

PRACTICAL WORK OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION BOARD



Canning Club of Knox County, Tennessee.

RECENTLY the Senate passed a bill opposing the acceptance of such assistance and cooperation as has been given by the General Education Board to the United States government on the ground that such a connection might confer too much influence on a private citizen. Mr. John D. Rockefeller is the founder of the fund which the General Education Board has administered, and that the action of the Senate was directed chiefly toward him was freely stated during the debate on the subject.

Some Senators who felt that there had been no impropriety in the activities of the General Education Board at another time were apprehensive that under similar conditions undue power might be exercised by private citizens, and therefore they voted in favor of the bill, although they had no animus against the Rockefellers.

Wherever the new education has been carried in the South, strengthening the State universities and offering opportunities in the remote rural communities, the name of Dr. Wallace Buttrick, of the General Education Board, is well known. Dr. Buttrick has been secretary of the Board since its establishment in 1902. The Board was liberally endowed by Mr. John D. Rockefeller for the purpose of promoting educational endeavor in all directions and in all sections of the country. In pursuance of this purpose Dr. Buttrick has spent much of his time in the field, seeking things to do and observing work in progress. While the Board has given generously to colleges and universities it may be said to be especially interested in agricultural, vocational and domestic education. On his recent tour of inspection Dr. Buttrick was accompanied by Mr. Abraham Flexner, who has recently become his associate in the offices of the Board.

Board's Work Is Unique.

The work of the General Education Board is unique. It seeks to co-operate with the local centres of education already established and with the federal Department of Agriculture, largely by financial support, which makes it possible to develop the resources of neglected districts and to train boys and girls for economic independence. It has given millions of dollars wherever it has been shown that they would increase the efficiency of a community, and it is prepared to continue and extend support upon the recommendation and advice of authorities, either local or national.

For the first three years of its existence the Board's activities consisted chiefly in sending representatives to make a thorough study of the status of education in the South. As a result of this study the members of the Board decided that the greatest need of that section of the country was to introduce more effective methods of farming. Eighty per cent of the people of the South live in the country and depend upon agriculture for their support.

The very best way of helping the South to help itself, therefore, was to enable the farmers, especially the boys and girls, to work the land and to handle its products more intelligently and more effectively. In the course of its investigation the representatives of the Board learned of the work that had been done by Dr. Seaman A. Knapp in fighting the boll weevil for the government, and proposed that if his work of showing the farmers how to fight this pest could be so extended as to demonstrate other methods of conservation and of good



Knox County (Tennessee) Girls at Work.

farmers the Board would pay the expenses entailed. The Secretary of Agriculture agreed that Dr. Knapp should take charge of the work in other States than Texas and Louisiana, in which he had been carrying on the campaign against the boll weevil, and the General Board of Education paid the bills, the appropriations for that purpose since 1906 amounting to about \$1,000,000. The results of this work are extremely interesting. What the investment has meant in dollars and cents is incalculable, but of far greater importance is the effect that it has had on the population in stimulating them to make a better use of their opportunities and facilities and in raising the tone of the communities in which they live.

Two hundred and sixteen men are now supervising farm work in the South and showing the farmer how he may make his acres more productive with less work and how the women of the family may add to the comfort of the home and find greater zest and variety in their lives. At present about twenty thousand farmers are following the improved methods to which they have been introduced by the demonstrators.

The work has been so wisely done that there is no resentment against the stranger who comes in to show a man who has farmed in the old-fashioned way how to better his methods. Indeed, the agent is not a stranger in the land. Usually he is connected with the State university or some other college, or with the local experiment station.

Influence Widespread.

The influence of these distributive agencies does not stop with the direct lessons given to the 20,000 farmers. These in turn pass it on to their neighbors, and it is estimated that there are now in the South almost 200,000 farmers who have felt the influence of this new agricultural doctrine and practice and are applying it on their farms.

So evident is the effect of the propaganda that it has come to the attention of the Farmers' Union of the Southern States and been commended by them and by the press generally in that part of the country.

It is not only in the South that these instructions are needed. In such Northern States as Maine and New Hamp-

shire, where the farmers have failed to keep pace with the agricultural development of the day and in consequence find it difficult to wrest a living from the soil, the General Education Board has come to the rescue and is paying for the services of experts to carry the gospel of better crops and a more generous standard of living through the rural districts. This is home missionary work of the most practical sort.

Boys' Corn Clubs.

Whatever may be done to introduce new methods among the farmers who have long become accustomed to the unprofitable ways of tilling the soil and raising live stock, and among the women who are prone to follow the traditions of their family and neighborhood, is set down as a gain to be thankful for, but the great hope of those who labor under the direction of the Board is in the boys and girls who are eager for the new things that their elders often accept with reluctance. The demonstration work among the boys of the public schools has met with tremendous response. The Boys' Corn Clubs have made themselves famous. The report of the General Education Board states that approximately 91,000 boys of twelve years old and upward are learning by doing. Instead of studying out agriculture in text books they are performing practical work on their fathers' farms, these experiments being made the basis of their work in the schools. Not only is this a far more effective way, but the personal element of getting results contributes an interest that no ordinary class room work can exert.

