

## The Progressive Farmer.

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### SOME OBJECTIONS TO AGRICULTURE IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

In a letter printed on page 11 of this issue, our friend, Mr. E. E. Miller, of Tennessee, sets forth some objections to teaching agriculture in the public schools—or rather some objections to some possible methods of teaching it. We do not know what the Tennessee leaders are planning to do, but the system in operation in North Carolina is not open to many of the objections named by Mr. Miller. We are not trying "to teach agriculture to boys who know nothing else." Under the rules sent out by Superintendent Joyner, children under fourteen years of age, unless unusually well advanced, are not taken into the agricultural classes. Our children at this age are usually studying other subjects in addition to the three R's. And whatever Mr. Miller may think about it, our opinion is that the average country boy who has to choose between "Agriculture for Beginners" on one hand, and geography, history, or grammar on the other, will make a mistake if he does not choose the first. He more sorely needs to know about things in his own life than things in the life of men dead a hundred years; he more sorely needs to know about conditions on his father's farm than about conditions in China or Kamchotka; and while there ought to be persistent effort to encourage correct speaking and writing, the average grammar fails lamentably in this particular—so conspicuously fails that we are glad to see Herbert Spencer referring to the usual grammar drill as "an intensely stupid custom." And it is certainly no more a "waste of time" to talk about soils and plant growth and animal feeding—things that are a part of the student's every-day life and thought—than it is to talk about the capital of New Mexico, the landing of John Smith, or the conjugation of the verb "to love."

We are getting away from the old idea that education is for purposes of ornament rather than of use; that it must deal with artificialities rather than actual life; that training cannot be had through the practical studies as well as through the studies that are of little or no benefit—and Mr. Miller, as a thoughtful young man, will doubtless fall in with the current before he gets much older. "A century ago," says Dr. George T. Winston, "education was for the few and was intended to fit men for the learned professions; to-day education is for the many and is intended to fit men for life's practical work." And we have found that we can train men's minds just as well by the new system as by the old.

Finally, our correspondent is about a hundred years ahead of his time—possibly five hundred years—with his warning against "making the schools mere schools of primary agriculture." We may sometime need such a warning, but that time is not yet in sight. The danger is entirely in the other direction. To warn people now against too much agriculture in the schools is like warning famine sufferers against the dangers of over-eating. It reminds us of the minister who preached a sermon to newspaper men on the deceitfulness of riches. The warning that is really needed now is that given by Prof. W. L. Poteat in his address before the North Carolina State Literary and Historical Association last week. We quote:

"I beg to point out the danger that the rural school, instead of serving to enrich and adorn country life, may be the most efficient agent in perpetuating its poverty. Under the operation of the French Education Bill of 1833, revised in 1871, there was a fearful exodus from the

farms and villages to the towns and to Paris. I have little doubt that many of you can duplicate the observation of Prof. Bailey in a county in New York. He asked the forty-five children of a rural school how many of them lived on farms. All hands went up but one. When he asked how many wished to live on the farm, no hand was raised but the one which was down before. Clearly that school had been educating the children away from the farm, killing with bookish and city methods their native sympathy with the country and its pursuits. In this matter indifference or compromise will lead to disaster. We need to insist that the rural school shall apply the fundamental principle of all education, and put the rural child into direct sympathy with his rural environment and into intelligent relation with the life which he is going to lead. The text-book made by the city man for the only child he knows, namely, the city child, will have to be rigidly excluded. The teacher must be less urban and literary in his ideals and methods and more at home amid natural objects."

### THE BOLL WEEVIL EXHIBITORS ARE PLAYING WITH DYNAMITE.

We are not in favor of mob law, but if there is no other way to stop foolish North Carolinians from obtaining and exhibiting Texas boll weevils, to the great peril of our cotton-growing interests, then a resort to Ku-Klux methods might be justifiable. These boll weevils have more lives than a cat has, and they multiply faster than any mathematician in the universe. Once let a few of them get loose in our State and get a hold on our cotton, and we shall have no end of trouble. They have cost Texas millions of dollars within the last five years, and are likely to cost it many more millions within the next five. And Secretary Wilson, we observe, says that they are going to cross the Mississippi River and probably cover the entire Cotton Belt. They move slowly, however, and in the ordinary course of events, it would be a long time before they would reach North Carolina; while if a few more Texans—whether knaves or fools will not effect the result—send a few more live specimens to North Carolinians of the same class as themselves, the boll weevil may start here next year. A Wake County farmer had some of the weevils on exhibition last week and a Scotland County farmer also entertained his neighbors in the same way. Of course, in both instances, the pests were "securely corked in a bottle," but in a State where somebody is killed with an unloaded (?) gun every week or two, this alleged evidence of safety is not assuring.

