; it is seldom one can set them free enough to give one the truth, but the number corresponded with the number my own observation suggested. One boy—a quaint, difficult, stupid lad, but emotional and lively—came to me and with a mannish jerk of the head, said "Very good records, those, Miss." '

After that we had many a concert in the dinner hour, when the children brought their records and I listened to 'K-K-K-Katie' and they in their turn to Brahms and Grieg and Sullivan. In that and other schools the children would come in at any time when they heard the gramophone and listen for a while to really difficult music, and go on doing so day after day. The only reason for giving the gramophone concert in school hours is that then one can give a few facts about composers and familiarize the children with their names, so that they may not be put off by the difficult foreign names like Mozart or Beethoven when they read their wireless programmes, but on the contrary have some feeling of their familiarity and attractiveness. Indeed

in these times of gramophone and wireless it should be one of the chief duties of a school to see that the children know the names of the reputable, not to say too strictly the great, poets, novelists, and musicians. Whether they read Hardy and Stevenson, or Charles Garvice and Ethel Dell depends largely on whose name they hear oftenest, and whose book falls in their way.

The thankfulness of a large proportion of our children for colourful things such as music, drama, poetry, is not at all incompatible with what I have said of their incuriosity and of their attitude to ordinary school subjects. A thoughtful schoolmaster told me one day that he thought the children might have expressed to him their attitude to school in the words, 'Old chap, this won't be any use to me', and I told him of my experience in offering the children music and plays. 'They've a taste all right', he answered, 'for the beautiful and brave, but none for mental exertion.' But in giving the children pleasure pure and simple we get beyond the question of use, though we usually carry with us an affirmative answer to it. The oftener we can give great pleasure the better. It expands and stimulates the children's selves, makes their blood flow faster, their breathing deeper. They and we feel school worth while.

A little must be said of the post-school rural child, in as far as he remains rural. But first the question must be asked, how many remain in the country? For the boys a usual estimate is that less than 40 per cent. of them go on to the land. In very remote villages as many as 50 per cent. *start* their wage-earning life on the land, but many of these—say one-third—leave the farms for the railway, the police, and the towns after a

few years. Figures for the past, even if we had reliable ones, as we have not, would not help us as regards the future, for agricultural life is changing.

For two or three years past a larger percentage of country boys have had to seek work away from home because farmers have so cut down their staffs. There will no doubt be further reductions in the near future, but no one could predict what will be happening in, say, ten years' time. Figures as to the destinies of the children are of interest apart from the question of how many take up agricultural pursuits. In one village, of 41 boys who have left school in the last twenty years (the school is very small) 25 went on to the land at the age of 13 or 14, of whom 3 ultimately emigrated, 6 were killed in the war, and 5 entered, later on, other kinds of employment. Of the others 3 became gardeners, 1 went on to the railway, 2 became motor mechanics, 1 a farm mechanic, hiring out his own machines, 1 a butcher, 1 a paper boy, 1 a house-decorator, 2 assistants in village shops and post offices, 1 a teacher, 1 a missionary, 1 a bricklayer's labourer. All but 3 of these boys are still working as employees, and these three were rather born to independence than have achieved it. They are all comparatively young still, but the proportion is very small.

This village is not representative, since it is in one of the most rustic districts in England, seven miles from the railway, and the only local industry beside farming is quarrying—work for which growing boys are useless as it requires great strength. But in all villages the destinies of the boys are very varied. Of the girls, enormous numbers from remoter villages enter 'service', nor is there any reason to suppose that this number

will be greatly reduced, as more domestic servants than ever are employed, and the conditions of this work are improving. Where there is a factory near, however, there is great competition to enter it, for the sake of remaining at home, or rather, of avoiding 'service'. The girls who go to service in towns seldom marry agricultural labourers, but that is the destiny of a number of those who go daily to a factory.

Taking the girl school-fellows of the boys referred to above, 47 left school in the last twenty years. Of these, 34 went into domestic service, 3 took to agricultural work (milking, &c.) on their fathers' farms, 5 did domestic work at home, 2 became typists and clerks, 1 a dressmaker, 1 a teacher, and 1 a cook at a tea-shop. Only 2 have so far married agricultural labourers, nor is there any reason to suppose that many others will; the girls in domestic service will more probably marry townsmen. The girls no more than the boys have a certain future before them, much less a certainly rural future.

The destinies of the children vary greatly from village to village and district to district. The figures for the past and the prospects for the future will not afford administrators any great positive leading with regard to the curricula of the schools; they warn them, if such warning were needed, as at this date it surely is not, that vocational bias to agriculture at the stage of elementary education would be a great injustice, and a waste of educational opportunities. On the other hand, every individual teacher should take into account his children's future. His detailed choice of subject-matter, his teaching method, and above all what may be called his general conversation with the children, will be af-

fected by what he knows of the direction of their thoughts, and of what opportunities in town, country, or the colonies lie before them.

What has been said of the country child might be summed up perhaps in a statement that the children may be roughly divided for purposes of education into two classes, those of agricultural labourers and those of more prosperous folk, or into those who are prepared for instruction and training by their homes and those who need preliminary help—food, space, clothes—before their schooling can be reasonably planned, much more before it can be judged. Sometimes it is suggested that it would be right to impoverish the school curriculum for impoverished children—to substitute handwork for geography and history and literature, manual instruction for ideas and information. This chapter throws down the glove to any theory behind which lurks the notion that school attempts to give too much.

In all this chapter we have said nothing of the farmer's child. The small holder's child has had his word, and with him go the offspring of all small farmers. A paragraph on the children of the established farmer of two hundred acres or so will be a suitable pendant to our chapter. They are not numerous in the schools, and as country secondary schools become more numerous they leave in greater numbers at 10 or 11. It has been said before that such children are usually sturdy in body and mind. Many farmers are passionately attached to their calling—to, as they would put it, the land. Farming is their life. They find in it their hopes for their children, and their own most cherished satisfactions. This attitude is communicated to the children, and becomes in them a sense of the importance of life

and of action. Linked with this is the sense of the importance of father, who has so much to decide, who has cows and horses and bulls and pigs to manage, and even men. The importance of father becomes in some dim way, to the child, the importance of himself. Farmhouse life is full of direct thrills for the child, too. Market-day means rides, perhaps; churning-day means beautiful new yellow butter and dairy and kitchen excitingly 'upside down'. There are the animals all the year; especially the newly appeared young things are exciting and delightful. There are not only the machines and the barns but a sense of mastery and ownership of them. There are laden tables of delicious food for all meals, even in the worst of times.

In the midst of such a life the school hours are and, it is to be feared, must remain, a dullish interval. Often the farmers' sons, at least, are difficult to interest, at moments difficult to control. They have not the same sense of the necessity of book-learning as the small holders' children have; the parents perhaps have a tendency to feel the child's future dependent rather upon the number and state of culture of the acres they can hand over to him than upon his wits and his accomplishments. School needs to afford such boys no rural training; rather it needs to give them a sense that after all the world is larger than the farm, and to socialize them, to give them the power to subordinate themselves, to co-operate. It will be remarked that farmers' sons cannot be all of one type. No doubt it is true, but most of those I have known have this need of social training. They bear a certain resemblance to John, who, however, was more active and outspoken than most.

John was 6 years and 10 months old. He had been

in the infant school a whole year, but had so far resolutely refused to learn to read. When he first came to school, if he experienced a dull moment he would sit as with reins in his hand and call out, 'Whoa Beauty!' or put his tongue between his back teeth and 'Clk! Clk! Clk!' for Diamond to trot. If you sat down beside him with a book he would be off, at the first word for dog, donkey, or any other animal known to him, telling you how to drive a donkey or a pig, or how he managed his own dog.

If you suggested to him that he should finish the job he was on when the clock struck 12 or 4, he would say 'Oh! I can't stop. I've got to go to see to the tractor.' Once he gave his teacher pause by saying, 'Oh! my men will be wasting time if I don't go and shout at 'em.' Taken for a bus ride, he pointed at a field as he exclaimed, 'My! that 's in good tilth! Just ready to give a good crop of wheat.' His play-time games were 'driving bullocks' and 'killing pigs'. One day he came into school with his hands covered with red chalk and announced, 'I've killed twenty pigs to-day.' His teacher had to say, 'You kill no more pigs this week.' It was no good to suggest he did not play the game; it was not a game, and he would not desist if you treated it as such. John's description of his father was that he was a big man, as big as ten giants and he had a great big voice—'a voice like you want for crow scaring.' John had a deep voice himself already, and asked if he will go crow-scaring when he grows up, replies contemptuously, 'Oh! I go crow-scaring now.' It is easily understood that John usually has a tendency to be cock of the walk at school—to use the other boys as horses to drive, and pigs to kill. The question about John is not so

much 'Will he be a good farmer?' as 'Will he be a good villager?'

To judge by the effect of home upon their sons, farmers are intensely individualistic. Were they more socially inclined they could make great contributions to modern village life, but if education is to help them to a wider and more human point of view it must be chiefly in schools and other educational institutions of secondary rank. (This matter is referred to again in the last chapter.)

The first requisite for a teacher of young children is a knowledge of the individual nature of his pupils, including their physical state and mental content of the moment. Only upon these, and through his knowledge of them, can the teacher build. This chapter has dealt perhaps too largely with the physical and economic background of a certain large section of village children. For this it is perhaps a sufficient excuse that these are the children most in need of the school's help, and for their sake it is more important to realize that their lives lack certain essentials than to make the most of such cultural elements as their lives possess. If we solve the problem of building up the minds and bodies of the neediest we shall incidentally enrich school life for the more fortunate and provide them with happier and more stimulating companionship. In some respects, however, the schools are impotent. They cannot alone, or in any considerable measure, solve the social and economic problems of giving the children a good start in life, and ambitions suitable to their powers which they have a reasonable chance of fulfilling. But if economic changes led to these improvements, then the schools could effectually try to remove the unfortunate

mental effects of the miserable history of the agricultural labourer, and to make even the poorest rural children heirs of the non-material wealth of the country-side.

VI

THE RURAL BIAS AND THE CURRICULUM

> The thirst that from the soul doth rise
> Doth ask a drink divine.

VERY severe accusations are sometimes made against the education given in country schools on the ground of its detachment from rural life. For example, a great Egyptologist wrote to *The Times* not long since that

'The countryman is being crushed by the townsman in all ways, economically by the sheltered industries, and educationally by atrophying his proper being. . . . We should not wish for any inferiority in country education, but for an entirely different kind of teaching from that of the townsman. There is quite as much to learn in one kind of life as in the other; but at present the countryman is tied to the wrong system, that of the town. The usual educationist cannot imagine an entirely different world of needs.'

Another specimen of lay criticism of rural schools is afforded by a report upon them made by the Chambers of Agriculture:

'The present system of education tended to produce clerks rather than manual workers. They felt that elementary education was too urban in its character, and tended to draw the population of the country-side—already dangerously depleted—into the towns. Rural schools were simply reproductions of those in the towns, whereas the rural schools had wonderful opportunities if only they would draw inspiration from the surrounding nature and country life. The

great change that was necessary was that a larger proportion of time should be earmarked for manual work. They further suggested that all teachers in rural districts should possess specific rural qualifications, and that central schools should be established where the older pupils might obtain advanced instruction.'

Sometimes the same type of criticism proceeds from a public which is not entirely a lay one—from education committees and administrators. The highest common factor of the accusations of shortcoming against the country school is that the education given is too clerkly, and of the suggestions for its reform, that the training and teaching given should be more practical, in the sense of giving a larger place to manual work, and should be more closely related to the rural environment. Teachers may and do accept this criticism and suggestion as true and valuable, and as pressing them in the direction in which they wish to go, though they must interpret the terms a little. For example, education being too clerkly does not mean that the children are given too many clerkly accomplishments; they do not read, number, or write English too well. On the contrary children need to do all these better; they need to read more plentifully, handle figures with greater readiness, and an improved sense of their meaning. The 'too-clerkliness' of education consists in its abstraction from the children's real lives. As to the paucity of the provision for handwork, it seems to be often thought that it is due to the prejudice of teachers in favour of merely intellectual work. Teachers may have a slight prejudice of that nature, owing to their own one-sided education in the past, and to the fact that they are necessarily people of some intellectual tastes. But the

lack of manual training is due to the fact that the public has not, in the past, desired it. The original function of the schools was to make the children barely literate, and the cost of providing manual training has kept this function to the fore. No materials can compare for cheapness with paper and ink. Cookery, carpentry, and sewing are all expensive subjects. Wood, utensils, fuel, and woven materials must be used and even a little of each spoiled. Instead of being antagonistic to such work some schools have carried it on in spite of most difficult conditions. In a certain school cookery and carpentry have been continuously taught for forty years, and the school is still without a room for manual work. A number of schools have the same story to tell of periods considerable, though not quite so long.

The suggestion that the rural environment should be used is universally accepted. The question is, in what way and to what extent. The more unorthodox, revolutionary, and detailed suggestions need to be examined in the light of the nature of the children, of their future, and of the limitations of school hours and staffs. One assumption of many lay critics is that the school should take a part directly in stemming the exodus from the country by teaching farm handicrafts, and by attaching the children by thoughts, habits, and affections to the country. In so far as school develops the children's powers of aesthetic appreciation it must tend to love of the country, but whether it should bias the children to look for a livelihood in the country is another question. A little thought brings to light the fact that economic forces are infinitely stronger than the school, and unless we are certain that these forces favour a rural career for the children, it is plainly wrong for the school

to press them in that direction. Even were employment certainly forthcoming, and as we have seen in Chapter V it is not, still the responsibility of pressing the children by ever so little force of their education into farm labour or small holdings is not one to be lightly taken. There are districts in which wages, housing, and general social conditions are such that no one with interest in the children as individuals, which every teacher worthy the name inevitably has, could wish to see them subject to. Agriculture is for many who enter it a blind-alley industry: hundreds of boys who go on to farms at 14 must find work elsewhere at 18. A teacher may, as a villager and a countryman, be never so sorry to see his finer boys join the police force or go on to the railway; as their friend he cannot but congratulate them.

There are two types of rural bias, both of which, too enthusiastically administered, might imply an untruth and bring consequent injustice. The first is the practical bias, the suggestion to a child that an agricultural life is worth while and attainable by preparing him or her practically for it. The other is by teaching him or her exclusively attractive rural lore. There is an assumption underlying the suggestion that subjects shall have a rural bias, that rural learning will keep children in the country. The whole truth might as often drive the labouring class from it; and indeed just now it is said that economic truth is driving even farmers' sons from the land. Take rural history; what lies closest to many of our children is the agricultural labourer's story; but normally they are taught much more about the history of the parish church or manor house. With the tendency of most of us to give history a tinge of

romance and beauty there is probably already too much bias—not perhaps of great practical importance. Still, it is good to be clear that if the rural labourer's child appreciated the story of his own class, any tendency he might have to leave the country would be reinforced. He would see how in weather fair or foul for others, his class has fared but poorly, and would be prepared for the knowledge that it is still the most defenceless class in the country. We are no doubt justified in keeping back from children most of the bitter history of the hundred and forty years up to the Old-Age Pensions Act, but certainly we are not justified in teaching of all the fun of the village green, and nothing of the Dorsetshire transportations or the pathetic meetings of Arch and his supporters; all the beauty and the high politics of the Church's past and none of its one-time tendency to uphold society as it was constituted, though justice was not its characteristic.

Apropos of this point, that knowledge of the countryside does not necessarily attach people to it for economic purposes, those who know the schools will call to mind many a lad well versed in farm life, who ends his disquisitions to one on farm machines or live stock with a very serious 'but I'm not going on the land'. In small cottages children share their parents' anxieties to the full, often indeed, in their inexperience, feeling them more keenly than older people, and some of them realize at a very early age how few opportunities lie open in the direction of agriculture. Many proposals have been made for introducing into the curriculum specialized instruction in farm processes. A resolution adopted by a branch of the National Farmers' Union, typical of many, states that 'it strongly urged that in

view of the large sums which agriculturists are contributing towards the cost of local education there should be included in the curriculum of elementary schools in rural areas agricultural subjects useful to boys going on farms'. It is urged that boys are useless on the farms when they go to them at 14. Apropos of this argument, it should be pointed out that it is not the school's work to see that a lad can earn his first week's wage actually in his first week of work. Employers of the Middle Ages expected to continue to instruct their apprentices long past the age of 14, and every good farmer who is also a good master will expect to teach the fourteen-year-old lads he employs. It is the school's work to see, not that the child is prepared to undertake farm work immediately upon order, but that he shall be generally alert and ready, prepared to be interested, and provided with some general scheme of knowledge into which he can fit the new facts he learns in his working life. A good general preparation for life will enable the young farmer to continue to be a learner longer than will 'specialized instruction'. The argument about the payment of rates will no doubt appear less often now that farmers have been so largely relieved in this respect; but in so far as farmers are entitled to a direct return for their payments these should be expended upon farm schools or on specialized instruction to children who have already taken up agricultural occupations.

