THE ORGANISATION OF RURAL EDUCATION.

THE two publications of the Board of Education before us, "Suggestions on Rural Education" and "Memorandum giving an outline of the successive legislative and administrative conditions affecting the relation of the Board of Education to Agricultural Education in England and Wales," cast several sidelights on the very curious administrative situation which at present exists with regard to agricultural education in this country. As the memorandum explains, the first move in this direction was taken in 1888–9, when a sum of 5000*l.* was voted in aid of "agricultural and dairy schools," and the administration of this vote was handed over to the Board of Agriculture on its creation in 1890. Almost simultaneously the county councils became charged with provision of technical instruction, and were granted the so-called "whisky money" for its development. The outcome was the creation of a number of schools and colleges of agriculture, some departments of existing universities, others independent institutions maintained by a group or by a single county, supported in the main by county council funds, but also subsidised and inspected by the Board of Agriculture out of its grant of 5000*l.*, which has since grown to 11,550*l.* annually. The institutions thus subsidised by the Board of Agriculture were, however, all of the university or higher technical school type; other agricultural instruction in secondary or primary schools, or by means of evening classes or peripatetic teachers, was provided by the county councils on their own initiative, and not recognised officially by the Board of Agriculture.

The anomaly of thus cutting off part of the educational work of the country from the main stream of education soon attracted attention, and during Sir John Gorst's secretaryship a definite statement was made that the educational work of the Board of Agriculture would be transferred to the Board of Education. However, with Mr. Hanbury's arrival at the Board of Agriculture this idea was dropped, and the Board strengthened its educational staff, while, as may be seen from the report of the Committee on Agricultural Education which reported this year, it appears to desire or to contemplate an extension of its functions. Meantime, however, the Board of Education had been moving in the same direction; it remained the authority dealing with rural education in the primary and secondary schools, and by the appointment of two special inspectors it was evidently taking up the question seriously. This being the case, the manner in which the Board of Education was ignored, both in framing the Committee on Agricultural Education and in calling for evidence, is so remarkable that the recommendations of that committee cannot be regarded as of much weight, so obvious is it that they have given but little consideration to the wider questions involved.

The two documents before us may be taken to indicate that the Board of Education does not regard as settled the question of whether it shall not control the whole of rural education. But the two departments will no doubt be left to settle this in their own departmental way; it may not be amiss, perhaps, to consider the problem a little in the light of the interests of agriculture and education. Clearly the ideal state of affairs is that which prevails in Ireland, where the Board of Agriculture and of Technical Instruction is not divided, but administers the greater part of the money and sets the example to the county councils, instead of following their lead. As a result we have in Ireland, though the work is younger, a coherent system carried out with due regard to economy, which is educating the farmer and not gratifying the short-sighted opinions of local committees. Real work is being done for agriculture, as may be seen from the creation of the early potato industry, the way the flax problem is being attacked, the increased exports of butter, eggs and poultry. In fine, in Ireland there is a thinking head and a continuous policy; in England it is all go as you please, with plenty of good work, but with waste on one side and neglect on the other. The Board of Agriculture cannot exercise any control; even the colleges which it inspects defer but little to its opinion, because they are primarily concerned in satisfying their immediate paymasters, the county councils. As to the general policy of a county in rural education the Board of Agriculture can say nothing, nor is its opinion and advice ever sought in such matters. Probably the Board of Agriculture was right in keeping closely within its appointed function, but whether the result were necessary or not, the fact remains that in practice its opinion on agricultural education generally has never carried much weight, nor have the county councils obtained that help in dealing with rural education which they might have expected. The Board of Education, speaking with a knowledge of what can and cannot be done in teaching, might have saved the country from a good many experiments which were not only expensive failures in themselves, but which left behind a feeling of soreness and distaste for any further meddling with the education of the farmer.

It is too late now to dispossess the county councils of the very large measure of initiative and control over rural education which they obtained as a result of the Technical Instruction Act, but the situation was really vitally changed by the Education Act of 1902, which imposed on every council *the duty of considering all the educational needs of its own area.* Supposing any county is failing to carry out this duty (and there are several which make no provision whatever for agricultural education), it is the Board of Education which will have to apply pressure, for the Board of Agriculture has no title to interfere. Thus the Board of Agriculture is really in an *impasse* as regards that part of agricultural education which it has reserved for itself, the higher technical form; it can aid an established college, but it cannot exercise the least influence on the many counties which neither possess nor share in one of these colleges, nor can it do anything to fill up the blank spaces on the map showing its spheres of influence which it occasionally exhibits when agricultural education is under discussion.

While higher education in agriculture might thus most properly be handed over to the Board of Education, it would never do to allow the Board of Agriculture to lose all contact with the colleges, which should be all acting as intelligence departments, both collecting and diffusing information on its behalf. The Board of Agriculture has another function at present very imperfectly performed—that of being an advisory and investigating agency for the working farmer. Day by day the Board is addressed for information about crops, manures, injurious insects, diseased plants, and so forth; it possesses no scientific staff to deal with such matters; above all, it has no mechanism for investigation; when a new problem comes along some member of the staff either tries to look it up in a text-book or a correspondent is called upon for an opinion.

