

Nature-Study and its Allies.

Nature-study, school gardens, manual training and domestic science are daily growing in importance in the eyes of those who see the value of their possibilities in education. But in the miscellaneous country school, where they are most needed, they are, with the exception of nature-study, most neglected. Manual training and domestic science require a more or less elaborate outfit and space which the town schools can afford but which it is thought the country schools cannot afford. There are ways and means of overcoming difficulties, and some country schools of one teacher have demonstrated their usefulness by showing that they can carry out an excellent course in manual training. Such a school, among other that might be mentioned, is the Roachville school, near Sussex, N. B., the teacher of which is Mr. W. N. Biggar. The work of the pupils as shown at the Teachers' Institute and at exhibitions has won deserved praise. It shows too what can be accomplished by skill and persistence on the part of the teacher.

There is no doubt that domestic science might be taught just as effectively by the country school-teacher who knows the subject. With simple cooking utensils brought from homes the teacher could give an occasional demonstration by allowing the pupils to cook a simple meal, with directions and blackboard illustrations that could be copied and used by their pupils for future work at home. We venture to say that if the teacher presents the subject tactfully the contempt or jealousy of mothers will not be aroused to say, "If I want my children to learn cooking I will teach them myself." Many overworked mothers would be glad of the teacher's help.

But cooking is only a part of domestic science. The teaching of that old-fashioned accomplishment, sewing, should be revived in country schools. Personal cleanliness and clean and wholesome surroundings; health and how to preserve it; how to avoid infection from such diseases as typhoid fever and consumption—these are taught as a part of domestic science as well as cooking and sewing.

But where is the time for all these subjects? asks the teacher. Some of them can be associated with other school branches, such as the reading lesson, history and geography. A definite time must be given of course for manual training, cooking or sew-

ing; but it has been found in the schools where these subjects have become a part of the course that the additional interest aroused makes up for the time taken from book studies—indeed that the latter are pursued with more vigor because of their alternation with manual subjects.

Nature-study is a proper foundation for a study of agriculture. The boys and girls who have been taught to use their eyes, who have an acquaintance with the plants, birds and insects, the hills and valleys, the streams and lakes about their homes, have had an excellent training not only for agriculture but for any vocation in life. Let us not begin to specialize too early in the student's life. Let us see that he has power to do many things fairly well, and among them to think for himself, and to be able to interpret intelligently the thought of the printed page.

School gardens are difficult to manage on account of the long summer vacations. The garden that may be in a flourishing condition at the end of June will probably be a mass of weeds in early September. Even if it is kept clean during the summer the pupils will feel that it is not their work that kept it so, and whether weedy or free from weeds the children will lose their interest. Window gardens may serve the purpose just as well, as they do in the town schools, to illustrate how plants grow from seeds.

Home gardens, that is gardens made and tended by each boy and girl of suitable age in the school, would have a great advantage over school gardens. Children would take more pride in keeping them up to the highest standard because they were their own and under the eyes of parents, teachers and friends. They would be interested in observing the work that weeds, birds and insects do, and thus on a small scale be led to grapple successfully with some of the initial difficulties of the work of the farmer. Autumn exhibitions of the products of these home gardens would stir up friendly rivalry and competition among children. The teacher's oversight of the garden would lead to more frequent visits to the homes of the pupils and thus secure that closer intimacy between school and home that is so much needed. In short the home garden seems to have advantages over the school garden, and Supt. MacKay, it is understood, favors its introduction in Nova Scotia.