With regard to all agricultural instruction proposed for the rural school, the question must be asked, 'Will it be just as good for boys going into urban employment and for girls going into urban domestic service as for those going on the land?' Only if this question can

be answered in the affirmative is there justification for adopting, for a number of schools, any scheme of such work as would take up a considerable part of school time.

Very varied types of agricultural instruction have been proposed and experimented with. At least three counties have arranged for a certain number of boys to be taken to see farriery and smithing. In a county where there is a good deal of seed growing, the children have been taught how to test seeds and other matters connected with this type of market gardening. A few schools have taught the management of small live stock —poultry, rabbits, goats, and bees. Individual schoolmasters have introduced children to subjects as specialized as willow-culture. An interesting syllabus [1] was issued in 1927 by the Hertfordshire County Council, suggesting directions in which a rural bias can be given to ordinary school subjects, and in particular urging the value of school visits to farms. With the syllabus are given printed lists of questions such as the children's expeditions should enable them to answer. The questions are very successful; any boy would love to find the answers to them.

The suggestions of the Board of Education on this subject are always very general; they 'consider it of great importance that the teaching in rural schools should be associated closely with the environment of the children; for various reasons it appears desirable at the present time to emphasize afresh the principle that the education given in rural schools should be intimately related to rural conditions of life. . . . The Board

[1] *Suggested Syllabus of Rural Education*, Hertfordshire County Council.

do not suggest that rural elementary schools should teach "agriculture", or attempt to give a vocational training. Like other schools, they should give a general education based upon environment.' The Board at present encourages experiments both in general rural reference and in specialized training; an appreciative account of work being done is given in the pamphlet entitled *Rural Education.*[1]

It is not proposed here to attempt any valuation of schemes for rural bias. Differences of ability, of homes, of prospects, of the situation of villages, call for different schemes. The special circumstances of every school need study before decisions are taken as to the direction of the teaching. A village school, however small, which is within easy reach of a town may do wrong to spend much time on specifically rural matters of any kind, except such as make for healthy leisure pursuits, while if there should exist schools (in this country there do not) a large majority of whose pupils subsequently get their living from the land there would be a case for making the content of all subjects and books preponderatingly rural.

Country teachers who love to give a strong rural bias to their work sometimes argue that their children leave school ready equally for town or country. Such a statement needs to be proved to the hilt. If it is true, then the work should be advocated because it makes the children adaptable and not because the children who have done it 'in practice prefer the country'.[2] It is not necessarily a gain to themselves or to the nation that

[1] *Rural Education*, Board of Education.

[2] Cf. *The Practical Education of Women and Girls for Rural Life*, H.M. Stationery Office, p. 61.

they prefer to spend their lives in the country unless economic circumstances afford a good living there. Of course, constant reference to reality, which use of the environment makes possible, has a vitalizing effect upon instruction, but the environment of a country dweller, in these days, includes much that is non-agricultural, has much in common with the urban environment. The growing use of machinery, the importation of goods from all parts of the world, the newspaper with its excellent pictures, the traffic on the roads, aeroplanes, the wireless, the gramophone, together with the many-sidedness of nature, of history, and of physical and political geography make it possible to refer constantly to the environment without biasing the children as to the whereabouts of their future home or the nature of their future work. It would seem that while for most schools a rural bias would be an injustice, an environmental reference is a necessity. What parts of the environment the teacher most uses to illustrate statements, to generalize from, to illumine from literature, must be determined by his knowledge of his children's capacities and their bias natural or previously acquired.

A scheme for giving environmental reference to school work may then be good or bad, according to the circumstances under which it is applied. Certain comments, however, may be made and a few practical questions raised.

For example, the general nature of the Board's suggestions and its encouragement of initiative affords an example to other administrators. No Education Committee should identify itself with a particular scheme, partly because it is unlikely to fit all their schools, but also because it is a departure from their true function.

Even the publication of Schemes and Syllabuses clearly announced to be only suggestions and not to be dictated schemes is of questionable wisdom. Teachers feel that an Education Committee who have spent time and trouble on a scheme, and identified themselves with it, naturally like to see it carried out and have a soft spot in their corporate heart for those who carry it out successfully and justify their faith. Sending teachers the records of varied experiments and circulating numbers of suggestions embodying various points of view is quite a different matter. The great thing is to stimulate teachers to think out their own problem.

Suggestions for teaching rural lore, and especially for taking children to ploughing-matches, to flower-shows, markets, &c., seem to call for comment. Excursions are very expensive of time and raise some difficult practical questions. Will the gain from the expedition pay for the whole time consumed in going and coming, as well as in learning? To the individual needs of how many scholars will the excursions minister? Will not many boys have learnt more in their private expeditions than can be seen in an hour or so? Can the head teacher leave his perhaps inexperienced assistants in charge of the school while he accompanies the chosen group?

Giving rural lore by means of instruction is less necessary than is often thought. As has been said elsewhere, school overlays knowledge that many children have, and to proceed to give further instruction may be to overlay that voluntarily acquired knowledge still more. At present boys pursue their researches into farming, farriery, and the breeding of stock both voluntarily and effectually. The aim of school is not to take over the direction of the children's acquisition of knowledge, but

to bring about the further exercise of initiative. The clever teacher will prefer the boys' teaching him about these matters of general rural information to his teaching the boys. Children love to give information and the best teacher can accept it, while pointing out gaps in his informants' knowledge by intelligent questions in such a way that he seems never to usurp leadership. Beginning so, the teacher and his pupils may pursue knowledge together, not concentrating all on the same few facts, but all bringing their own special grist to the mill. Allowing the children to determine the starting-point for accumulating lore has the advantage, among others, of allowing a look-in to the point of view of the girl scholars. To lay down a syllabus of rural lore may not make the children's researches more thorough, and it may reduce their relish.

The personal elements in the school situation are too much forgotten. The children's minds at 11 are not live vacua, waiting for content. It has been shown that children's minds not infrequently have a rural content and an anti-rural bias; occasionally, on the other hand, they have too severe a rural bias, as in the case of the small boy referred to on p. 175. The need of farmers' children is sometimes to learn something of parts of the country where modern tendencies are clearer than in certain large-farm districts. The teacher's mind, too, has a content and a bias. Often the teacher's bias is both insufficiently professional and insufficiently rural, but the greater of these insufficiencies is the first. Less would possibly be heard of the rural bias if teachers were better psychologists, better qualified to get into genuine touch with the mind-content, the interests, and the impulses of their children. A long special course in

rural knowledge for all rural head teachers would not of itself add greatly to the spiritual and mental life of the schools. While teachers need to allow to a greater extent for the individuality of their children, they have their own inescapable temperaments, and will teach best the subjects in which they most fully find themselves. Thus the three elements in the school situation —pupils, teacher, and environment (a hold-all term, the last, for physical surroundings, homes, futures, school equipment, &c.)—make of every school a unique compound. New syllabuses are not the chief need, but a highly developed and devoted personality at the head of the school, capable of bringing about adequate interaction between the various elements in it. Many of our most intelligent or best-prepared head teachers already understand well how to use the environment as a base, or as illumination, for much of what they teach. So far as circumstances permit they do so use the environment. As has been clearly indicated in Chapter III, many assistant teachers are unable skilfully to link schoolwork with the rest of the children's lives. This is because of lack of preparation. Great originality is not now necessary to enable a teacher to use the locality as a basis for work in certain subjects. Schools exist, though they are not common, where in geography lessons models of the district are made to show and explain the relief; which possess ordnance-maps of the district, and where the children have made maps of their villages to show the boundaries of farms and the distribution of crops. Work along these lines has been successfully carried out, and descriptions of the experiments published.

The teaching of local history of a kind to illustrate the

political history of the nation is common and is often well done. Here, again, the teacher receives example and precept from other teachers who have preceded him. Small county histories are now available and in some counties courses of lectures in local history have been arranged for teachers. Local history is a subject which has an appeal for many teachers and they have enthusiastically demonstrated to each other, in exhibitions and discussions and lectures, their various modes of interesting children in district and county. The local history taught is, however, mostly illustrative of national, political, and social history rather than a detailed study of the industry and social conditions of the district. Experiments in giving courses dealing more closely with the history of agriculture and with the lives of the past occupiers of ancient farmhouses and cottages are desirable, and will no doubt be made in some of the larger central schools whose teachers are able to specialize.

The importance of local reference in arithmetic is also well understood by competent teachers. They know well that too much emphasis on rural matters as such withdraws attention from the importance of finding the shortest, and most easily comprehended, mode of handling a problem. They have discovered that some of the 'rural arithmetics' published have been very unsound as text-books, and that it is better to find the text-book mathematically soundest and supplement it with 'rural' examples where necessary. Merely to give sums which mention sheep or mangolds instead of street lamps and shops is not to make arithmetic in any effectual way more practical. The important thing is that the children shall have had *experiences* which have called upon them to make the abstractions which are number. The best

teachers of arithmetic concentrate on keeping arithmetic practical in a general way and upon developing the 'number sense' of children rather than upon making a great number of abstractions from things specifically rural. The rural environment affords the opportunity of specially interesting exercises in mensuration, for example, and no young qualified teacher professionally worth his salt neglects them.

In short, the able and qualified teacher already uses the rural environment a good deal in teaching the subjects of the curriculum.

Many teachers have not, however, the intimate knowledge of village and farm life or of the contents of the country child's mind which would enable them to link school work very closely with the detail of the pupils' circumstances. Many very valuable connexions cannot be set up through formal teaching at all, but find their place in all that informal part of school life that may be called the conversation of teacher and pupil. One may illustrate this statement briefly, though the connexions made in this way could be innumerable. The moral stimulation of children could be greater, one has often thought, if the theory of conduct suggested to children could be linked more with their lives. For example, the children's conduct to animals is not infrequently a difficulty. There are villages where small orgies of cruelty to birds recur every spring, and the unskilled and brutal driving of cattle is not an uncommon sight. I have heard many slightly sentimental attempts to teach children love of animals, and read in the children's books such stories as that of the lady who nursed a dying sparrow back to life. But animals are not exclusively, or even chiefly, pets to country

children, and few of them will ever nurse sparrows in the 'warm palms' of their 'kind hands'. But they might be taught to wring the neck of a too-suffering bird and decently to bury the body. Humane methods of catching and killing animals should not go totally unmentioned in school. The children should learn to feel the shame of unskilled, cruel, and economically wasteful ways of driving cattle and sheep. If the school took up a practical attitude it might have the influence with children to prevent the stoning of robins in the winter hedges, and with parents to keep little children from certain brutalizing sights, such as the massacres of rats at threshing, and hares and rabbits after corn-cutting.

A more important point is one that has been mentioned in a previous chapter. Village children are often lacking in moral as in other ambitions. They are seldom hero-worshippers; most of the great ones of every kind appear to have lived in worlds very unrelated to their own. They need to know of men and women who have done well in their own rank, or from beginnings similar to their own, or in stations not dissimilar from those in which some of the children may expect to find themselves. There is a dearth of heroes, on a scale to be nationally known, who have lived as farm-workers or risen from that rank. They are not, however, quite absent; there are Cook who discovered Australia, John Clare the poet, Arch and Edwards the Trade Union leaders. Perhaps it is more important still that local heroes should be recognized; villagers are sometimes prone to think meanly of their own and their neighbours' lives; North Oxfordshire children should all know, for example, of William Smith the geologist and engineer,

who began his career in the Churchill village school; they should know too of William Jones the diarist and Quaker of Charlbury; of Loudon of Great Tew, farmer and landscape gardener, who 'believed that the good farmer must beautify the land on which he worked, and that all agricultural improvement should be based on a union of beauty and utility'[1]—a message specially needed by our farmers' children, a certain section of whom learn at home to regard most forms of civilization as waste of money, time, or energy. Every county or district, indeed almost every village, should afford some instances of useful and devoted public service rendered, or work of general interest and importance done, which is yet not different in nature from work which the children may aspire to do.

The importance to village school children of accurate and conventional speech is a much-discussed subject, related to one not now regarded as of practical importance—the preservation of dialect. Rural speech is now seldom of any great interest. Some dialect words remain, but the sounds have often a Babel-like variety even in one village; the people are open to so many influences. Perhaps for this same reason speech is often terribly debased in rural districts. In the buses going into almost any market town in England you will hear a great mixture of vowel sounds, a great slovenliness of enunciation. Not long since I took down a few sentences on such a market bus and while waiting for its arrival. So far as I can represent the sounds what I heard went as follows: 'Thiz a drahf somewer. Wen Oi ses lif' m' daown, lif m' daown! Wen Oi ses Oi cahn

[1] Cf. *Three Centuries in North Oxfordshire*, by M. Sturge Henderson, Blackwell, p. 152.

see, Oi cahn see. The gra-ahss is wet. Dooant pläee wee it. Tah-tah Voylutt. Ent thaï. The sec nousemäid gone fur noluddee.' Neither sound nor expressions heard bore any discernible relation to the very interesting dialect spoken in the district forty years ago. Not the schools, but increasing traffic and the loss from among the villagers of the most active minds and best conversationalists, is to blame for this mixed and slovenly speech. But the school must do what it can to mend matters. The first thing, as always, is to get the children to see the beauty of what we want for them: their speech will improve when they wish it to, and not, substantially, till then. A certain head mistress has tackled the problem by learning more of the genuine local speech than her children or their parents know. By honouring and using what is good in their speech she has earned the privilege of pointing out what is poor, and of expounding the advantage of the power to use good conventional English—a power valuable in these days to chauffeur, and maid, and clerk, and indispensable to any one who aspires to public speech. It is the adolescent who desires to speak properly; but if he is to do this with ease, when the desire for correctness and elegance comes upon him or her, he should learn correct vowel sound and aspiration as an infant. He will drop his good speech, probably, while he is in the junior classes, but if he has learnt to imitate good speech, to say verses and the rhymes of games and to sing, correctly, as a small child, he will have the power to resume correct sounds when he has come to aspire to good speech. Good speech comes, too, of a desire and need for expression, for slovenly speech expresses little. Thus the fundamental improvement in the school life, which

we shall shortly discuss, would carry with it this minor improvement, beside many others.

It has been suggested in Chapter IV that handwork in junior classes is sometimes unpractical and of little educational value. There is something ironical in the sight of a buttonless little boy, with toes and heels out of his stockings and perhaps shoes too, sewing away at raffia. Here and there a teacher finds a way of getting handwork to contribute to self-respect. The girls' sewing is made immediately useful and the boys learn to wield a needle, and even to mend a shoe. Most of us could do with more of the handyman about us. Handwork, like other subjects, is vivified by practical applications of principles. Gains in self-respect and foot-comfort may be considerable too.

These are illustrations of some of the modes of making familiar and homely links between schoolwork and ordinary lives. The school sometimes is able to make more important, more difficult connexions. A head master who has the confidence of his boys and their parents (and also, it may be well to note, of the largest local employer of labour), is able to discuss with his big boys the use of friendly societies, of co-operation among farmers, and among producers and consumers generally, of the chances of permanent employment in agriculture, and of the prospects of small-holders.

'Only connect', the motto of Mr. E. M. Forster's novel *Howard's End*, would be a good one for a rural school. The connexions should go in all directions—even towards towns. But the country environment is richer than the urban—far richer in the amount of reality which the child can touch at first hand, except in the one respect of variety, frequency, and intensity

of human intercourse. This richness of environment should, it has been said, give the country schools superiority over those in towns. No sound educationist can live and work in the country without making use of many aspects of nature, in accordance with the bents of his pupils and with his own temperament and acquirements.

One of the best ways of making sure that the child's 'bias' is given fair play and expression in school is that of allowing and encouraging him to do some of the work as hobbies. Nature with its infinitely numerous aspects should especially be studied thus.

The hobby method, so that it is genuinely used, affords a way of pursuing avocations with economic aspects, which prevents the injustice that might be done by compulsory vocational work. The major part of work for a genuine hobby will be done out of school. A few schools have taken part in the movement to establish 'Young Farmers' Clubs', in which the children are enabled to keep and tend animals for profit, or to sell advantageously the produce from their gardens. Such clubs are excellent; they do suggest country avocations for the children, but supply a test at the same time of the economic desirability of them. They are useful also for their social and co-operative aspects. The children learn the pleasure and use of working together, and get an initiation into the satisfaction of holding small public offices. Criticism of their methods of treating animals and the demand for precise accounts are useful, too.

