

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THE matter which follows is extracted from a lecture* given at Melbourne by Mr. A. E. V. Richardson, M.A., B.Sc., Agricultural Superintendent, Victoria Department of Agriculture, who recently visited America for the purpose of investigating agricultural conditions, &c. He states:—

The bill for agricultural education, research, and extension (in the United States) approximates £12,000,000. . . . What have been the results of the expenditure? Primary production for the fifteen years prior to the war had been increasing to the value of £90,000,000 annually, and £90,000,000 per annum extra production is a fine dividend to realize on the amount spent for agricultural education.

Let me briefly review the forms of agricultural education. Agricultural education, taken in the broadest sense of the term, may be said to cover all those activities undertaken for the promotion of sound and profitable agriculture of a country. These may be classified as (1) instructional work, (2) investigational work, (3) extension work. By instructional work we mean all the formal teaching of agriculture from the primary schools to the University. The investigational work involves the discovery of new facts and principles pertaining to agriculture. By publicity or extension work is meant the conveyance and dissemination of agricultural information to those who are unable to take advantage of the formal teaching of the schools and colleges. The three great institutions are (1) the Agricultural College, (2) the Experiment Station, (3) the Federal Department of Agriculture.

INSTRUCTIONAL WORK.—THE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE.

The agricultural colleges were born in the throes of the Civil War—at a time when the very existence of the nation was at stake—when doubt and pessimism seemed to reign supreme. They have had a chequered career. At first they attracted no students. To-day they are crowded. Forty years of failure and twelve years of dazzling success is the epitome of the history of the colleges. Last year 130,000 students were registered in the fifty-three colleges of agriculture in the United States, and of these 16,000 were undergoing a four-years course for the degree of Agricultural Science. It would take me too long to trace the history of the colleges, but success came when the Federal and State Governments began to invest money liberally in the colleges, and provide them with proper equipment, and high-class specialists as teachers.

Twenty years ago the students came to the colleges fresh from the cornfields, with no prior training. Now, however, they must have a high-school training before they are allowed to enter the colleges. The curriculum has gradually developed in such a way as to secure a unique blend of the vocational and non-vocational in varying proportions, with enough of both to turn out an efficient business man without sacrificing his education as a citizen. The authorities aim at making a good farmer, but they aim, too, at making the student a good citizen as well. Ninety-five per cent. of the students who graduate from the colleges either go on the land or take up some form of agricultural work—teaching, investigational work, or extension work. Of those who do not graduate practically all return to the land. In either case failures are almost unknown.

For those who cannot attend the full courses, short courses extending from two weeks to two months are held, so that they who desire to increase their knowledge of agriculture may do so. These courses are given by specialists, and thousands of farmers attend them every year. At Ohio there were over three thousand farmers in attendance at the College of Agriculture at the time of my visit.

A feature of most American colleges of agriculture is the provision made for the teaching of domestic science and home economics. Within the college is a group of buildings devoted exclusively to the training of young women in domestic

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