Corn was selected for demonstration because it is a plant that can be profitably produced in all parts of the United States. Further, almost all boys who live in the country have a knowledge of it and so do not find it a difficult subject. The social end also appeals strongly to boys who have few opportunities in that line. Races are held in court houses, at country fairs and in other places convenient of access for the scattered corn growers, and the interchange of ideas is as helpful to the boys as to older farmers. In order to promote a friendly rivalry prizes of trips to Washington, where it sometimes happens they may see the President; gold watches, a

buggy, a good strong plough, cash, a colt, a registered calf, books on agriculture and horticulture and other things worthy of any boy's best efforts are offered. The names of the boys belonging to these clubs are sent to the authorities in Washington, who will see that they receive from time to time bulletins and circulars of instruction in regard to seed selection, the preparation of the soil, fertilization and cultivation.

The General Education Board recognizes that it is as important to educate the girls of the South along practical housekeeping and economic lines as it is to make good farmers of their brothers. The organization of girls' clubs began in Virginia and South Carolina in 1910. The avowed objects being "to stimulate interest and wholesome co-operation among members of the family in the home; to provide some means by which the girls may earn money at home, and at the same time get the education and viewpoint necessary for the ideal farm life; to encourage rural families to provide purer and better food at a lower cost and to utilize the surplus and otherwise waste products of the garden and orchards; to furnish teachers with a device for helping their pupils and their communities." In the first year that the clubs were organized there were 325 girls enrolled. Now there are more than thirty-three thousand in the fourteen Southern States.

Girls Cultivate the Tomato.

Just as the boys had made corn the staple end of their agricultural efforts, so the tomato was taken as the most promising vegetable on which the girls could concentrate their attention, although they were encouraged to plant other vegetables in their gardens. A tenth of an acre was decided upon as a good average size for the gardens. As the boys are advised to feed the corn that they grow on the farm wherever it is practicable, so the girls are urged to can the fruit and vegetables that they raise so that their families need not buy any canned goods in the course of the year. Agents employed by the General Education Board instruct the girls in the best way to prepare the vegetables and fruit and show them the advantage of using neat labels and of raising making their work attractive. In addition

to supplying the home girls find that they can sell enough every year to make a good addition to their small incomes. The cans always bear the label, "To make the best butter," the motto of the club.

Sometimes the work is undertaken with the same sort of primitive outfit that was used in the days of our grandmothers. The boiling and stewing is done in a big kettle hung over a fire out of doors, the stirring with a long handled homemade implement. Under the trees the girls prepare the fruit and vegetables, and when they are ready put them into the cans and are waiting on long homemade tables. Of course, it is possible to have the products thus prepared quite as good as those put up in modern ways, but very soon the girls become eager to obtain the up to date, labor saving devices and they make enough to pay for them.

Clubs Develop Personality.

The effect of these clubs upon the personality of the girls is remarkable. The pictures in the possession of the General Education Board would show it, even if they did not have the reports from the workers in the field to verify it. New ambitions, new interests wake up the sluggish and curb the reckless. Locked away in the archives of the Board is the report of a bad girl whom the other members of the club looked at askance when she joined it. The girl, finding a useful outlet for her energy, won many prizes and to-day, attractive and useful, is one of the best examples of what the canning clubs do for girls in the South. Her latest picture is hung conspicuously where visitors may see the vegetables she has raised and the prize winning cans that she has put up.

It must be understood that the activities of the canning and poultry clubs are by no means limited to manual labor. Aside from the fact that chemistry and exactness and all sorts of scientific knowledge are learned in the application of their principles, the members of the clubs keep accurate records of their experiments and the results obtained. They also write compositions about what they have learned, and thus combine literary training with that of scientific study and analysis. Sometimes their enthu-



Gathering Tomatoes for Canning.

ism finds expression in verse. Mark to the Tomato Club Song, submitted by the Wilkinson County (Miss.) Club, to be sung to the tune of "Dixie":—

Tomato Club Song.

Tomato seed and loamy bottom
Make you wealthy, if you've got 'em.
Plant away, plant away, plant away,
tomato girls!
Catch the worms and watch the weather,
Working one and all together,
Plant away, plant away, plant away,
tomato girls!

Chorus.

For the canning clubs of Dixie,
Hooray! Hooray!
In Dixie land we'll take our stand
To live and can in Dixie.
Away, away, away down South in Dixie.

Now pick your fruit and quit your plan-

ning!
Aprons on and start to canning!

Can away, can away, can away, to-

mato girls!
Then stack 'em on the shelf, O Honey

Each can means some ready money,
Can away, can away, can away, to-

mato girls!
Come, customer, step up and try 'em,

Taste 'em once, you've got to buy 'em.
Sell away, sell away, sell away, tomato

girls!
The canning girl, you'll not forget her;

Makes the best a little better.
Sell away, sell away, sell away, tomato girls!

Another phase of the work done by the General Education Board is exemplified in the George Peabody College at Nashville, Tenn., which is to be opened this summer and which Dr. Buttrick and Mr. Flexner visited on their recent trip. This college will offer to students who wish to make teaching their profession the opportunities for which they now have to go to the University of Chicago and Teachers College, Columbia University, in New York city.

The architects' plans call for twenty academic buildings and fifteen residence halls, besides professors' houses. The buildings will be in the classic style, with many details from the Southern Colonial. They will be grouped around a spacious campus and will when finished compare favorably with similar institutions of the North.

An interesting feature of the college will be the Seaman A. Knapp School and Farm, named for Dr. Knapp, whose memory is cherished for his farm demonstration work in the South. The school is designed as a memorial to him and his work. It will deliberately set itself the task of helping the present and future dwellers in the country to make more money, to become more efficient producers and more economic citizens.