The assumption has been made, in this chapter, so far, that the curriculum of the schools is substantially satisfactory. This assumption must now be modified a

little. It is rather the proposed curriculum than the one actually in practice in many schools, that is taken as satisfactory; and it is taken as satisfactory for the present, not for an indefinite time. Nor are many of the methods of teaching the subjects included in our view of the curriculum. The curriculum of the new central schools as they are formed may be expected to include the study of arithmetic, geography, and history, several branches of the study of language and literature, the elements of some two of the essential handicrafts upon which civilized life depends (carpentry and gardening for boys, and cookery and needlework for girls), a little science, usually in the form of nature-study, or of varied experimental work in connexion with gardening, some singing and physical culture, and finally some religious or moral education and stimulus. It is as well to remember that this curriculum is as yet a good deal richer than those by which a majority of our children so far profit. For example, as yet 'only some 31 per cent.[1] of eligible girls in rural schools obtain instruction in housecraft.' Many of the schools which are to some extent 'central' or 'senior' schools have no workshop for boys. More important is the fact that in so many of the schools only one or two subjects of the curriculum are really effectively taught, though all may be on the time-table. This is, at present, a perfectly natural state of affairs.

One subject taught and learned with enthusiasm is worth much, and in small schools the observer often feels how wise it is of the teacher, who must teach almost all subjects, to concentrate his energies to some extent. But more must be expected of the central schools with

[1] Cf. *The Practical Education of Women for Rural Life.* H.M. Stationery Office.

staffs of three or four teachers for the children over eleven. The best teaching is done where the teacher can make a hobby of his subject, or of the teaching of it, continually adding to his knowledge, being critical of his modes of introducing his pupils to its successive fields. The difference that comes over teaching and children when a subject is put into the hands of an enthusiast, after being taught as a matter of routine, is the difference between existence and life. Yet any considerable degree of specializing in our larger country schools is rare. Singing, perhaps, and cooking and carpentry are handed over to single teachers, but specialization often goes no farther. The reason is partly that of old habit and inertia; the head teacher has perhaps never seen a school where teachers were not always in charge of the same class, and has never made a time-table for specialists.

Of course, if specialization by teachers meant rigid departmentalizing of the work, loss and not gain would result from it. Reorganization of the work should take with it, hand in hand, its greater co-ordination in the minds of the teachers. Staff discussions, and the attempt to work out a common educational policy, seem difficult in every type of school, but a head teacher interested in the children of every stage, and in the teaching of every subject, yet democratically prepared to see his own methods go by the board, provided he has had plenty of discussion with his teachers, can do much. Sometimes, where the scope of specialization must necessarily be somewhat narrowly restricted, it would be possible to put senior teachers in general charge of some one subject and thus ensure co-ordination, even if he or she could only teach it to one or two classes. Innumerable questions arise, for example, in the prepara-

tion of arithmetic schemes, as to what shall be taught and the manner of teaching it. One who had given thought to the teaching of this subject could lighten every one's labours by making careful schemes for the whole school, by keeping up to date with experiments in teaching it, and with publications on the subject. Division of labour among teachers can only be successful where all have given, and do give, thought to education as such and not merely to lessons. Difficulties in co-operation are due to lack of ideas in common. But if all teachers had an interest in the theory of education, and in methodology, they would have a common basis.

Even when the curriculum now generally accepted as substantially suitable is effectively available for a great majority of children, many varieties and changes, more or less minor, will be possible. Syllabuses and time-tables may, and will, vary from district to district, from school to school, and still more will differ from decade to decade, though the general scheme remain applicable. It is more than possible, for example, that the age considered suitable for beginning certain subjects will vary with the possible raising of school age and other factors. Cooking, carpentry, and gardening, for example, are now begun at 11 or 12; two years of these subjects is not too long if any lasting impression is to be made. Social conditions at present affect the age at which these subjects are begun. To take cookery; the children are suffering from ill-cooked food; there exist cottages with no means of cooking except an open fire-grate. If the vicious circle of malnutrition is ever to be broken, embryo housekeepers must learn, as part of their education, the taste of good food, the necessity of it, and simple methods of producing it. Yet 12 is

not the ideal age at which to begin to learn cookery; at 14 girls are nearer to a vision of what home-life means, and if continued adolescent education becomes feasible, the when and how of cookery teaching may have to be reconsidered.

Take again some of the newer demands of modern life of which school at present takes no account; may not room have to be made in early education for some introduction to these, with the result that something must be postponed? There is, for example, the huge increase in our use of machinery. Possibly an understanding of the elements of mechanics may have to come before the study of gardening. Again, it is possible that gardening, apart from its pursuit as a hobby and as the children's part in keeping the school grounds tidy and pleasant, is better begun at a somewhat later age than the cessation of education at 14 permits.

Experience of village life suggests that there is too rigid a division between boys' work and girls', as does also knowledge of the tastes of boys and girls when these are not too much influenced by convention. In these days one knows of a number of families where both husband and wife take up employment irregularly and both are periodically out of work. When only the wife has work the amenities of the home are liable to vanish while the husband gets slack and purposeless from lack of work. Often too, as has been said elsewhere, the wife accustomed to gardening and the handling of small live stock could effectually supplement the family's diet and clothes. Perhaps, when there are classes for the adolescent, young children will rather take 'handyman' courses of a wide range than attempt the mastery of any craft.

The time would appear to be coming also when health and physical development must claim greater attention in school hours. The health of children is more and more recognized as a matter of public responsibility; as a nation we look more and more to the pleasure that comes of physical fitness and prowess to make life worth while. In no great time the school may find itself called upon to give a really large place to dancing and games and singing.

All those concerned in the education of young children should sit loose to their notions of ideal curricula, particularly administrators and head teachers. It is a misfortune, especially, when committees and directors wed themselves to particular schemes instead of promoting thought and experiment and adaptation to locality in their head teachers. However, when all is said, it is clear that the schools will benefit by the extension of craft work, at which educational authorities are now working. It is both necessary from the social point of view and is at least a tolerable form of the corrective of which school work stands so generally in need. The uses of such practical crafts as cookery, gardening, and carpentry can be made obvious to the children; they give the children movement and manual exercise, and almost necessarily relax the too formal discipline that prevails in other subjects.

VII

THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL METHOD

The days that make us happy make us wise.—MASEFIELD.

THE general adoption of the curriculum outlined in the last chapter will not of itself give real life to the schools. At this date our mode of teaching is more at fault than our choice of subjects. Subjects are of less importance than the relationship of the whole of school life to the child's entire personality. The provision of suitable subject-matter goes but a little way. Gardening and cookery will not produce a new mental attitude in the children, nor give reason and fitness to the whole of school life; but this is what is needed. I had the misfortune once to hear a short conversation between a teacher who was an excellent disciplinarian, skilled in teaching practical subjects, and one of his elder boy pupils. It went so: 'Smith, stop that talking.' 'I wasn't talking, sir.' 'Somebody was talking and I think it was you.' Sulkily and half audibly, 'I never spoke; wish I had.' 'If I hear another sound, you'll know the feel of my cane, and stop in here with me.' Smith, treated as a potential liar, not at all as a reasonable and responsible being, left the room in sulks and ill temper. A good disciplinarian and a good teacher had proved himself no educationist at all.

The story is only intended as crude illustration. Even character training, against which the teacher so egregiously sinned, is not everything. Visitors to our country schools from universities, from certain types of secondary schools, from cultured families, from all places in fact, where hobbies and intellectual activities are pur-

sued for their own sake, by people who would pursue them on a desert island, must almost always be struck by the low degree of life in the schools—even in good schools, with a fine moral atmosphere contributed to by both teachers and children. School is a duty to the children, admitted but not understood. Their heart is not in school; it has not tapped their motive power. The lessons that are liked are very often those where effort is relaxed. Every first-rate teacher feels that the children's real power is not harnessed in the school, and bends his or her energies to putting this right. But the task is enormous. Reforms by the teacher are dependent upon reforms in the buildings, in the nutrition and housing of children, in the selection and training of the teacher himself.

We have spoken previously of the popular criticism of schools. Sometimes the critics appear to think that the schools can be improved by an act of will on the part of teachers; but it is not so. No one is more sensitive to demand and opinion than the country teacher. By long dependence on the public will, by the habit of tactful forbearance and submission to administrators and inspectors, elementary teachers, especially country teachers working in small numbers or in isolation, have become extremely sensitive, almost pathetically willing to organize changes initiated and insisted upon by others. It is not to the teacher, in particular, but to the whole provision for the children that critics should address their attention.

Sometimes, however, the teacher, without waiting for reinforcements, tries to make school all that it should be. It is not always good for the schools that this should be done, for a high proportion of those who

make the attempt leave the profession in discouragement if they are women, and if they are men take refuge in their family life for consolation, and regret that they ever entered the teaching profession. What a task it is to try to change school all at once from an unreal, compulsory, largely irrelevant experience to one of concentrated reality and zest may perhaps be illustrated by a passage from the history of a certain tiny school. The life of the school had been most depressed before it was taken in hand by a young certificated teacher from London. I examined all the standards just after she arrived and found that the children had very poor information and vocabularies. A fourteen-year-old boy could not write a description of the road between his home and the nearest town that would serve any purpose; he could not spell machines, engines, aeroplane, composition. A girl of 13 in Standard VI confessed 'I do not know what quotation marks are.' Asked what the work of Parliament is, several children said simply, 'The work of Parliament is to govern the land.' Asked to describe the best way to light a fire they were no more informative. Of the children in Standard V not one knew two important wars in which England has taken part. There was not a single mention of the Great, or of the Napoleonic, War, though several children mentioned Creçy.

The new teacher was of a sturdy and even dogged nature in her own affairs, but held that 'moral force is the negation of spirituality', and that the first principle in education is that the children shall work under guidance instead of under compulsion. She would not even make overmuch use of the cruder kinds of suggestion. The school contained two or three boys of a rather

degenerate type, who mistook gentleness for weakness, and quite simply took advantage of the new régime to throw off all restraint in moments of temptation. They were denied a struggle of wills, and only resisted in so far as they flagrantly interfered with others, but they brought the teacher to the verge of breakdown. In course of time they went their ways. Then the school's experiment could be seen and judged. That it succeeded in being the scene of zestful life was beyond doubt, although it contained more than its due proportion of 'dull and backwards', and children of poor physique. Movement was free and the children arranged their own desks; if they felt inclined to work out of doors they were free to do so. Pupils had assignments and private time-tables for most subjects. A great effort was made to surround the children with the means of good work and play. Lots of reference books were provided (from the teacher's own library; the school had the best collection of small books of reference for nature study that I have seen in any school); a good assortment of tools was collected; and a small outhouse was given up to the children for the toys and 'acting clothes' for use in playtime. No marks or rewards of any kind were given to individuals except, of course, approbation and disapprobation, and those very restrained. The school was usually divided into 'houses' or teams. An arrangement would usually be maintained for a few months—till some defect in it made the children desire to change. Punishment was never resorted to; hence it was possible to spend a good deal of time on any occupation or on none. A certain amount of pressure would be put upon the idle or mischievous by his fellows in his team, and in time the teacher's pleasure in the

children's work came to be greatly valued, but of course no child of normally strong impulses is always equally open to such influence, and time was certainly wasted.

The effect on the children was very various; there were ambitious little girls whom the régime suited, judge it from what point of view you would. They went ahead with their work through every kind of turmoil and achieved a very high level of work. There was a backward boy who quite ceased to be 'dull' except in a technical sense; he spent his time in joining in every mischief, in knitting jumpers, and in reading. Before the new teacher's advent he was a depressed child, no good at anything: now he was an accomplished knitter and a pretty fair reader; more, he had a confidence, a little ambition. The last time I saw him he was seriously considering whether or no to transfer himself to a school at two miles' distance where he would be able to learn wood-work. One very difficult child seemed quite definitely to lose; he was an orphan who had suffered mismanagement at home and had become self-conscious and moody. Simple routine and kindly, firm discipline from without would perhaps have proved, for him, remedial treatment. Perhaps all the children were a little subject to moods.

But a cloud was lifted from the school as a whole. The children looked alive in every limb all the time. It was much more than a physical change, but it had a marked physical aspect. Free and purposeful movement, together with long periods in the air, combined to give them bright eyes and cheeks and to make them strong and brisk. Playtime afforded the opportunity of seeing them at their best, they played with such zest. They were particularly fond of various more or less dramatic

games—forming processions, playing bands, acting robbers, and the like, and would dress themselves up with great effectiveness, not to say care. They put thought into their play and took trouble with it. Having acted a version of a story one week, they would revise and add to it the next. Play of such quality is rare to see. The girls did not always share these games, but would be found continuing work or getting the teacher to cut them out patterns of clothes they needed for some special occasion. One girl loved to dust the school. Individual boys would detach themselves and be found sweeping the lawn or turning out a cupboard.

But the school carried its unconventionality on its front. If you went in during the arithmetic period you would hear whistling and humming; unless you were of very imposing presence you would see a child who was in want of something take the nearest path to it, probably over the tops of the long, hindering desks. And it must be admitted that the standard of work was not uniformly good, though much more work was done than in many schools in which all the standards are (as here) in the hands of one person.

The experiment was doomed. Without encouragement, of which little was forthcoming, it caused too great a drain upon the teacher's energy. The gallantry of her life can only be appreciated by those who know the nervous strain of teaching and living in isolation, and who have taught children from ignorant, ill-disciplined homes. She had taken a great sword, and cut through every stupid, selfish type of discipline, every barrier between the children and the real world, every artificiality between herself and them; I know of no greater courage or test of endurance. In addition to

school hours, the teacher had given her whole time to preparing just the right exercises for the children's next apparently independent steps. She spent her utmost ingenuity in finding and making the materials they required for the projects they had in hand.

That there are less direct and heroic, but perhaps, in the long run, more successful methods of slaying apathy I do not doubt, but any hope that the superior equipment and curriculum of the larger schools will do it without a concurrent improvement in all that is implied in the term 'methods' will be disappointed. I remember, for example, a certain Standard V in one of our largest rural schools; the scholarship winners had left and the teacher found her children so dull that it bored her to teach, and them to learn. Discouragement and dullness were on the children's faces. It was an old-fashioned 'good' school, well staffed, and captained by a head of some ability, who had been there thirty years, but was still in his prime. The school is unbeloved, as it has always been. The same head, and in some sense a good one for thirty years, a staff 50 per cent. certificated, and still the boys who have left school express their hostility to all that school meant and means to them, by standing stolidly in a teacher's way at the corner of the street, and returning a slight belated titter to a greeting. The school has missed fire. It is sometimes thought that method in teaching consists of educational devices of dreary artificiality, and subjects the children to subtle intellectual fetters. A little knowledge leads to dangerous practices, but genuine educational science turns the limits of school life into boundaries freeing energies, instead of chains restraining them.

Following custom, the first and largest place was

given in the last chapter to thoughts on the last stage of primary school life. But the importance of this period as compared with earlier ones is over-estimated. The child dulled at 11 by six years of only partial use of his faculties and energy cannot be fully roused and trained in the last three years. If the enlivenment of the rural school depends rather upon method than upon curricula, upon the gradual development and training of the child than upon instruction, its reform will begin with the babe on his day of entry.

Already it has been shown in Chapter IV that numberless opportunities are lost in our infant and junior classes, and numberless hours of the children's time wasted. This is no place for a disquisition on infant method, and already some of the needs of the schools are evident from what has been said of their defects. The child on entry is a baby accustomed to free movement; it will be some years yet before it becomes at all natural to him, or good for him, to have long sittings in one position. The first need is to allow the child some freedom in deciding how long he shall sit, and how long in a particular spot or posture. To provide this freedom, long desks have to be done away with and small light furniture provided. Low long cupboards or shelves should enable children to fetch and put away their own toys and books. Vast expense is not necessarily entailed; small tables can be made from the old desks, and in the larger schools the carpentry class of elder boys can put up shelves; the children can sew cheap curtains. After the provision for movement, nourishment, and nose-wiping, which two last are hardly matters of teaching and need not be dwelt on here, comes the training of the senses on which all our mental

life depends. Such training is needed by all little children, but a good proportion of our entrants need it in a special degree. Those from negligent or exceptionally poor homes come only able to *speak*, and not at all to talk. Their speech consists of a few sentences of request and command. Children even of good cottage homes have often not learned to play with things, to rejoice in them, to handle, name, and talk about them. Its use is the chief aspect of a thing for them, and their attention has not been directed to things that do not serve an immediate, simple purpose. In a word the children are under-stimulated. If school proceeds to offer them books not only before books have become meaningful as mines of pleasure for themselves, objects of respect and affection to grown-ups (and there are many homes quite without books), and if formal number is taught before the children have made good acquaintance with quantity, with large numbers of things, with weight, and before they have played at shopping, then the children become not only under-stimulated but stultified by acting blindly under direction. The exercise of the senses is needed to provide the children with mental furniture. Before the children can even listen with pleasure to stories their minds must be furnished with images of things. Object lessons are very far from being enough. Tiny children need to be in contact with things the whole day, with possibly one or two short exceptional periods. They must have toys and pictures. They must play floor games, so that they can all have quantities of bricks or sand, test their powers of delicate handling by building a tall tower, get sensations of weight by shovelling sand with effort, or use constructive powers to build a long railway line, or a whole

village. The teacher must bring interesting things for them to handle and use. There should be no permanent school selection of objects for study, but nursery and kitchen, farm and garden and shop must all contribute. Where the children are backward they still need emphasis upon the use of things at five, and should play the practical 'pretence' games of laying meals, and sweeping floors, and should actually dust and polish their room and the shelves and desks. Some schools solve the problem of getting these good things; children play upon old rugs, building with plentiful blocks of wood provided by a friendly carpenter, toys are collected from neighbouring nurseries; picture books are forthcoming in the shape of tradesmen's catalogues. Experience of real things valued by the teacher or by a fellow pupil, and of practical care of their own things has results of immediate 'practical' value, besides their infinitely greater importance to the development of the children. A headmistress, whose children took to polishing their own class-room furniture, told me how the latter had always suffered from the scraping of boots and other ill usage when the school was let for meetings. From the time that the children took part of their play and exercise in the form of domestic chares, no such trouble was experienced. Even the tinies hated to see their own handiwork undone.