The way the Board of Agriculture has dealt with some of the diseases which have sprung up of late years would be ludicrous had they not turned out so tragic to some of the farmers concerned, and this has been purely the fault of a system which calls upon the

Board to advise and regulate, but yet gives it no means of obtaining knowledge. By some obscure departmental tradition research is supposed to be outside the scope of the Board of Agriculture—it spends something between 400*l*. and 500*l*. a year in assisting various investigations! But if the Board of Agriculture is to forward the industry of agriculture, its very first business is investigation and research; it must condescend to go to work in the way other countries and our own colonies aid their farmers, and it must have money to do the work with. Now to build up a proper intelligence department, the present grant of 11,000*l*. a year to the Board of Agriculture for educational purposes is none too much; let it be allowed to keep this money and retain its connection with the colleges by using it to promote investigation in them, building up in one a mycological department which would act as consultant for the board, in another an entomological department, and so forth. Meantime let the educational work of the colleges be put under the control of its proper authority, the Board of Education.

THE CHILDHOOD OF MAN.[1]

DR. L. FROBENIUS is a prolific writer on ethnological subjects, and we welcome a translation of a book which gives in popular language the results of his wide reading. The book deals with an extensive range of subjects, upon many of which very diverse views are held, and the English reader will be pleased to be able readily to grasp the point of view of a German ethnologist; but a book, in some cases, has to be judged by what is omitted as well as by what it actually contains.

In dealing with articles of personal adornment the author admits that the objects worn have usually another value than that of pure ornament; he refers to trophies and currency, but entirely omits the very widely spread wearing of "ornaments" for magical purposes. He makes some interesting observations on scarifications of various central African tribes, and alludes to the significance of these and other forms of skin decoration; but, unfortunately, he terms all such tattooing.

The making of shell money he regards as the most peculiar of the reasons for the origin of labour. He quotes R. Parkinson concerning the use and exchange value of the *dewarra*. Under the term of dress-language he refers to strings and belts of wampum, and to the notched and painted eagle feathers of some North American Indians. Also culled from American sources are his accounts of sign and gesture language, but no allusion is made to the gesture language of such peoples as the Australians, Papuans, Neapolitans, and many others. One of the best sections is that dealing with drums and drum language, which he believes has a very wide extension in Africa, and is "convinced that this peculiar drum-language is current throughout Central Africa east of the chain of lakes." He says (p. 86):—"It would appear to be most highly developed in the western parts of equatorial Africa, although scarcely less widespread in Oceania, that is, in the insular lands lying north-west and north-east of New Guinea. In New Pomerania [New Britain] itself the different villages communicate over wide areas by means of the drum-telegraph, which has also a very wide range in the Amazons valley and in Mexico. The North-west Americans, too, possess similar instruments." An interesting modification of the drum, according to him, is the apparatus that is fastened to a bow in Mangbattuland. He makes the interesting suggestion (p. 99) that "the drum is a hybrid sort of instrument, one part of which, the sounding-case, owes its origin to the pounding of corn; the other, the skin, to the measured beat in leather-dressing." The most valuable portion of his account of picture-writing is taken from Hoffman's (not "Hoffmann") contribution to Garrick Mallery's great monograph, to which he does not allude by name.

In the chapter on "skull-worship and head-hunting" he refers to the well-known fact that the preservation of skulls by some people is to ensure the assistance or protection of the spirit of the dead man, which in the next world becomes the servant of whoever captured his skull. Although he does not say so, scalp-collecting had probably a similar significance, as probably had the bunches of human hair which are inserted in some shields from Borneo and Celebes.

In dealing with fetishism he says (p. 184):—

"So long, for instance, as the owners of the ancestral images remember the names and the personalities of the dead represented by them, so long will the object retain the type identical in character, essentially the same. But when the memory dies out while the image remains, it will soon happen that the wooden figures will acquire the general significance of a sacred object without any personal value." "When . . . the negro sees any unusual object, he is at once taken with a certain feeling of anxiety, a certain perplexity, and he is ready to believe in a display of power in this object, which exceeds the usual, the commonplace, to the extent that the thing itself looks strange or weird. To put it clearly, the negro attributes a supernatural power to every fresh appearance, to any new object which in any way departs from the ordinary, the known, the intelligible. For him it is uncanny" (pp. 185–6).

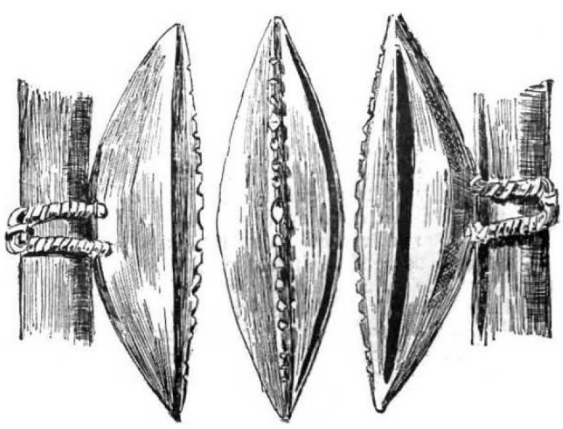

FIG. 1.—The little Signal-drum of the Madi bow. About half natura size. Three views. From "The Childhood of Man."

But the author does not pay sufficient attention to the fact that a fetish is credited with mysterious powers owing to its being the habitation, temporary or permanent, of a spiritual being, or as being the vehicle or means by which the spirit communicates with his worshippers. The chapter on secret societies and masks is of great interest; it deals mainly with West African conditions, but in the next chapter the author describes the *mide* of the Ojibways. The chapter on sacred animals is scarcely adequate, and totemism he regards, like Mr. Andrew Lang—of

[1] "The Childhood of Man: a Popular Account of the Lives, Customs and Thoughts of the Primitive Races." By Leo Frobenius, translated by A. H. Keane. Pp. 504; with 415 illustrations. (London: Seeley and Co., Ltd., 1909.) Price 16*s*. net.