The Cotton States Association of Commissioners of Agriculture at its recent session in Montgomery very properly condemned this exceedingly silly and dangerous practice in the following resolution:

"Resolved, That this Association severely condemns the importation into non-infected areas of live weevils by persons or organizations curious to know what the weevil is like, or anxious to conduct experiments for the purpose of procuring remedies, and that we ask all the cotton States to pass such laws as to make it a criminal offense to bring live weevils into non-infected districts; and that the Legislatures of the cotton States authorize their Boards of Agriculture, or in the absence of such, the Experiment Station authorities, to establish quarantine or other necessary regulations that will prevent the spread of the weevil. We also urge all non-infected States to strenuously guard against the importation of cotton, cottonseed, hulls, corn, hay and any other farm products from Texas, that are liable to introduce the weevil."

The Legislature of North Carolina is not in session, and the Board of Agriculture seems to have no power to act, but public opinion should be strong enough to protect the State against this folly.

### CURRENT EVENTS: THE DRIFT OF THINGS AS WE SEE IT.

Congress met last week, but it is only getting on its working clothes, getting itself organized. In the Senate an effort to oust Mr. Smoot, the Mormon Senator from Utah, has occupied most of the spare time. This matter is explained at greater length in our General News columns, and we only pause here to record the opinion that Smoot will keep his seat—as he probably ought, under the Constitution. In the House, the new Speaker, Mr. Cannon, is losing sleep trying to hear the claims of everybody who wishes a committee appointment. In this particular North Carolina is most interested in Congressman Small's effort to get on the River and Harbor Committee, where he would be able to do effective work for the proposed inland waterway. The State, in our opinion, has no more efficient or worthy representative than Mr. Small, and we hope that he will win this point of vantage.

Congressman Kitchin has introduced a bill to repeal the Fifteenth Amendment, but of course he doesn't expect anything to come of it. And it strikes us that it is very foolish for our Southern representatives to be agitating the question of negro suffrage. We are doing as we please down here anyhow, and if it consoles the hearts of Northern fire-eaters to know that the Fifteenth is still (nominally) alive, why should we quarrel with them?

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### County School Superintendents.

The meeting of county school superintendents held in Raleigh last week was largely attended, and the discussion of educational methods, exchange of views and experiences, cannot fail to have a helpful effect. In his opening address, State Superintendent Joyner reported that during the past year the high-water mark in length of public school term—16.47 weeks—has been reached; the salary of white teachers has increased \$1.58 (to \$28.36) and of negro teachers 44 cents (to \$22.63); and more than two hundred school libraries have been established. As to illiteracy and school attendance, Prof. Joyner said:

"The United States census of 1900 shows 175,645 white illiterates over ten years old in North Carolina, 19.5 per cent of white illiteracy. I have no doubt that this per cent has been considerably decreased during the past three years. For your encouragement, I should perhaps state that the census reports show the per cent of illiteracy to have been in 1880, 31.5; in 1890, 23.10; so that since 1880, we have reduced it 12 per cent, and since 1890, 3.5 per cent. The per cent of negro illiteracy is even much larger. The percentage of illiteracy is still appalling and suggests, especially in view of the possible disfranchisement of thousands of white voters, a stupendous work to be done in removing this illiteracy before 1908. My report for the past year shows 161,797 white children of school age not enrolled in the public schools. A comparatively small number of these were enrolled in private schools. A large number of them, between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one years, had either completed the course of study in their public schools or were compelled to stop permanently to work. With these exceptions, every one of the others is on the straight road to illiteracy and disfranchisement, and can be saved from both only by the earnest efforts of all friends of public education in improving the public schools and in bringing the children into them. I am glad to be able to report an increase in the enrollment of the rural public schools and an increase of 10,000 children in the average daily attendance of the white rural schools. This is an increase of at least 6 per cent in the average daily attendance of the white schools during the past year. The increase in average daily attendance in the