Next after, and together with sense experience, should come conversation. The power to talk readily and sensibly should be acquired before there is any thought of reading and written expression. Naturally speech comes before writing; it is more important for the children and for some, if not all, will remain more important all their lives.

When the time comes for children to be subject to a time-table, subjects and activities should still be less segregated and isolated than they are in our present usual practice. Nature study for little country children is just one department of the provision for sense-training and general acquaintance with their material environment. They are not ready for detail and dissection, but only for the obvious aspects of things. They need still to develop sensitiveness to shape and colour; to be still learning the names of the common things. The necessary rural *basis* to the children's education must be given in the infants' room, for the study of the immediate environment, simply, and with little relation to the wider world, is the special study of the little child. To start a 'rural bias' at eleven is beginning too late. Long before that the children's affections for space and air and clouds and trees and flowers, animals and birds should be established, and their country vocabularies large. How large they can be I learnt in the school where Standard I taught me the names of motherwort and the bartsias, and knew the names of some of the caterpillars and butterflies. At present in school we limit ourselves to a round of the most obvious flowers and the few commonest birds, consecrated for school study by long tradition, but the children will help us to break the bonds of custom if they are encouraged to bring to school and share with others whatever attracts their eyes, which are as yet comparatively fresh to the world. Time should be made every day for extending the children's knowledge of natural and other objects.

A disquisition on the teaching of reading would of itself occupy the space of a small book. It is sufficient

to say here that the children's reading matter should be based upon their environment and connected with their active life. It is easy to keep the reading in touch with experience, although it involves the making of some apparatus. In a certain infant school all sets of reading books are banished. There is a library of tiny printed books, some of stories, some containing accounts of animals and birds. Before the children are ready to read these they use the teacher's home-made apparatus. To keep reading in touch with nature, and real things in general, there are reading-sheets made with large sheets of paper and a brush, some pages of which are dictated to the teacher by the children after conversation on some topic, others are short verses on flowers or birds known, others are verses the children have learnt, or will learn, by heart. For the tinies there are books with large pictures of animals with only a few very short sentences with each. There are scrolls made with gummed paper to represent parchment, on which have been written the simplest possible versions of some of the Bible stories, so that the children can imagine they are little Jewish boys reading of Ruth or David. Connexions set up should of course be natural and important. Some infant schools have a custom of connecting all the work with the week's story, but such connexions are apt to be artificial and to keep children too constantly in touch with an imaginative world. The reading matter for all junior classes should be more varied than it usually is. Often all the available books, except perhaps a geography and a book of historical narratives, are fiction of some type or other. For junior classes there should always be some books on natural history and some on machines.

The beginnings of arithmetic call at present for special skill, since they are not generally well taught, and the teacher who is to do this well must rely on learning greatly from her own experience. Few rural schools have the space, or the skilled infants' teacher, to start this subject well in every respect. Still, one has seen very practical shopping lessons, and even weighing and measuring ones. In general, though, sense experience is used far too little as a basis for this subject.

The accumulation of miscellaneous information and experience should not cease with infant years. Modern life demands most varied knowledge for its successful conduct. All the world is everybody's parish in these days.

A good extent and variety of knowledge is not only necessary for the practical life of the poorest children; it is also the necessary background to the special studies of the children fortunate enough to continue their studies beyond the elementary school age. Sanderson of Oundle found, of all his boys, that they needed larger stores of miscellaneous knowledge and practical experiences before they could grasp the sciences they desired to learn. It is possible that had his boys received a more practical education before they were fourteen they might have made satisfactory progress with science somewhat earlier. At any rate, plentiful sensuous experience in early years, together with a wide range of miscellaneous knowledge accumulated early, make the best basis on which to choose a trade, and evolve a view of life; and the laying of this foundation is a most satisfying process. Children can and sometimes do, as we have shown in Chapter V in respect of rural knowledge, make a much larger accumulation of experience than is usually

expected of them. Just as by eleven they are found to have a great store of field knowledge, so if interest is stirred boys will accumulate large stores of geographical and other facts. Both boys and girls can, and do in many good schools, read quite widely and learn to consult books in order to further their various practical projects.

One of the best ways for children to pursue and garner information is by the accumulation and rough classification of pictures, somewhat after the manner of Norman MacMunn's encyclopaedia. The pictures should not be put upon walls, for nothing is uglier than lots of little dusty pictures. But shoe-boxes, strengthened in handwork periods with strong, but decorative paper, make excellent card-catalogue cases for picture postcards or small newspaper cuttings. Wooden boxes which will take folders (made of brown paper) of foolscap size, can easily be found, for the preservation and classification of larger pictures. After a few months of making such collections the teacher will find that all sorts of lessons can be richly illustrated, not by putting a single picture which nobody can really see before the class, but by the thorough independent study of a number of relevant pictures.

This use of the pictures is a very minor one, however. The collection and classification of the pictures under headings selected by the children themselves, either individually or in groups, will be their chief use. One class of small boys I know made collections of 'zoo' animals and classified them in various ways—one under the names of the continents where they live wild, another under some rough biological conceptions of his own, and another under 'uses'.

Handwork at this stage is the practical aspect of all

subjects. Weapons and castles will be modelled, the patterns of clothes cut, pottery moulded, and looms made, to illustrate history. Clay models of islands will be made to illustrate the various formations of land surface; floor maps will be made, and tiny models of sheep and other animals dotted about to show the nature of farming in the country concerned and so on, as is already done in a certain small proportion of schools. Some teachers think themselves incapable in the matter of handwork, but if they would thus use it, instead of isolating it, they would find that the children's desire to achieve realism would spur them to great efforts. The teacher can then work along with them, improving her own powers, and increasing her own ingenuity, being simply one of the keenest of the workers, and not claiming powers of direction she feels herself to lack.

Perhaps Bedlow St. Mary School may serve as an illustration of what may fairly be expected of rural schools when they have been given their chance. It is an actual school, not a composite of virtues. It has no advantages that should be exceptional. It consists of 120 children. The village is large and scattered and children are received from other villages. The buildings are not specially good but they have been reasonably modified and repaired. (It is a provided or 'Council' school.) The babies' room is far too small and has no independent door to the open air; but the other infants' room is large and has several windows, reaching down quite low so that the light is really good. In the upper school, one room is shared by two classes consisting respectively of Standards VI and VII and Standards IV and V; otherwise each teacher has a room to himself

or herself. There is a school house which has been partially rebuilt, and is now sunny and fairly roomy. The playgrounds are ample. A part of each is concreted and there has been a partially successful attempt to drain this part. The girls' ground is big enough for net-ball, which they play; in the babies' ground there are permanent swings and see-saws put up by the big boys.

The school is staffed with three certificated and three uncertificated teachers. Gardening and woodwork and cooking are taught by the permanent staff, and the younger children do very varied handwork, including raffia, toy-making, and cardboard modelling.

The teachers specialize to some extent. A certificated young lady fresh from college takes art and needlework. The head teacher, who is of course a man, takes gardening, and the only man assistant, carpentry. The senior mistress has charge of the infants' school, but also takes literature with Standards VI and VII. An uncertificated woman assistant takes the handwork of the junior classes.

The school is popular with both staff and pupils. So far as is possible the staff teach the subjects they most enjoy teaching, and pupils choose their methods of learning so far as their choice proves at all successful. Consequently there is no subject but is fairly well taught, and the breath of life is in all the work. There are plenty of slightly old-fashioned bits of method, but these are of little consequence because the spirit of the whole is so reasonable and happy. The infants' room is informally arranged. There are long side-tables for the display of hand-work, for pictures, for reading cards, for flowers and toys brought to school. There is a large

'shop' full of exciting commodities for number work, and two fine dolls' houses. The room is full of colour and full of things. Some are things of beauty: a few posters, some of the reading books and cards and the children's own nature and 'imaginative' drawings are fresh and delightful to grown-ups and full of meaning to the children. The children's desks are heavy and hampering, but apart from these there is incentive to movement and action. Children walk round the room reading the rhymes on the walls that have been put there for the week; they fetch and carry for themselves; a corner of the room is reserved for broom and dustpan and cloths for tidyings; the children go freely to each other's assistance. There is no blind restriction of the work to a narrow range. Class I of infants and Standard I, who form one class, have accumulated over 100 sets of reading books in half-dozens. School is real here, linked up with life; the infants' talk shows this clearly.

Throughout the school conversation is free and ranges over things of importance and interest, though there is more sense and richness in the life of the infants and the upper classes than in that of the junior standards—a usual state of affairs, alluded to previously, but here marked because of the exceptionally wide and practical outlook of the head master and senior mistress. The literature class of the latter (Standards VI and VII) illustrates this. It is studying *As You Like It* of the teacher's choice and reading *Tarzan of the Apes* of its own! The art work does not perhaps go very far as yet, but it is fresh and stimulating; the children do various kinds of drawing, including sketching, illustration of poems, and decorative writing. Carpentry has

been turned to practical use on the school premises, and no doubt could be similarly used elsewhere. The boys have built bicycle sheds and a summer-house for meals and lessons. Every room in the school has a small library with reference books.

The boys' and girls' futures are frankly spoken of, to encourage them to relate their work and thoughts to these in their own way.

School meals are provided here. In the winter months between sixty and seventy children dine at school daily. 'Dine' is the right word; it is often a solid meal of meat and two vegetables, followed by milk or boiled pudding. The reasonable trustful spirit of those who run the school is specially clear at meal times; it is a happy meal. The children's likes and dislikes are not repressed, but as far as possible taken into account. The home manners of some of the children are very rough, but school has succeeded in establishing a convention of nice behaviour at meals, and a reasonably restrained use of table utensils.

The meal is prepared by the children; boys peel the potatoes and prepare the vegetables; girls watch the cooking, all under the supervision of the senior mistress. Boys clear away and the corps of washers-up is organized by a boy who is in some way, to some extent, mentally defective. He washes up, however, with huge zest and efficiency and is radiantly happy in the work. Meals cost 3*d*. each. Children pay 2*d*. per day, and the deficit is paid off annually by a well-to-do neighbour of the school.

The school owes its quality primarily to the profound humanity of its two heads. These are certificated, trained teachers nearing retiring age. They are pro-

ducts of the old times, who went through pupil teachership and in their youth taught classes of seventy children. But they are products of newer times too; they have taken advantage of all offers of help, all the new ideas that have come their way. They have felt they must give full value in return for every improvement of space or equipment in school, every accession of comfort for themselves. Latter days have brought them rewards which their own rich spirits make into great ones. A motor-car makes visits to the county town quite easy and has opened a wide sphere of life to them. They can go to classes and the theatre; have joined societies, and are serving the county on various committees, thus getting a wide circle of appreciative friends that the village could not afford them. In the village communal life not only the head teachers but the whole staff of this school take a full, not to say heroic, part. Almost every evening is full with such things as the Women's Institute, the training of the Church choir, boys' and girls' social evenings, &c.

I suppose that if in the next fifty years all our rural schools could approximate in quality to this one we should have a finer rural primary education than the world has seen. But in addition to the virtues of Bedlow St. Mary School we should look for definitely better intellectual results from a generation of teachers who have received a sound secondary education. All honour to those who, without modern advantages, have revealed up and down the country, not alone at Bedlow, the happy possibilities of the rural school.

VIII

THE RURAL TEACHER AND HIS TRAINING

THE teacher is the central factor in the rural school problem, not at all because he must be always chalking and talking, but because he moulds the conditions under which the children learn and live. No syllabuses, no methods, no bias, no inspection, are half as important as is the training and treatment of the teacher. It is time that the teacher occupied a more central place in our thoughts about country education, for when the teacher is a true educationist half the difficulties arising in other quarters vanish; he counteracts the ill effects tending to arise from many of the school's poor conditions. The schemes and syllabuses occasionally pressed willy-nilly upon schools and teachers are doomed to general failure, though they may suit temporarily some special state of affairs. Only a trained and active *mind* can reconcile the children's physical and mental needs, can keep the day's activities balanced, can seize passing opportunities, can adapt work to changing conditions, can make the most of circumstances be they good or bad. The good teacher is the corner-stone at the head, the apex of the pyramid of the school child's necessaries.

So far, the teacher has not enjoyed an exalted position except in respect of the fact of his importance. But now the rural teacher, in common with other teachers, has reached the beginning of a new era. A just, and it is to be hoped lasting, settlement of salary questions has set him free from a degree of poverty that did not allow of his continuously fitting himself for his work, and kept his thoughts preoccupied with his own and his children's

future. Energy has thus been released: the economic position is improved for all teachers and everywhere they are giving a new degree of attention and enthusiasm to their work. But for the rural teacher there is another incitement to increased, fresher, more strenuous thought and experiment. The reorganization of schools into junior and senior means more in rural than in urban districts. In the country it should mean something of a revolution in education, and teachers are the necessary leaders of the revolution.

Reorganization will ultimately bring about changes in the personnel of the staffs of rural schools. Present teachers will man the new schools at first, but it is a very important question by whom they will be succeeded. The changes proceeding need to be hastened in so far as they are clearly good, and controlled in so far as their direction and effect are doubtful. Some account of the types and tendencies of our present teachers may be useful in envisaging the necessary next steps to encourage and improve the staff of the rural schools.

In another chapter something has been said of the rural teacher, historically viewed. We need go no farther back here than the generation of teachers just fallen, or just falling, out of the ranks—the 'old guard', as they are affectionately termed in N.U.T. meetings. Nearly all the elder head masters were brought up on the hard régime of pupil teachership, starting their apprenticeship to teaching at 13, usually in the school in which they had themselves been taught. Their day began at 7.30 with lessons from their head teacher, proceeded with the teaching of other children from 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., and the evening was spent in preparing work

to show up the next morning at their early session. Their prime thoughts during this period took the form of questions: 'Would they be able to pass the Queen's Scholarship Examination?' and 'Would they be able to control their pupils during the day that lay immediately before them?' A pupil-teacher's life was a hazardous and not very happy affair, only undertaken, I imagine, by gallant and ambitious girls and boys. At the end of the pupil-teachership lay the possible adventure of college, and beyond that a position of some authority and respect. On the way to a head-teachership they would get learning. These children were sons and daughters of small-holders and tradesmen and artisans and even labourers. It is to be doubted whether some of them could hope for as many of the amenities of life as their brothers and sisters who became blacksmiths or small farmers or dressmakers, or went into 'good' domestic service. But learning has a great fascination for human beings; and besides, the world outside was a wonderful place, full of opportunities, to the village youth in the days when villages were really isolated and largely self-supporting. They were not altogether deceived in thinking that a new world might lie for them somewhere across the parish or county boundary, and that the teaching profession would carry them to it. Pupil-teacherships and a college course provided them, not with an education, but with certain tools for getting knowledge, and a proportion of them found the means, ultimately, of unlocking the doors to other professions, e.g. the Church, and even the inner rooms, normally reserved to Oxford and Cambridge scholars, of their own profession.

Pupil-teachership was a hard life in point of hours;

hard morally and spiritually often. Setting children to teach unwilling child pupils was not in itself a fruitful idea, though the pupil-teacher system was a great and ingeniously planned advance on the employment of 'monitors'. Sometimes now in school we think how charming it is to see one child teaching another, but conditions are entirely different. It was common for the pupil-teacher to be defied and teased in school, and mobbed out of it. Mere hardship is not in itself a serious matter; but the training, though hard, was ineffective. As a retired schoolmaster said to me recently, the régime was 'mental and moral starvation'. Sometimes both teacher and pupil-teacher were uneducated; there was no time to express the joy of learning, to feel the greatness of knowledge (and yet of course some did). When the grind was over the usual reward was not a great one. The retired teacher quoted above told me how his one idea when he went out to teach after college was to take Cassell's *Self Educator*, which was coming out in parts, but he could not afford it.

