

## THE RUGBY EXPERIMENT

From Learning to Earning

Birth and Growth of a Young People's College. By P. I. Kitchen. Pp. 168. (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1944.) 8s. 6d. net.

THE establishment in due course of young people's colleges having almost become the law of the land, this book could not have appeared at a more opportune moment. In a general way, the story it tells is well known. In a couple of years, the day continuation school clauses of the Act of 1918 became, at any rate in the sense in which their author meant them, a dead letter—except at Rugby. The story with its sequel is here set forth by Mr. Kitchen, who since 1919 has been principal of Rugby College of Technology and Arts, and organizer of further education at Rugby. He describes his book as a simple account of a small-scale experiment for assisting youth in its dangerous crossing over the no-man's land between school and work, and he hopes its realism may prove a refreshing contrast to the chorus of reconstruction programmes now emanating from the idealists.

The Lewis Committee of 1917 reported the occupations of children of 14 plus as amounting to a small proportion of apprenticeships and a large proportion of blind-alley jobs and seasonal work—a fruitful source of juvenile delinquency. The Committee confidently recommended compulsory day continuation schools, and the recommendation was adopted by Mr. Fisher in the following year. (It may be observed that the dismal account given by Mr. Herbert Lewis's Committee in 1917 is just as true in 1944.) Appointed days were fixed in a few places, of which Rugby was one, for the operation of the clauses in the Act which made attendance at continuation schools compulsory. Rugby's appointed day was April 13, 1920, and Rugby proceeded with its preparations.

An enthusiastic staff resolved to give the go-by to the old order of marks, examinations, reports, competitions, rewards and punishments, and to create a new order in which control was to be self-control, and discipline a disreputable word. The guiding principle was free activity, and precious time was not to be wasted on vocational education. To cut a long story short, the scheme received an unexpected shock. It satisfied nobody. With employers murmuring, parents dissatisfied, public opinion uneasy, and young people themselves "overdosed with high lights, play and freedom", the programme of the compulsory day was replanned on the old lines, and freedom was reserved for voluntary evening work, where it thrived. A modern curriculum was eventually devised, of which the underlying principles will no doubt receive careful attention in many other places besides Rugby.

But Rugby's decision to stand alone as the pioneer compulsory day continuation school was likely to incur criticism and animosity, and a hard struggle ensued, especially after the promising London attempt and the Kent scheme both had to be abandoned. The school was, of course, an isolated institution, and was regarded by some as a mere curiosity, but by the more far-seeing as a possible "spring-board for a second forward movement, better timed and more carefully prepared, with a more successful issue". The author adds an account of the birth and growth of the technical and art school; and it is to be noted that the Rugby experiment is entirely favourable to the association of all forms of part-time schooling in one college building, with all

types of pupils learning and growing together. "All gain much by the example of and contact with others, old or young, bright or dull, ambitious or indifferent, engineers or artists, conscripted or voluntary, scholarship or paying pupils."

The story of the Rugby experiment needed to be told, and it is most fortunate that the story has been told so worthily. The total impression left upon the attentive reader is quite clear, and there is not a dull sentence in the book. A good deal of it is a record of a real fight, a struggle for existence, in which the more enlightened employers and parents, and the practical support of the great school near by, helped to secure a victory.

T. RAYMONT.

## EVOLUTION OF A LAND POLICY

The Arkansas Plantation, 1920-1942

By Donald Crichton Alexander. (Patterson Prize Essays, Yale University, Vol. 2.) Pp. 118. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1943.) 6s. 6d. net.

THIS ably written essay deals with far wider issues than its title suggests. It reviews the disastrous condition into which American agriculture in general, and the cotton-growing industry in particular, fell between the two World Wars, and the gradual evolution of measures to remedy this. The United States had become a creditor nation, and she failed to realize that a policy of high industrial tariffs was limiting trade with her neighbours. The tariffs maintained industrial prosperity for a time but aggravated the agricultural depression. Huge stocks of cotton accumulated and growers went bankrupt.

An account is given of the dismal failure of the Harding, Coolidge and Hoover administrations to understand and deal with the problem. Under Roosevelt, effective action was taken and an Agricultural Adjustment Act was passed; but in 1936 the Supreme Court announced that it was unconstitutional. Soil conservation had been a secondary objective in this Act, but under a new Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act passed in 1936 it took first place. According to Mr. Henry Wallace, the Act had five objectives: "Preservation of soil fertility, diminution of soil exploitation, promotion of the economic use of land, the protection of rivers and harbours against the results of soil erosion and the attainment of parity income for agriculture". This Act failed as a means of acreage control, and a second Agricultural Adjustment Act was passed in 1938 in which preservation of soil resources is still a basic objective. Another interesting point is that it contains provisions designed to gain a wider market for the farmer; these include the establishment of four regional laboratories for research and development of new uses for farm products, a scheme that might very profitably be studied in Britain.

The author's easy and lucid style makes the book a pleasure to read, and in view of the difficulties through which British agricultural industry has been passing it will be of interest to many who are concerned with farming.

It is to be hoped that in framing our own agricultural policy due consideration will be given to that most important factor, the maintenance of soil fertility, and that attention will be directed to research on improved and new uses for agricultural products.

W. G. OGG.