CAUSES OF FAILURES AND ELIMINATIONS IN RURAL HIGH SCHOOLS

THERE is a growing tendency on the part of modern society to insist upon a widening and enlargement of the educational field. The time has come in the development of high schools when we can no longer turn a deaf ear to these ever increasing demands. We are no longer expected merely to establish and maintain high schools. We are now held responsible for the provision of a type of high school education which will meet the social and vocational as well as the cultural needs of society. We must not only attract to our schools the mass of boys and girls of high school age, but it is positively our responsibility to make the work so practical, worth while, and attractive that these pupils will stay in school and complete the courses of their choice.

There is ample proof that we have not yet reached this desired goal in the rural high schools of Virginia. Approximately four-fifths of all school children in Virginia live in rural districts, and yet the city high schools in Virginia have half the high school enrollment for the State. Of course there are rural children enrolled in the city high schools, but there are not enough of these to make up for this vast difference. In the first place the rural high schools are not attracting enough children to them.

Then our rural high schools are not holding their pupils after they get them to enroll. This is especially true in the case of boys. Last year only 5233 pupils were graduated from a total enrollment of nearly 50,000, and in the rural high schools only 35% of these graduates were boys. When only 10% of our high school pupils stay in school long enough to graduate, and when only 35% of those graduating are boys, it is very evident that we should search carefully for the causes of failure and elimination of pupils in rural high schools and take steps to change this condition as speedily as possible.

It is a fairly well accepted principle that failures either cause elimination, or that failures are usually co-existent with eliminations. This has been pointed out in studies by Vandenburg and others. Of course there is the occasional case of a boy who is forced to stop school to help support a family, but it is rare indeed to find a case of this kind in which the boy is doing good work in school; for, when a boy is vitally interested in his work he usually finds a way to keep at it.

Since failures cause eliminations, we shall probably be nearer the solution of our problem if we can find out what are the causes of failures in the rural high schools of Virginia. After several conferences with some of our rural high school teachers and pupils, I am convinced that the rural high school itself is probably responsible for most of the failures of the rural high school pupils.

In spite of the progress made on account of the movement toward vocational education, characterized by the Smith-Highes Act of 1917, our rural high schools have not yet provided courses of study suited to the capacities and interests of our rural high school pupils. Too often the course of study for rural high schools is merely a modification of the course devised first for the use of city high schools. The fact that we do not hear patrons criticizing the curriculum of our high schools is no proof that they are satisfied with what we are giving them. Methods and school procedure in general have gone through radical changes during the past few years, and many parents who do not care to expose their own ignorance of these changes are withholding their support from the sort of high school education which we are offering them.

Then teachers do not always know the values of the courses which they attempt to teach. We know now that we can no longer
expect any high school pupil to study any subject merely for the sake of the subject. "Latin for Latin's sake" is a slogan not very popular with the mass of high school students. The teacher must furnish motives, suggest uses and explain the practical and vocational as well as the cultural values of the subject which he is teaching, so that his pupils will want to learn the subject. These motives, uses and values must be kept constantly before the pupils. It is especially important that the teachers in our rural high schools provide for the educational guidance of their pupils, for there are very few parents of the rural high school pupils who have enough educational background and appreciation to enable them to take a large part in the educational guidance of their own children.

This condition makes it highly important that we have professionally trained teachers for our rural high schools. It is rather difficult to get such a teacher for $121 per month when she can get $140 per month to teach in the city high school. (These were the average salaries paid in 1922-1923.) Then, too, her task is made easier if she can have the use of a library with 925 volumes as she has in the average city high school, in place of 385 volumes in the average rural high school. If she is a science teacher, she certainly can do better work with $4,250 worth of laboratory equipment in the city high school than she can do with a little over $400 worth in the rural high school.

In summing this situation up, we find that many of our rural high school boys and girls, especially the boys, are failing to enroll in our high schools and take the courses which we are offering them, because the rural high school itself is failing to provide for the capacities, needs and interests of these boys and girls. The condition will probably be changed when we secure teachers with special training for rural high school work,—teachers with professional vision and with an appreciation for rural life; and, when we, with the help of these teachers, make new courses of study which will provide for more seeing, handling, and doing on the part of pupils in all of their learning processes.

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VISITING HOUSEKEEPERS

THE first experimental work in the "visiting housekeeper" movement seems to have been carried on in Cleveland during the winter of 1912-13 in connection with the regular Y. W. C. A. work. This experiment was to show what might be accomplished by a home visitor trained in domestic science. From the results the value of the work on a larger scale seemed assured and the work was continued.

My investigation indicates that at present the visiting housekeeper works alone and carries from twelve to thirty-five families at one time, depending upon the condition and location of her charges. She visits these families frequently, varying from once a day to twice a week, according to the needs of the family and the number of cases she has. She does not take cases as a rule unless there is someone in the home to instruct. For example, if the mother is ill and there is an older girl who can be instructed, then the family is accepted as a visiting housekeeper's problem.

The following1 illustration gives us an idea of the type of work done by visiting housekeepers:

"There were seven members of this family, father, mother, and five babies under four years of age. They lived in a two-room shanty ten by fourteen, with three small windows which were nailed shut in the fall and taken out for spring cleaning. The father could neither read nor write and his occupation consisted merely of odd jobs. The mother left the grade school at fifteen and knew nothing of the simplest forms of housekeeping. All the children were undernourished and the twins who were past a year old had made no effort to walk.

"The visiting housekeeper's most natural entrance to the family was through the need of a supervised diet for the children. They were taken to the Nurse's clinic and there a special diet was prescribed for them. She then went in to teach the planning and