Because in those days the teaching profession was drawing upon a large, almost unbreached reservoir of talent, these teachers did well. Those who achieved the Certificate, still more those who reached college, bore the scars of battles won. They had learnt the 'management' of children, those knacks of manner that carry the suggestion of obedience, and more than that had learnt to face the foe—the unwilling pupil—with the knowledge that they must and could win. I like to think that they were obeyed as the old-soldier schoolmaster is to-day. No typical, sound-natured boy will rebel against a master who is known to bear war-scars, unless his 'discipline' passes all bounds, and there must

have been a similar relationship between pupils and the 'old guard'. The latter are proud of their 'discipline' still. The sight of dilatory pupils, half-hearted commands, annoys them and seems to them, sometimes, to suggest that modern methods of training teachers are decadent. But in the main they feel that they are having now a glimpse of a Promised Land after desert wanderings.

Besides the 'old guard' there are numbers of middle-aged head teachers, both men and women, who were brought up in a somewhat similar way. They were pupil-teachers, completing their professional preparation at college. But in reality their conditions have been easier and more exhilarating in various ways. Some have attended pupil-teacher centres, thus getting a little leisure for their academic work; their work in college was less rigorous and more interesting; they have lived in a more liberal atmosphere; though not sharing fully in secondary and university education they have lived among people who were; their own children, for example, are now enjoying excellent secondary and university education, and they themselves have often availed themselves of summer courses, W.E.A. lectures, and the like. Many of the post-primary central schools already formed are in the hands of these teachers. They have the very great responsibility of demonstrating to parents and children the worth-whileness, in spite of the sacrifices involved, of the new type of school. Have they the necessary gifts and qualities?

Many have fine natural gifts. Few have the same feeling of responsibility for the whole school and its methods that every secondary school head has. They are accustomed to every teacher being responsible for his

class. Their only way, often, of dealing with lower classes is to state what they expect of the children at a certain stage. Although the infants' departments have in many cases been placed in their hands during recent years they are innocent of the psychology of infancy.

There is a danger that the change when a school becomes a 'senior' or 'central' one may be so small superficially, that no very great effort is made to meet it. After all, at present in many cases all that happens immediately is that one Monday morning a number of new pupils join the upper classes, and that a few children 'stay to dinner'. Possibly there is no change of staff, or only (and that in the course of time), a certificated teacher substituted for an 'uncertificated' one. The change comes gradually, and the school has no feeling that it is called upon to play a part in an educational renaissance, although the public expects one to come as a result of the reorganization of the schools and the raised salaries. When a head teacher is newly appointed to a central senior school it is easy for the Education Committee to indicate to him something of what is expected of his school. Those already in charge of schools receiving extra elder scholars are perhaps more in need of being awakened to the possibilities of the new régime in general, and to new effort to adapt their schools to fulfil modern demands upon them. The Oxfordshire Education Committee has published a pamphlet on the work of the new schools;[1] they render posts in them attractive by advertising the special needs of the schools, as if they sought the right person for important work. Help could further be given by special

[1] *The Work and Organization of Senior Country Schools*, Oxfordshire Education Committee.

short courses in which the relationship of the new schools to rural and social problems was discussed: one such has been held this summer by the Welsh Department of the Board of Education. By whatever means, the heads should understand how the schools are on trial now. Every head teacher whose school is a central one should be called upon to submit his proposed schemes for work to his committee. He should be the genuine and only author of the schemes, but he might be encouraged to discuss them with inspectors and various experts.

Of course, many head teachers of this type are already marvels of adjustment to the rural environment. Indeed their general service to the village is frequently of higher quality than their own special work in school. They have certain gifts of great use to their fellow villagers which they devote to them without stint, e.g. facility in writing, and ability for organization. Their very isolation has endowed them with impartiality. Lacking close touch with most of their fellow villagers, they have been somewhat compensated by some communication with them all, and have been, consciously or unconsciously, a most valuable social link.

The young certificated teacher in the country schools is often very different from his predecessors. He is better educated but he tends to be of a somewhat urban type. He or she has attended a secondary school and college. Up to the present both these institutions have for the most part assumed a typically urban background in their pupils. It is partly a matter of curriculum, but much more the result of the staffs of schools and colleges being sons and daughters of professional folk, whose interests are cultural in a somewhat narrow sense. Great

numbers of country girls and boys are to a very great extent detached from the life of their village by the suggestion they meet with during their school life. They travel to a town for their schooling and learn to look upon their urban school as the finest thing in their existence; they learn to like urban amusements such as cinemas and concerts, and to look upon their village as merely empty of these. When they return to the villages they find it very difficult to take part without self-consciousness in the simple communal activities that are the heart and value of village life, and consequently, in spite of all their advantages, contribute less very frequently than do young folk who have had only their village school course, and upon whom community and parents have spent so much less.

Many training colleges, too, have a strong urban bias. Most of them send their students to practise only in town schools; the good and attractive schools seen by the students are in such cases almost all in towns, and consequently the ideal future they conceive for themselves as teachers is often an urban one. A few colleges situated in country towns send students into country schools to practise and are in practice 'rural' training colleges. But they do not train sufficient students for country schools. It is not easy for colleges in urban districts to show their students good country schools or to arrange practice in them, even though a proportion of the students hail from the country, or may be expected to take rural posts. Practice in country schools involves lodging- and travelling-expenses, and supervision by the college lecturers, which is essential for profitable practice, is almost impossible to arrange. These difficulties must be remembered in the discussion as to

whether some training colleges should specialize in rural work.

The young certificated teachers who do reach the country are thus often urban in their tendencies. Motor-bicycle and bus now enable them to get out of the village for their amusement, and for this reason some of them never learn the charm of the neighbourly life of a village.

Half of the teachers in our rural schools are below certificated rank. The lowest are, of course, supplementary teachers, of whom in the whole country there are nearly eight thousand, seven thousand of whom, approximately, work in rural schools. Their sole qualification is vaccination, and that is not now insisted upon! If one of the main contentions of these chapters—that early school days are of very great importance—is true, the retention of supplementary *teachers* is wrong. We had better postpone improvements of equipment and the raising of school age, or provision of 'continued' education, rather than secure them by employing in a responsible position totally unqualified folk, thus retaining a primary education which affords only a foundation of sand for post-primary work. Supplementary teachers are at present placed in charge of classes and receive comparatively little supervision: detailed supervision cannot be gracefully given to, or taken by, workers of mature age.

If there must be such a third estate among rural teachers, young girls should be employed under the definite understanding that they pass from the work at a certain age. They should work, of course, only under supervision; their chief use would be in very tiny schools, such as justify the employment of only one qualified

teacher; they could act as nursemaid to the small children, supervising their dressing and undressing, their washing and visits to the lavatory, changing their occupations and playing with them, under the guidance of the teacher. Such employment would be a good preliminary to work as a children's nurse.

The supplementary teacher's life is from her own point of view less satisfactory than is usually realized. Her pay is insufficient to keep a grown person; it is, of course, far less than that of a good domestic servant, consequently the mature supplementary teacher must either live a very poor life or must supplement her wages. It has occasionally seemed to me, besides, very hard to expect a woman who cannot get cleanliness and order and thrift behind her in her home, to enforce upon or suggest to children the modern standards demanded by the school authorities. Also, although social position is not of very special importance to a teacher's (or perhaps any one else's) work, still the teaching profession ought hardly to be asked to carry so many members of a positively depressed class.

The uncertificated teacher is to my mind an entirely different proposition, and the clear-cut position of many teachers in wishing to see her (only 5 per cent. of the uncertificated teachers are men) totally eliminated at once is not the one to which my experience has brought me. It would be excellent if the certificate were the minimum qualification for a country teacher, but for the next two decades our minds will need to be concentrated on obtaining other improvements. The present uncertificated teacher has great weaknesses, as I have already shown in other chapters, but she has considerable virtues too. One of these is youth. Certification

and marriage absorb most of these young ladies before the age of thirty. This ensures a very youthful element in almost every staff—an excellent thing, for young children love youth and freshness as much as the oldest of us. Their youth ensures that they shall have enjoyed the latest improvements in secondary teaching, and even their elementary schooldays are not so very far behind them. It is quite possible to see uncertificated teachers, who have enjoyed close touch with modern education, surpassing their somewhat older certificated brothers both in knowledge and in teaching aptitude. One of the best teachers I have seen was an uncertificated teacher of infants. She began her work as the laughing-stock of the school for certain personal disadvantages that made her excessively shy and clumsy, but has taken advantage of teachers' classes, articles in the professional papers, inspectors' and advisers' visits till now, I think, all her visitors learn from her. Of course the uncertificated teacher should ideally be compared not with elder certificated friends, but with herself certificated. That is true; but if we employed only certificated teachers the salary bill would go up, and so must the numbers of children in classes. In smallish schools this would be a very serious matter. It would mean that where now children of one or two mental stages are taught together the number of stages must be approximately doubled.

Instead of, for the present, eliminating the uncertificated teacher I should like to see two other reforms instituted, of which the first is the improvement of the head teacher. We need a philosopher at the head of every school. We may not get that, but we should get for all but very small schools a sound educationist, a man or woman with a university training or a special

'third-year' course, a man or woman who knows something of the psychology of children of every age under his or her care, a student of psychology and method. Then if his or her staff must consist partly of uncertificated teachers, I would insist upon the attendance of the latter at Saturday classes in method and psychology and English. The teacher of those Saturday classes should have some general responsibility for the work of uncertificated teachers over a part of a county. He (or more probably, she) should visit the schools and demonstrate methods, and see what connexion comes about between the classes and the work in school. She would need to be a circumspect woman, paying scrupulous deference to head teachers on some points. The good she could do would depend, as all spiritual good depends, not on prestige, nor yet on moral force, but on rejection of both of those in favour of a belief in human nature, and in the power of truth to win its way—of course not always out of, but sometimes into, one's mind.

Work has been done in this way in some counties where there have been Saturday morning classes for uncertificated teachers for some years; also in two counties advisory teachers have been employed who helped them to think out what work could best be done and how, in their classrooms, with their own children and equipment. Through the Saturday classes some fine, happy teachers have been produced. Unfortunately the classes have not usually been compulsory and a good number of teachers who have not attended will be found, even where the best provision has been made. There seems no final reason, however, why attendance should not be required as a condition of employment. A good deal of junior teaching does not require, or at

any rate is not given, much evening preparation, so that the day's work for many of these teachers is not long. The Saturday morning class is often itself preparation for the work; and the teachers' pay, though not high in the early years, ultimately affords a good simple living, with pension.

There is, however, all the difference in the world between the uncertificated teacher whose work is in general well directed by a well-qualified and enthusiastic head teacher, and who is helped in detail by a competent lecturer or adviser, and one who is simply dropped into a classroom to find her feet. One may see a girl fresh from a secondary school, harsh and impatient with the little ones, dreading the monotony—as she thinks to herself—of an elementary school, fearing for her discipline, come back, after a few lectures on the teaching of small children, with a feeling that at least she sees her way to, perhaps, some entertaining English work, perhaps to pleasing handwork. A little successful work gives her pleasure and refreshment and may start her working with enthusiasm. Then she is given schemes, and helped to see what she may expect of children at various stages; and finally gets some notion of how to study the children, and therefore of their infinite variety and interest.

But here is an account of the work of a typical unguided teacher:

'The uncertificated teacher has no experience of infants, no training or theories as to how to teach. She fumblingly tries to find out what has been done by the previous teacher. Her manner is cold and the régime strict. The discipline is what is so often called "good", because a routine is constantly maintained. At slack moments the children sit with

their hands on their heads. Most of the children of from 5 to 7 are taught number grouped in one class. "Nature" lessons are given from an old yellow roll of "Object lesson" sheets. Her especial weakness is that she cannot deal with a child who departs from the normal; the little ones under five are idle and bored, the backward children are getting slyly mischievous, and there is a poor child with deformed legs and poor circulation who is obviously terribly unhappy and yet whose intelligence is fairly normal, for whom nothing is done, no effort made.'

It is fair to say that this teacher was in charge of over twenty children ranging in age from 4 to 7—a big task.

The relation of the uncertificated teacher to the 'rural bias' of the school is interesting. The *subject* in which they are precisely weakest is nature study, partly because they are themselves extremely ignorant of it, and partly because this subject cannot be taught by stereotyped methods, but only by capturing the real minds of the pupils. Why young country teachers should be as ignorant as they are it is beyond me to say. It may be largely because they are country *girls* and not country boys, for country girls are rarely quite so free from home duties as boys contrive to be, and the little girl who roams fields and woods independently is an exception. Then, secondary school life is often very hard for country girls; time is so filled by school, and the journey to and fro, and the home work, that their life is very largely limited to what school gives. Now that rural secondary schools are multiplying, a proportion of the girls will have shorter journeys, and these schools will perhaps keep their pupils in mind of country matters. The existing County Secondary School, catering for both town and country children, may not be able

to help. Some lectures in the methods of teaching nature study would perhaps be the most useful of all; there is no better method of conducting nature-study lessons with young children than that of learning with and from the pupils. No scientific course will deal with all the aspects of nature that little children need to touch upon. For the present it ought to be realized that the uninstructed, inexpert state of the uncertificated teacher is a far greater difficulty for the head teacher, in giving a sound environmental reference to the school's work, than any inability in himself. His staff defeat his best laid schemes of work; he must spend too much energy both in teaching them the abc of method, and in rectifying the mistakes in the education of the children who are passed up to him through their hands, for him to have time and freshness to keep the work in close touch with the special life of the country-side.

That the uncertificated teacher is the better for being young has already been said. Uncertificated teachership is not quite a career, though it affords a living, and those who do not marry ought usually to pass out of it by the other avenue—college training and certification. At present such candidates have considerable difficulty in finding places in college; the colleges have a sufficiency of candidates of better academic attainments than most of the uncertificated staff have, and very naturally and rightly give the former preference. Some heads of colleges keep a few places for specially recommended women whose early opportunities have not been good, but these places are not nearly sufficient if a deliberate attempt is to be made to prevent girls from remaining permanently in an 'uncertificated' state.

An additional reason for pressing country uncertifi-

cated teachers to obtain a college training is that a number of them will be needed as heads of the junior schools which will exist when the upper classes have been centralized. It will probably be found difficult to staff such schools adequately, unless some women accustomed to country life and country teaching find their way to college. Already the women who reach the country schools are not on the whole the keenest members of the profession. Not so fine a type of woman as of man is attracted. Isolation for a woman can be very real. If she goes to the country to take charge of a school it is necessarily in one of the smaller villages, and she does not, as a man does, usually carry her own private society with her. It is a problem we shall return to, how the supply of good women teachers in the country can best be encouraged. At any rate, the best of our uncertificated teachers already know the advantages of country work and have a prejudice in favour of country life, or at least habits and tastes which would almost certainly prevent them from taking up work in large towns.

Not all of our uncertificated teachers are anxious for college, but more could be stimulated to a desire for it. At present one or two training colleges are specializing to some extent in the training of rural teachers, and there have been proposals for a college, or colleges, which would be exclusively for rural teachers, and would give special courses. Probably there would be no need for, or value in, a 'biased' training in an ordinary two-year course, but the background of the students and country conditions in general could be borne in mind. The evil effects of segregation would need to be mitigated by drawing students from different parts of the country.

It is doubted in some quarters whether the recruitment of rural teachers from among secondary school pupils will supply enough candidates, or at any rate enough of rural tastes and experience. It has also been urged by some lovers of village folk and life that the system of secondary schools is not, and can never be, so complete that every rural child who is best fitted for an intellectual occupation shall have an opportunity of adopting one, and that the door to the teaching profession should be open to him by the passing of an examination, either with or without previous pupil-teachership.

To meet these views the pupil-teacher system, practically non-existent in the counties for some years, was revived with certain special provisions in 1913 and 1914. The new 'rural pupil-teachers' had this advantage over their predecessors, that arrangements had to be made for them to attend central classes, and that they must only spend half their time in teaching, so that some of their academic work is done in school hours. The head teacher usually gives some instruction to them out of school hours.

The Departmental Committee now sitting has made inquiries as to whether it is thought this system affords a sufficiently good preparation for the teaching profession. My own experience of rural pupil-teachers led me to the conclusion that only the best of them would make good teachers in the end. The difficulty of selecting them at fourteen was very great owing to differing conditions in the schools. Those from the smallest schools and poor schools generally, even if they seemed to have good innate ability, had too great arrears to make up. Also, although we were as ingenious as was in us in providing variety of experience for our rural pupil-

teachers, still their main daily life was spent in a school for young children—not the most stimulating and developing atmosphere for adolescents. On the other hand, the best of the rural pupil-teachers are very attractive people. Being the sons and daughters of small farmers and country trades-folk, they come from homes than which none give a better preparation for life. For my own part I found them people of fundamentally good taste, responsive, and accustomed to and expectant of a good deal of hard work. Their training cannot possibly be as many-sided, and in that sense as thorough, as that of the secondary school pupil. There is a marked difference between the capacity for teaching of uncertificated teachers who have received a secondary school education and those who have not. The secondary school products are marked by more confidence of bearing and therefore, I have sometimes thought, a warmer and freer attitude to the children, and also by much greater ability to teach some subjects, e.g. drawing, singing, and games—subjects which can rarely be effectively taught to rural pupil-teachers—and which for that reason they cannot teach. The education and training of the latter being less rich, it is the more necessary that only very good candidates shall be appointed. The rural pupil-teacher system should only be allowed to survive where a class of, say, ten pupils over fourteen can be formed at the top of a rural central school, as is done in a few of the Warwickshire rural elementary schools, where tuition can be given to them during the ordinary school hours. At such a school, if the teachers specialized, the staff of the school would be able to undertake the major part of their training. Whatever is arranged the head teacher of the school should on no account be allowed to under-

take their tuition after school hours. His hands are full with the scientific ordering of his school. His evenings should be free for preparation and his own purposes.

It has been decided, as the result of the deliberations of the Departmental Committee on the Training of Rural Teachers, that the rural pupil-teacher shall be retained and that a special examination shall be held the passing of which will qualify him, and any supplementary teachers on the same terms, for service as an uncertificated teacher, or for entry to a training college. In this examination handicrafts and gardening have their place, but it has not been found practicable to give a large place to 'rural' subjects. The usefulness of this examination will depend upon a good standard of attainment being demanded. Teachers who achieve such a standard in spite of the difficulties of rural pupil-teachership, or the still greater ones of studying alone, though not in some ways well qualified for teaching by their preparation, are a valuable and distinctive addition to the teaching profession, because of their personal pluck, ambition, and ability.

The Departmental Committee has not yet, as I write, reported upon the wider terms of its reference, 'To consider the desirability of providing courses of training specially suitable for teachers interested in country life and occupations.'

It is of course undesirable to get teachers of an urban type into our rural schools, but it may also be doubted whether we should attempt to get a special 'rural' brand of teacher in all our schools. We do, however, need a number of teachers qualified to lead and help others in getting a good all-round knowledge of country facts, and some conception of agricultural possibilities and a special

knowledge of rural educational achievements and experiments. Certainly, also, all country teachers should be rural lorists up to a point, but it is not necessary that rural lore should be every one's primary hobby. A county would be ill served that had no archaeologists or geographers among its teachers. The best would be for all to pursue a hobby with a rural aspect, and then for all to share knowledge and communicate inspiration and impulse. Already the liberal training of a university or of reading have enabled a number of teachers to give an environmental reference to their teaching which could only be improved upon *in detail* by special education. For example, in a county well known to me there are head teachers who have successfully 'biased' the education they give through physical science, gardening, and carpentry, through botany and nature study, and through the literary subjects, the bias varying with the districts these head teachers have found themselves in, and of course, with their own powers and temperaments. The advantage of the school's rural bias coming about through the wide general culture, open-mindedness and professional direction of mind of the teacher, is that he is thereby competent to judge the complicated and varied village conditions of which something has been said above in Chapters V and VI.

But competent students of the country-side are now too rare, and courses should be supplied which teachers, intending or practising, may attend. The schemes for training rural teachers should be of two types:

I. Scientific and manual.
II. Social and economic.

The larger central schools or centralized senior classes

might aim at having on their staffs two teachers who have been respectively through courses I and II. Both third-year courses and short vacation courses for rural teachers should be of both these types; but we need a good number of teachers who have followed twelve-month courses. The last named, whether coming immediately after the training college course, or better still, perhaps, some three, four, or more years later, should be given in Agricultural Departments and Rural Economics Departments of universities, if possible. Wherever students go it should certainly be into a university atmosphere, into some place where they may meet men and women of widely varying types of character and culture. I must leave the sketching of a scientific and manual course to those more competent than I am; but below is a skeleton of such a course in social and economic subjects as might sensitize the mind of a young teacher to the personalities of his pupils and their parents, and in general to some of the aspects of country life.

Some Suggestions for a Third Year Humanistic Course for Rural Teachers

1. *Rural History*
   - (*a*) A general course 1066–1750. History of the village and agriculture. History of the Poor Law.
   - (*b*) Detailed study of the period 1750–1914 with special reference to the *Agricultural Labourer* and to the history of modern farming.
   - (*c*) The History of Village Education. Medieval Education of the village child. Post-Reformation Education—the Church and the Schoolmaster.

Eighteenth-century Charity schools. Private schools. The National and the British and Foreign Societies' schools.

Methods and curriculum in the schools 1870–1927. Educational experiments in rural schools in England. Experiments abroad. Experiments in the Education of the Rural Adolescent.

2. *Rural Economics*

Recent developments in agriculture in this country. Types of farming: the large farm, the family farm, the small-holding, market gardens. Small Holdings Acts; the Corn Production Act; the Agricultural Wages Board. Rural Industries. Agricultural Co-operation at home and abroad. Rural Housing. Labourers' budgets.

3. *Local Government*

Powers of Parish Councils. Powers of Rural District Councils. Functions of Guardians. Powers of County Councils.

4. *Social Study*

Special study of some particular villages, or of some district around a market town including: Housing; Allotments; Gardens; Small-holdings; the work and functions of religious communities, of Women's Institutes, of the Y.M.C.A., of the British Legion, of Sports Clubs, of the Rural Community Council, of the Village Hall, of Friendly Societies, of Young Farmers' Clubs, of Thrift Clubs, &c. The study of communications and transport; of the amusements of the village; labourers' family budgets; the physique

of the children in the schools; educational history of the villages; biographies of village worthies.

5. A practical course in woodwork or gardening.

or

Evidence of vacation spent working on a farm or small-holding.

or

Evidence of a hobby pursued such as Botany or Nature Study.

While suggesting third-year courses for prospective rural teachers it is well to remember that occasionally a new kind of work proves refreshing and stimulating; a clergyman trained as a curate in an east-end parish has before now proved a great success as a country vicar; two of the best country schoolmasters I have known took up headships in the country after being for many years assistants in London suburbs. It was one of those who said to me: 'I feel I'm a younger man since I came to the country. It sharpens one's wits so'—a curious phrase, many would think, used of the country, but other urban schoolmasters have found it a true one. But it was not only 'the country' that stimulated them; they were professionally awakened men, invigorated by a new professional problem. Though not rurally trained, their professional knowledge had taught them to study their new environment, which they most effectually did. One of those I have in mind at the moment introduced new crops into the district through his own and the school garden; the other did more than any teacher I have ever known to interest rural parents in the school and to make it seem to them an institution of vital importance.

There is one respect in which administrators will find it difficult to ensure that the rural schools as reorganized are better staffed than the schools are at present, and that is that there will be even fewer obvious places for good women. Some of the junior schools will be small, and there will be pressure on the Committee to put uncertificated heads in charge. If this is done the small villages will lose a most valuable member and in particular the girls of the villages will lose an adviser and pattern and director whom they can ill afford to be without. Somehow the village girl is overshadowed by the village boy, but her needs are just as great as his. In these days of Women's Institutes, too, the field is as open to women to do good public work as to men. We may well consider the larger schools also, to ask what type of women they will attract. It stands to reason that most of the best women will decline to enter a department of the education service which offers no headships at all, and if country schools are organized as we may expect, there will be very few even of infant headships, excepting those of tiny one-man or rather one-woman schools. The ultimate solution of the difficulty lies in women being given charge of some of the larger schools. In the meantime, administrators may find it well to press specialization upon the head teachers of the central schools so that there may be responsibility for subjects. Not many schools will be large enough, or suitably organized, to make the post of head woman assistant much more than a sinecure, administratively.

Such long courses as we have just discussed must necessarily chiefly concern the village teacher of the future. What of the village teacher of the present? It may be profitable to hark back for a moment to him.

We have described the country teacher section by section; now we may perhaps be permitted a few generalizations. Country teachers, as is natural at a time of rapid changes, are a great mixture of qualifications, of ability, of degrees of social address, of tastes. On the whole, *tant mieux*. Nothing could be worse than wholesale segregation, or specialization along one line, or even lines too similar. But those who legislate for country schools must bear in mind that there is a great gap between those live teachers who run the N.U.T. associations, attend voluntary classes, form clubs, and afford society for each other, and some who for various reasons—poverty, pressing responsibilities, apathy—remain in isolation, tucked away. Some of these folk have taught from the age of 14 or 15 to late middle age. They may hold the acting teachers' certificate or be uncertificated, or supplementary, or they may even be college trained. A proportion of them have remained so isolated that their methods are antiquated beyond belief. One has seen their children waste time standing on their desks with their hands on their heads. Examples have been given of, for instance, a school where three classes of the children would learn altogether with one voice to spell one difficult word, where one may hear the arithmetical tables sung to a monotonous tune or the children may be knitting string socks—in short, doing many a thing that wastes, as it has for decades wasted, the children's time.

Suggestions then as to helping the present teacher must cover a wide gamut. First it may be said how much is sometimes accomplished by suggestions emanating from the Education Committee and made to all teachers. Nowadays these must be carefully made, for

the highly qualified teacher may resent too frequent, or too crude, suggestions. Still the children have often profited by such suggestions. An instance was given above of a school whose methods could not have been much worse and still pass muster. The children had some musical ability but quite uncultivated taste; a suggestion had been made that if new hymn books were needed 'Hymns of the Kingdom' should be adopted and a list of the most suitable hymns given. The hymns were the bright spot in that school. In one district after a discussion on the eternal 'script' versus 'cursive' problem, a note was sent round suggesting to teachers the perusal of a simple book on writing by a writing-master, which showed that there is no great gulf between the two styles. The book was read by a large number of teachers subsequently. The Board's 'Suggestions to Teachers' are of course the 'suggestions' with the widest scope and the widest public.

One county has, I hear, 'suggestions' boxes which tour the county and to which any teacher may contribute ideas large or small, schemes of work, specimens of handwork, and so on.

'Suggestions' must, however, be always somewhat superficial; even the Board's excellent new book is only a poor substitute for professional knowledge on the part of the teacher. Qualified responsible modern teachers must be helped in a different way. They must help themselves; but of course administrators sitting in the middle of things are in a position to help them to help themselves. Knowledge grows by being used, and they can use the knowledge of keen teachers by consulting them, by providing some of them with opportunities to lecture; they can support and encourage teachers'

societies of various kinds. They should do everything they can to make the country teacher feel that he does or can belong to the highest rank in the educational service. There is a very strong feeling at present that all inspectors and administrators, every one who emanates from a central office, is the superior of the man or woman at the head of the school. It would certainly be useful if more administrative posts were open to teachers; but it probably is not at all essential.

Authorities ought, however, to pay the teachers the compliment of appointing, with as few exceptions as possible, expert educationists as administrators. It is not unknown for a Director's chief assistant to be a young university man of no professional training or experience. Possibly there is a shortage of men; but such posts are not unsuitable for women. If differences are desirable or necessary in the education of girls and boys it would seem desirable that women should be represented on administrative staffs.

Promotion for our valuable teachers should not take the form of frequent furniture moving. The leaving of the head of a school, be the school never so tiny, makes an inevitable revolution in its work. Where there is an interregnum, as often happens, and supply teachers are sent, the loss may be incalculable. Somehow ways must be found of bringing honour and comfort to the good teacher, so as rather to secure his remaining where he is, and giving his school that continuity which is an absolute condition of the children's maximum benefit.

Perhaps the times have changed sufficiently for inspection to take a new form, more helpful and encouraging to good teachers than the old: that of the offer of consultants for the help of the general practitioner.

Every good teacher would be thankful for expert psychological help as often as he could get it. The assessment of the intelligence of backward children is a crying need in country schools. Almost as many teachers would be grateful for that form of help, which would supply them with what they need for the judgement of their own work, as would resent the infliction upon the schools of an examination to test the results of work. Such an examination could never be just, would narrow the scope of the work, and repress experiment—be frost, in fact, on all the growing points of the schools. But special inspection by an expert in one subject, the expert to be if possible a fellow teacher practising under the same authority, should be a great stimulus to a school. We should adopt the principle of helping and pressing on and recognizing the best of our teachers rather than that of tripping up the worst. If the educational dead cannot quite be left to bury their dead, at least we should reduce inspectional visits to the minimum and add to the number of expert advisers, whose help the teachers will soon learn to ask for.

As to what is done along these lines we may give, as an instance, the County Education Committee who have realized that teachers should be some of the chief contributors to the discussion of the problem of rural education, and have organized a series of lectures by teachers to teachers on that subject. The list of subjects included the teaching of English, of arithmetic and of village history, geography of the locality, rural science, the school workshop and garden, the country girl, the rural housewife, country hobbies, and accounts of three experiments in rural education. That this excellent series of lectures were not all very well attended is illustrative

of the fact that only a proportion of the teachers are alive to all the main aspects of their work: also possibly that they hardly as yet look for guidance from folk of their own rank. Of course the teachers must be, as indeed they are, their own chief helpers out of this state of affairs. Pursuing professional knowledge with 'unhasting, unresting diligence', they should form professional clubs for the discussing of professional subjects, such as already exist in some counties; more teachers should publish articles and accounts of their work, for administrators and committees need at least as much enlightenment from teachers as teachers from them. Already at least one county has a county teachers' association which publishes a periodical.

It is sometimes thought that the teacher's social position is of great importance, at any rate to himself. But equality with vicar or doctor, if it means the assumption of social superiority to his pupils or their parents, would be a tragic development for education. In the first and second quarters of the last century it was thought that teachers should live as hardly as the poorest of their children. That was going rather far, but there was something true in the conception. A teacher, no more than a religious minister, should claim any social priority. If a proportion of the country clergy have set us a poor example, we shall see them abandon it before they succeed in leading their village flock effectually back to religion and the church, before they help us in touching the lives of the country adolescent. Besides, now that the isolation of one village from others is becoming for many a thing of the past, teachers will not be altogether dependent on very local society. It is open to everybody with cars to be 'county people'

now in the sense that they are able to cultivate friends over a wide area. Professional friendships and associations, meetings at Saturday classes, membership of Women's Institutes and other county organizations, already enable many teachers to feel the whole county their home. All teachers, under the new régime, when it is for them an accomplished fact, whether in junior or central senior schools, should get some knowledge of, and touch with, their fellow teachers in the whole district served by the central school.

There lies before rural school teachers a life sufficiently interesting if they see all the implications and possibilities of their work. It may be said of country teaching as of farming that it is not a trade or profession but a life, a life of many consolations if of no showy rewards. Beside a profession now as absorbing and full of development and change as any, there is the 'cash value' of space and air and quiet and the far richer aspects of an incomparable country-side. It would be, however, less than practical to forget that some of the younger teachers, especially men with families, have still a stiff financial problem while they climb the early rungs of the new Burnham scales, even though these are a vast improvement on previous conditions.

Rural teachers, like others, are only at the beginning of what has become professionally possible, through the advance of psychology and experimental teaching. But in personal quality and in citizenly conduct few professional folk and surely no villagers can give them a lead. There are few of them but give a helping hand to almost every public project of value in their villages.

THE EDUCATION OF THE COUNTRY ADOLESCENT

WE come now to the most difficult problem that faces the rural educationist—a problem not even stated, let alone approaching solution. Two forms of statement would be possible, a statistical one and a sympathetic one. Figures as to the numbers of youths receiving some sort of education are not forthcoming, and there are very few people who know the needs of post-school village boys and girls.[1] The country adolescent seems at present to fall between two stools. There are few opportunities of regular school education for him or her, and he is not catered for in the irregular, but in some villages fairly plentiful, provision for grown folk.

Perhaps adolescent education, for those not provided for by the secondary schools, has more in common with adult than with primary education. The youths we have in mind have entered on their adult phase in that they have begun wage-earning or, to include girls who remain at home, earning their living. The fact of their new status as partially independent folk is much in their mind, and their actual work is much in mind, also, because they are having the exciting and uncomfortable experiences of the tyro. For these and other reasons educational courses must be of a special nature. Like provision for adults, that for adolescents must be respectfully offered; mere attendance may be compulsory, but the work proposed must be such as meets conscious needs—and it must have a certain vocational reference.

Yet, of course, adolescent education has many rela-

[1] An interesting account of village youths will be found in *Rural Education*, by A. W. Ashby and P. G. Byles, pp. 202–6.

tions to primary school work. Primary teachers do not cease to interest themselves in their pupils on the day they leave school; they know the children and should have valuable suggestions to offer as to what further help they could avail themselves of after the age of 14. The present chapter embodies only a few somewhat casual suggestions—thoughts that have occurred to me partly in the course of primary and secondary school work, and partly in ordinary village life.

Recently Lord Eustace Percy has signified to local authorities that a study of the needs of the adolescent should be prepared. No doubt they are engaged upon statistical and geographical study of the situation; for as with all rural problems, human statistics in this matter will have to be kept in close association with those of area and distance. Rural adolescents will be difficult to cater for, if only because it is difficult to collect them in fair numbers. It is probable that ultimately the senior central schools will do something for the child up to the age of 15. There may be the compulsory raising of the school age, or an extension of the practice of voluntary attendance to 15. Improvement in the primary school will itself affect what is and should be done for the adolescent. If we can succeed in increasing the curiosity, the happiness, and the general mental and physical energy and resiliency of the elder boys and girls, they will perhaps indicate their own felt needs and desires. Adolescent education in its narrower sense must be a development proceeding in some ways from the point at which school work leaves off. At the same time, much needs to be done for the rural adolescent's education which lies outside the work of the strictly educational agencies. His general physical

and spiritual need is acute. Outside his daily work there is little in many villages to aid in his social or moral development, and that little he not seldom rejects. Something of a metamorphosis comes over the rural boy at about 14. He suffers a sea-change, not apparently for the better. He is learning a job, but rapidly forgetting his nature-lore. The knowledge he acquired at school seems to have sunk so deep in as to be no longer available for ordinary use. Instead of passing through a stage especially sociable, as in theory he should, he often becomes silent and moody and unpleasant of manner; he is 'too big for his shoes' at home, tyrannous to younger brothers and sisters, and set, it would seem, on making the world acknowledge that 'a man 's a man' in spite of the least attractive conduct. This happens to the more intelligent and sensitive boys as well as in a new degree to those 'dull and backward' boys whose school conduct has often had already a slightly anti-social tinge. Perhaps the truth is that, in order to be social, boys require a group of people of their own age and kind, and this is lacking. Of the boys that attended school, a proportion leave the village for work elsewhere and some go on to a secondary school. Those that are left are too small a number for it to be likely that individuals can find congenial spirits among them, and they are far too few to enjoy themselves as a mob, as youths in more populated districts do. Often at 16 or so there comes upon them a special sensitiveness to their own and other people's 'social' position that may last a long time. Their employers may be, or more often seem, harsh and exacting; girls who were their playmates at school are dressing elegantly and turning their eyes elsewhere.

Parents often think it necessary at this stage to point the harsher lessons of life; to indicate the flaws in ambitions, to inculcate worldly wisdom in the matter of personal bearing to employers and possible employers, to ridicule the extravagances of youthful thought on politics and other matters. In this way they are working directly against the grain, and the process is specially painful in small cottages, that allow no privacy for day-dreams or sulks. It is especially unfortunate that at this time boys should have, as is quite often the case, no touch with any more comprehensive institutions than the family and, perhaps, a football team. They are ready for political interests, but in some villages there is great apathy about politics, so that there are no political clubs and few meetings. Where influences have been at all favourable, the religious life has some attractions for them, but they are too old for Sunday School, sermons do not meet their need, and confirmation classes are not for all. Their work is often varied and calls for skill, but no one helps them to see the economic or scientific or aesthetic significance of what they see and do. Thus they come in time to neglect, and finally to lose sight of, their own serious interests, and to think entertainment (the cinema, the gramophone, the wireless, dances, and whist drives) the choicest thing in life.

Girls seem in some ways less unfortunate than boys. The girls of the poorest country class often go 'into service' at 14, and thus they escape from the restrictions of the physical background of crowded houses. They get also a considerable new experience. Mistresses are often more understanding than masters, and girls thus have a good deal of sympathetic intercourse in and

with the family they serve, especially, perhaps, nowadays in what is called 'better-class service'—in the homes of professional men. Girls who are retained to help with the work at home are usually daughters of small-holders, farmers, and owners of small businesses. As was remarked in the last chapter, the homes of such hard-working but not poverty-stricken folk are frequently among the best of homes for a child to start from. That fact is quite consonant with the statement that both sons and daughters of such homes need a continued education and that the community needs that a large proportion of them should receive it.

To turn again to the most necessitous adolescents, it is those of the small villages whose state causes most anxiety. Here and there are villages where the state of the adolescent would seem to be extraordinarily low spiritually. It must be very long before educationists can get a great hold on the young people brought up in these; such a hold could only follow upon improvement in the general rural economic situation, for small classes in villages are very expensive, and so are the bicycles, or buses, and weatherproof clothes that make winter central classes possible. However, this is an educational essay and therefore the question of further strictly educational development must come first.

No statistics are available as to the proportion of young folk undertaking any educational work between the ages of 14 and 18. They sometimes join in classes mainly intended for grown-up folk, e.g. in those held in men's clubs; and girls sometimes join in the activities of Women's Institutes. We may dismiss these cases as unimportant, merely better than nothing educationally. Both young people and adults like to spend some of

their leisure in private as regards each other. It would be short-sighted of the Women's Institutes to sacrifice the mothers' interests at all to the daughters'—to lower their entrance age. Apart from such adventitious opportunities there are classes fairly frequently in woodwork for boys and cookery for girls. Woodwork is popular, and cookery usually commands a class. But often the discipline of such classes is difficult. The teacher is tried by excessive gossip and flippancy, and loses his or her enthusiasm. Travelling and other expenses make the cost of the classes very high, and the amount of organization and office work involved cause the responsible officers to feel that a mountain is in labour producing a mouse. It is not an exaggeration to say that at present very little is being done and that little is hesitant and inconclusive.

Neither the right subjects nor the right teachers have in the main been found. Neither subject nor teacher will alone fill the bill; we must get both together. The special need of the teacher is psychological understanding of the adolescent—of the rapid development of his emotions; of his search for ideals, or, at any rate, for models for himself; of how, if he is of good intelligence, he likes to take a wide sweep intellectually and emotionally, revelling in large ideas and generalizations, and identifying himself with lost and ridiculous causes; of his potential sociability and capacity for pleasure in people. The teachers so far evolved in our educational system who have best demonstrated the possibilities of 'continued' education are those who taught successfully in the first continuation schools. These were all in urban districts. But the technique these teachers developed is essentially the technique we require. Their

schools were on trial; while attendance from day to day was not voluntary the teachers knew that a failure to appeal to the scholars would mean in the end the closing of the school. Thus their relation to their pupils was a new and very live one. Their pupils were difficult; they were earning their livings and were 'independent' and touchy; they were sometimes socialists and revolutionary; they were factory workers and subject to mob movement. They were, in brief, even tougher subjects than our rural adolescents will prove. But some of the schools succeeded wonderfully; the Birmingham Education Committee's Day School for Young Employees may be instanced. The teachers learnt to put out their every effort; they exercised their every charm and every virtue. Women teachers had to consider the very clothes they wore, because the effect of them was so evident—they so pleased and displeased, and were so imitated. Subjects had to be taught in such a way as to appeal; and yet the lessons needed to contain plenty of solid stuff or real beauty, or they palled. History was the history of the children's own class, of their own works and factories, of their own towns; it was made more living still by correlation with literature and drama, and by active representation of chosen scenes. At times the children chose their own subjects, sometimes by formal voting, but more soundly through the teachers' intimate friendship with and knowledge of them. These teachers had to, as it were, throw away every claim to leadership—all authority, all pride of class and culture—before they could begin in truth to lead. But in some cases a wonderful leadership was achieved.

Where can we look for teachers who can tackle the

rural problem with the same freshness? Before we attempt any answer to that question we must look at the question as to what subjects we could have up our sleeves to offer, and as to who is to guide and administer the work.

It is clear that the work will not be technical. Successful work with young people everywhere has had a social and aesthetic side. The High Schools of Denmark, in which country agricultural skill and knowledge have reached a high degree and are widespread, have not given much technical instruction. They have awakened their pupils' minds largely by what are called 'cultural' subjects, but their work has gone hand in hand with vocational opportunity. That is what we, too, need: economic opportunity but a liberal training. Certain forms of agricultural and rural knowledge can and must be part of a rural liberal education. But to be that they must be regarded as educational tools, and taught for their effect upon the pupils' minds.

Our second question was: Who is to administer adolescent education?

From 1912 to 1926 there was an arrangement between the authorities that the Ministry of Agriculture paid for all agricultural instruction to scholars over 16; but all work with pupils of from 14 to 16 was in the charge of the Board of Education. This division of responsibility for continued education seems to have led to the formation of water-tight compartments. The education committees provided no classes which could possibly be described as 'agricultural', while the agricultural authorities provided no classes for children. The Ministry and the Board have now agreed 'that the division of responsibility on a basis of age be abandoned

and grants paid, by one or other department according to the subject of instruction'.

If this arrangement were to mean that technical subjects are taught by those interested in them for technical and commercial reasons, then rural adolescent education would be at a standstill, or would backslide into failure. But there is reason to think that agriculturists see quite as clearly as educationists that what both agriculture and children need is the enlightened and active mind. Here are some quotations from an agricultural economist:

'As the possibilities of advancement of methods increase, a continually rising standard of general intelligence will be required of both farmers and workers. Therefore the improvement of general elementary education in rural areas needs pressing even from the agricultural standpoint. It is too little realized that the so-called practical instruction often fails, even with adults, because it attempts to appeal to the economic rather than general human motives and interests. The indirect approach through educational channels is frequently the most effective. . . .

'Nearly everywhere degree courses in agriculture include some agricultural history, agricultural economics, and some "comparative agriculture". In most degree courses one or more of these is compulsory. The teaching of all these tends to the humane side of the subject, the history of agriculture including social history and even the teaching of comparative agriculture tends to become the teaching of geography. —The more humane subjects have been included in "higher" agricultural education partly on recognition of their teaching value, and partly on greater recognition of the complicated character of farming as an art and a business, but also partly on the recognition of the fact that the more humane subjects provide good bases for judgment in the industry and in business. . . .

'My own view, perhaps a biased one, yet formed out of a good deal of experience of teaching and of some teaching of children, is that the foundation of good courses leading to agricultural subjects is to be found in agricultural history and agricultural geography; they provide in the simplest and best way the possibility of combining human interests with useful instruction; they can even be scientific and yet carry a human appeal.'

Though this wise and humane point of view is more and more frequently taken by agriculturists whose knowledge and experience are wide, there are others of more limited outlook. Some counties, however, have a useful arrangement by which agricultural education is under the control of a sub-committee composed of members from both Agriculture and Education Committees: this should lead to views and practices taking account of the needs of both pupils and industry.

Subjects then will be chosen which will bear upon the vocations of the pupils, of whom many will be employed in agriculture, and nearly all will be directly or indirectly dependent upon it. To all it will be a most significant matter, but they will not all have an interest in its technicalities. In the quotation given above, the history and geography of agriculture are suggested as a suitable type of subject for study. They are clearly world-wide subjects, of many aspects capable of attracting minds of several types, a single mind in many ways. The writer who has been quoted illustrates his meaning:

'One of the best syllabuses I ever saw in a country school was of a "correlation" course in history and geography. The part dealing with the potato included maps showing the distribution of the wild potato; and the distribution of the production and consumption of the ordinary potato as we know

it; it included pictures of the type of ship in which the potatoes were brought over to Europe; it discussed the food values of the tubers, and discussed their place in the dietary of the people; and then it discussed the cultivation of the crop, its distribution and its diseases. A similar course on wheat included a discussion of dietaries in relation to climate &c., the conditions under which the wheat crop is successfully grown, the distribution of the wheat-eating populations and the wheat-producing areas of the world; it also included what is known of the cultivated varieties; diseases of wheat, milling and quality of wheat &c. Here I submit, is the subject-matter of effective yet practical teaching.'

More explicitly still our agriculturist proceeds to say that the teaching of 'girls to milk and boys to plough' is not the best use of the adolescent's time and the public's money.

The moral we are to draw is clear. One may well imagine that some one might remark at this point that a liberal education could quite well take milking for its point of departure, and there would be truth in that. But the red herring must not be followed. The point is that we must find the subject-matter that will most effectively and quickly and lastingly awaken the children's minds. The crafts cannot usually in the country make the best starting point because they are so dependent on place and time. A cowshed is not the best place for talk, and the open field in process of ploughing is apt to be a cold and silent place. Ploughing and milking and the other farm processes have their place in the residential Farm Institutes for pupils of over 16. A sufficient number of young people should pass through these to keep local practice hygienic and up to date.

Though crafts will not serve as the pabulum for the part-time adolescent student, he should not be limited

to humane starting points. Science provides some as good except that, unfortunately, the student of the humanities is so often the better teacher. His subject-matter has taught him more about people; he knows himself better. The scientist who could make his subjects illumine the life and experience of our country lads and lassies would be a pearl of great price. Teachers of biology in some secondary schools and colleges are said to be proving the extreme value of this subject. The thing is, at the present time, to find the right teacher—the one who will find what subjects will do, and then if necessary make himself fit to teach them. It is perfectly possible to learn subjects in order to teach them if one is sufficiently interested in the effect upon the child and, of course, if the subjects are within the bounds of one's talents and temperament. The courses sketched above on the potato and wheat are as much scientific as humane, and though these would perhaps prove almost too discursive in most teachers' hands, they illustrate the point that what we want is teachers, guides, alive and interested people, rather than past masters of clearly defined subjects.

Teachers are needed that can appeal to both sexes. Classes will be twice the size if they can be for both girls and boys—and still, often, they will be small.

In the larger village centres and small country towns efforts should be made to give social and cultural activities such as singing, acting, 'folk' dancing, and 'Greek' dancing as well as some subject or subjects with a rural reference. Nothing loosens and aerates the soil of personality—body and mind together—so quickly as the lively corporate activity involved in singing, acting, and dancing.

What we need then is experiment, conducted by those who have developed what we may briefly call the teaching point of view, whether they are persons who have received the conventional teachers' training or not. We have returned to the question where to find the teachers? Obviously, we shall look first and most hopefully among those who are fully trained. We shall not find many among our present rural staffs, very naturally, for reasons to be inferred from the last chapter; but as the central schools grow more common, more teachers will be giving special thought to the education of those who are between childhood and manhood, and from these should come some excellent teachers of evening classes. Here and there among the county instructors may be found some who have learnt some teaching-method from their work with adults. The peripatetic teachers of cookery and handicrafts will not confine themselves to day work; but here one might remark that the counties can often only command the services of very young, not very highly trained, people in these posts, and the work we have in mind is not the most suitable for a beginner working—as in this case he or she would probably have to—alone.

One thing the teachers will have to think out is the special needs of girls. It has been said that most rural continuation classes must be mixed or they will be too expensive to be practicable and too small to make corporate feeling possible; it will be difficult to cater for both sexes, but it is one of the tests of a teacher's skill to help a number of individuals to get what they separately require from a single course of work. Up to now girls have mostly been offered courses in domestic work and in dairying. As with boys, there has been

little attempt to continue to give them a liberal or general post-primary education. But girls have very strong aesthetic and moral interests, and these should be catered for. How is this to be done? Because they cannot often be provided for apart from boys, and because one class and subject must serve so many individuals and purposes, it must often be by directing their attention to the aesthetic, moral, and human side of whatever subjects are taught. Obviously history and geography and agriculture itself lend themselves to this emphasis. Plainly in these mixed classes, knowledge of educational methods will sometimes be as important as in the primary school. Some subjects at first sight very utilitarian have a pronounced aesthetic aspect. Clever teachers of domestic subjects—sewing, cookery, laundry—must find time to discuss the functions of a home, and the extraordinary importance of a housewife's work, to describe and discuss pretty homes they have seen, to have competitions in which credit shall be given equally to utility and beauty. Simple—not time-consuming—arrangements of salads, of flowers, decorations of clothes and household cloths of various kinds, effective packing of vegetables, eggs, preserves, butter, &c., which shall demonstrate the qualities of the goods and attract the eye.

Besides the tastes already mentioned girls have often a considerable liking and aptitude for what one may call small business. No doubt it is an aspect of the capacity that makes economical and pleasant homes. It is this aptitude which has enabled educated girls and women to transform the tea-shops in almost every town from ugly, unpleasant little places where poor food was provided, to charming rooms with home-made cakes

that are a pleasant part of all shopping and sight-seeing expeditions. The combination of this small-business talent and aesthetic appreciation that has made these small restaurants so successful should also be useful in poultry farming, bee-keeping, preserve making, and fruit-canning. It would be excellent if suitable training should lead to more girls remaining on small-holdings or farms, and undertaking some suitable part of the work. A larger number of really suitable wives of farmers and other land-workers would then be forthcoming. Some stimulation in this direction could be, as it is, given in Young Farmers' Clubs. If girls were retained in the country in rather larger numbers and given some practical yet genuinely enlightening training, those who became farm-workers' wives would be able to add to their husbands' wages by small produce; they will have time for such work now that comparatively small families are the rule. A large number of farmers' daughters could be extremely useful in keeping farm accounts. Faithful, if simple, accounting is the new process many farms are most in need of, and on many farms unless a woman keeps the books they never will be properly kept.

The *Report of the Inter-departmental Committee on the Practical Education of Women for Rural Life* [1] points out that the importance of women in agriculture is much greater than is usually supposed. There are 19,000 women farmers, besides 15,000 daughters and relatives of farmers definitely employed upon farms, and nearly 63,000 regular women land-workers. Besides these women 'independently' employed, there are the women 'co-operatively' engaged in agriculture—

[1] H.M. Stationery Office, 1928.

the wives of farm-workers, small-holders, and farmers, who may, the report says, be numbered at about one million. Upon the state of mind of these 'co-operatively' engaged women depends to a great extent the future of agriculture. 'They are', says the Report, 'in a position to be either a drag on, or a spur to, agricultural development'.

Numerous as are youths and girls at present employed in agriculture, they are, as has been said, very scattered. Residential courses will be necessary to supplement day or evening classes. Probably many of those over sixteen could best get 'continued education' in short residential mid-winter courses. Rate-aided Farm Institutes already exist to give such courses, and there are one or two voluntary institutions. A spell of residence with other folk of their own age, with new work and experiences to partake in and discuss together, is always stimulating and enjoyable, but so far the numbers who have attended a farm-school course have been so few that no general influence on village life has resulted; instead students have returned to their homes and farms only to be more sensitive to agricultural malpractices and to their own intellectual isolation. Yet if only a sufficient sprinkling of young people took a single winter course their influence would surely be considerable both on village life and on farm practice. Farm-school pupils should come back bringing new agricultural methods, new songs, new friends, and new standards for games. Perhaps a small stream of young people going to, and returning from, a happy residential experience would do more than any equally feasible reform for farm and village life. But it is said, and seems probable, that in most Farm Institutes the vocational work is given the

first place, and the form that residential life takes has not been thought very important.

No doubt experiments in, and new valuation of, the departments of farm-school life are taking place now. A voluntary institution working at these matters is Avoncroft, which has been opened to experiment in this country with the methods of the High Schools of Denmark. The following extract from *The Times Educational Supplement* summarizes the aims and courses pursued here.

'The opening of Avoncroft is due to the initiative of Mr. George Cadbury, who has presented to the trustees two houses, a bungalow, and 14 acres of highly productive land near the River Avon at Offenham and the Vale of Evesham, famous as a centre of intensive horticulture. There will be living accommodation for 12 to 15 students, and at the fee of £20 for a single term of 11 weeks, or £36 for two terms, all the essentials of college community life will be available. The college will necessarily be conducted on the simplest lines, consistent with comfort, and the students will help in certain household duties.

'The aim is limited by the brevity of the courses to giving the students a general outline of modern history, literature, economics, and sociology, with particular reference to rural conditions. There will be lectures on physics, chemistry, and biology, and instruction in farm accounts, marketing, credit, rural local government, and other matters concerned with agriculture. The course includes work on the land, related specially to the most modern methods of small farming, and instruction in carpentry and the care of farm machines.

'The college course will consist of two terms between October and March, the period when farm-workers are best able to obtain time for study, and during the vacations and the summer special courses for women students and other

short-period schools will be arranged. Grants in aid of fees are to be awarded by the committee to would-be students of special merit.'

An interesting experiment in the provision of non-residential courses is the 'Village College' [1] which is being developed at Sawston in Cambridgeshire. Here elementary school, continuation, and adult classes are to be housed together in a roomy and pleasant building, and to be guided by a well-qualified head of the College, who will study the needs of the villages which the College will serve and who will see that the aims of all the work are related.

More advanced courses than those provided by Farm Institutes are given in Agricultural Colleges, whose two-year courses are frequented by the sons of large farmers. Here, too, the training should have a very liberal element. Few things are more necessary for village life than the touching of future farmers to a finer social feeling. It is often and truly said that farmers are individualists. Their life is so full of work and of interest that it is natural enough that they should find it engrossing. Yet minds more hospitable to thoughts of a wider world would perhaps benefit their farms as well as the communal life of their village. Farmers are the most permanent class in the village community; teachers and clergy come and go, but the farmer's family belongs to the district, and stays in it. As employers they enjoy prestige of a very important kind. They have, in spite of the depression of their industry, that good life, that 'stake in the country', that is an unpaid debt unless civic responsibility is felt.

[1] *The Village College*, by Henry Morris, Cambridge University Press.

Adolescent education in the country is, we may say with rough truth, a thing of the future, and it would be optimistic to expect much of it in the next ten years. But what of the young people in the meantime? What, too, of the young folk in the small, scattered villages which will always to some extent baffle the scholastic authorities? The present state of mind of young folk is here and there nothing short of morbid. Some things one may hear from teachers in distress it would not be possible to tell without seeming to vilify country life. Here and there the urgent problems are bestiality and mean dishonesty. In these cases one naturally looks at existing institutions, and present residents, to see if more can be done to bring public opinion to bear upon the young in a way acceptable to themselves. What is needed is some, almost any, form of social life. The teachers who, though they cannot get enough of children of one mind to continue work in any subject, open their schools for a weekly social evening, who open (it is not common) their homes to their past pupils, are doing the helpful thing. Such a state of affairs as has been spoken of can be tackled only by the missionary spirit. Good fellowship, happy social relationships, are the great spiritual needs of tiny villages, and these are conspicuously absent where the economic gaps between class and class are considerable.

The one institution with a footing in all such villages is the Church. In the last few years the Church has awakened to discussion of special rural problems; there are diocesan meetings and there was a national conference on rural matters in 1927. The atmosphere is sympathetic, but there is an insufficiency of information in the speeches, reports of which I have read. If

some of the clergy could take the course of humane rural studies that has been sketched in Chapter VII it would be excellent, and if they could take it together with some teachers there would be an enormous gain. In village education the minister too often gives too much attention to what is done in school hours with the young children who have already a devoted guardian, and too little to the difficult young things cut off from the sustaining school routine, and from almost every other source of help. The Bible nowhere speaks of the importance of the years 14 to 18, though of infancy it says much. Nevertheless Fishers of Men need especially to consider this stage of growth. Perhaps the movement for adult education, now being fostered by the Church Tutorial Classes Association, will ultimately stimulate interest in similar help for the adolescent.[1]

Leadership is difficult in the villages, as elsewhere in these days. The time for the simple exercise of authority and of the leadership that comes of position has passed. Youths doubt the good of religion and of intellectual effort, and the disinterestedness of those who offer them. Our poorer village population is in a disillusioned unhopeful mood. Actually wages are better than in 1914, but this improvement has not been accompanied by a rising of spirit, perhaps because of the hazards of employment; there is much bitterness about the farmers who employ, say, two men and a boy on 300 acres.

The causes of this mood are economic; the first need of boys and girls is to feel that there is a future for them, that there is a definite niche that each can fill

[1] Cf. *The Teaching Church. A Handbook of Adult Religious Education*, by the Bishop of Manchester and others, S.P.C.K.

adequately or inadequately according to their choice. Social workers in the country can do something here; they can help in County Council politics to press for good numbers of small holdings, and help to form public opinion so that the public need of land does not force up the price too far. They may be able to help the village to good residents who will offer employment in garden and house, or as chauffeurs. But these things again take time.

Perhaps one of the most promising lines of work for immediate effect is the encouragement of games and physical activity. Disillusionment scarcely touches the desire of a youth to show physical prowess. To make games possible, and to help in their organization and maintenance is the one avenue in some villages that lies open to the hearts of their youth. Football and cricket clubs have survived night schools and village providence societies. Tennis and badminton are as good and as attractive for girls as football and cricket for boys, though perhaps tennis is a somewhat expensive game to encourage. The social element in such games makes immediately for self-respect—for the clean frock or shirt, for a knowledge of decent social usage and conventions, for a regular brush and clean up. It is sad to see almost all games and athletic sports die down completely in the winter in some villages. No public-spirited person could do better than help to obtain a good playing-ground for the summer and a small gymnasium for the winter.

Of course in some large villages there are a number of sources of help and inspiration for young people. One which is available chiefly there and sometimes in smaller villages and which should, perhaps, not pass quite

unmentioned is the 'Young People's Classes' of certain Nonconformist churches. Here and there they have been among the best things in villages, but their activities are apt to be intermittent.

Before and above everything, the country cries out for economic opportunities for its children. These cannot be artificially provided, but every hopeful experiment should be tried; and the children themselves should be so taught as to attack their own economic problems with all possible freshness and hope. They will never find easy solutions; to the end it will take a strong hand and spirit to draw a good living from smallish parcels of land, whether farms or small-holdings. But an agricultural life just so far economically sufficient to give the land worker of whatever rank a healthy life, and leave him his personal independence, is worth the long, strong, pull it entails.

It is impossible to live and work in the country without developing a lively sense of the stress and strain of life, and without coming to realize where these are most felt, for the neighbour relationship is there a genuine one, fed with facts inevitably responded to with pleasure and pain. Hence there are here and there in this essay what may seem pessimistic paragraphs. But even these have not been written without the knowledge that both schools and the social and political order are attempting a new thing in the country, making for a goal never before reached. Wages are higher, schools are better, than ever before. Knowledge of social conditions, experiments in improved social usage, have made great progress. But there are danger spots, and to these we must look.

APPENDIX I

The 'Standards' of the Revised Code.—Ref. Chapter II.

48	*Standard* I	*Standard* II	*Standard* III	*Standard* IV	*Standard* V	*Standard* VI
Reading.	Narrative in monosyllables.	One of the Narratives next in order after monosyllables in an elementary reading book used in the school.	A short paragraph from an elementary reading book used in the school.	A short paragraph from a more advanced reading book used in the school.	A few lines of poetry from a reading book used in the first class of the school	A short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper, or other modern narrative
Writing.	Form on blackboard or slate, from dictation, letters capital and small, manuscript.	Copy in manuscript character a line of print.	A sentence from the same paragraph, slowly read once, and then dictated in single words	A sentence slowly dictated once by a few words at a time, from the same book, but not from the paragraph read.	A sentence slowly dictated once, by a few words at a time, from a reading book used in the first class of the school.	Another short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper, or other modern narrative, slowly dictated once by a few words at a time.
Arithmetic.	Form on blackboard or slate, from dictation, figures up to 20; name at sight figures up to 20; add and subtract figures up to 10, orally, from examples on blackboard.	A sum in simple addition or subtraction, and the multiplication table.	A sum in any simple rule as far as short division (inclusive).	A sum in compound rules (money).	A sum in compound rules (common weights and measures)	A sum in practice or bills of parcels.

APPENDIX II

Time-Table, 1883, *Shenington School.*

	MORNING									AFTERNOON							
	9	9.10.	9.50.	10.	10.30	11.	11.15.	11.55.	12.	1.30–1.35.	3.	3 15.	3.40.	4.			
I Standards IV, V, and VI.	Prayers and Singing.	Religious Instruction.	Marking Registers.	Dictation and Copy-book alternately.	Reading	Recreation.	Arithmetic	Dismiss	Marking Registers.	Girls: Needlework. Boys: Arithmetic and writing alternately.	Recreation.	Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday—English. Thursday—Reading. Friday—Singing.	Dismiss.				
II Standards II and III				ditto	ditto		Arithmetic			ditto		Monday—Lesson by P.T. 'English' Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Friday—Singing					
III Standard I.				Dictation, Copy-books and Transcriptions alternately.	ditto		Arithmetic			ditto		Transcription on Monday and Wednesday. Learning a verse on Tuesday and Thursday. Friday—Singing.					
IV Infants.				Ball Frame and Writing Figures.	ditto		Writing Letters.			Girls: Needlework. Boys: Writing and Exercise.		Object lesson. Tuesday—P T Mon , Weds , and Thurs. Reading in 1st Class Friday—Singing.					

Approved on behalf of the Education Department, as fulfilling the requirements of Section 7 of the Elementary Education Act 1870.
Feb. 22, 1888. H. A. PICKARD, H M.I.

Children to go to Church on Saints' Days and Ash Wednesday at 11 15 a.m., the whole time from 9 15 to 11.15 being given to secular work.
A. B (Rector). 19th *Jan.* 1883.

APPENDIX III

BIBLIOGRAPHY

EDUCATION

Rural Education. By ASHBY AND BYLES. Oxford University Press. 3*s.* 6*d.*

Rural Education. Board of Education. 1*s.*

Suggestions on Rural Education. By T. S. DYMOND. H.M. Stationery Office. 6*d.*

The Work and Organization of Senior Country Schools. Oxfordshire Education Committee. 6*d.*

The Practical Education of Women for Rural Life. H.M. Stationery Office. 6*d.*

Humanism in the Continuation School. By J. DOVER WILSON. Board of Education.

Suggested Syllabus of Rural Education. Hertfordshire County Council.

The Village School: Can it function for Elder Children? By WILLIAM CLAYTON. National Union of Teachers.

The Countryside as Educator. H.M.Stationery Office.

Scheme for the Collection of Rural Lore in Wales. Welsh Department, Board of Education.

The Neglected Treasures of the Countryside. Welsh Department, Board of Education.

AMERICAN

Country Life and the Country School. By MABEL CARNEY. Row Peterson & Co., Chicago and New York.

HYGIENE

Reports of the Chief Medical Officer (Issued Annually). Board of Education.

Reports of County Medical Officers.

STATISTICS

Statistics of Public Education. England and Wales. Board of Education.

HISTORY OF RURAL SCHOOLS

History of Elementary Education in England and Wales from 1800. By C. BIRCHENOUGH. W. B. Clive (University Tutorial Press).

A Survey of the History of Education. By HELEN WODEHOUSE. Arnold.

Reports on Elementary Schools. By MATTHEW ARNOLD. Board of Education.
History of Cambridgeshire. By E. CONYBEARE. Elliot Stock.
Three Centuries in North Oxfordshire. By M. STURGE HENDERSON. Edward Arnold.
Rural Education. By ASHBY AND BYLES. Oxford University Press.

RURAL HISTORY AND ECONOMICS

The Evolution of the English Farm. By M. E. SEEBOHM. Allen & Unwin.
A Short History of British Agriculture. By JOHN ORR. Oxford University Press.
A History of English Farming. By LORD ERNLE. Longmans.
A History of the English Agricultural Labourer from the earliest times to 1894. By W. HASBACH. P. S. King & Son.
A History of the English Agricultural Labourer, his Social Surroundings and Economic Conditions from 1870 to the Present Time. By F. E. GREEN. P. S. King & Son.
The Village Labourer, 1760–1832. By J. L. and B. HAMMOND. Longmans, Green & Co.
Village Trade Unions in Two Centuries. By ERNEST SELLEY. Allen & Unwin.
An Introduction to English Rural History. By GEO. GUEST. The Central Bookroom. 6*d.*
Rural Industries of England and Wales. By HAY AND FITZRANDOLPH. Vols. i, ii, iii. Oxford University Press.
Rural Industries Round Oxford. By K. S. WOODS. Oxford University Press.
The Land and the Nation. By the Liberal Land Committee. Hodder & Stoughton.
Labour's Policy on Agriculture. Labour Publications Department.
Joseph Arch: the Story of his Life. Told by Himself. Hutchinson & Co. 1898.

SOCIAL (Sociology, Studies of Institutions, of Personalities, &c.)

Problems of Village Life. By E. N. BENNETT. Williams & Norgate.
Rusticus or the Future of the Countryside. By MARTIN S. BRIGGS. Kegan Paul.
England's Green and Pleasant Land. Anonymous. Jonathan Cape.
The Dying Peasant and the Future of his Sons. By J. W. ROBERTSON SCOTT. Idbury Village Press.
Change in the Village. By GEORGE BOURN (George Sturt). Duckworth.

The Wheelwright's Shop. By GEORGE BOURN (George Sturt). Duckworth.

A Small Boy in the Sixties. By GEORGE BOURN (George Sturt). Cambridge University Press.

My Moorland Patients. By BISHOP. Murray.

Old England. By BERNARD GILBERT. Collins.

Letters to America. By BERNARD GILBERT. Basil Blackwell.

The Shepherd's Life. By W. H. HUDSON. Methuen.

(Other books by Brown, Gilbert, Hudson, Robertson Scott, &c.)

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, OXFORD
BY JOHN JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY