

* Special Papers. *

* ARBOR DAY EXERCISE.

BY W. H. FLETCHER.

As Arbor Day approaches, teacher and pupils should have occasional talks about what should be done on that day. Inquiries should be made as to what kinds of trees would grow well in the school-yard, and the suitability of each kind discussed. The trees that grow in the surrounding woods will generally be found most suitable and, in the selection of these, care should be exercised to secure those that grow on soil as near as may be the same as that of the school-yard. It is also well to select trees that are growing in open places so that their future isolation may not be so great a change as if they had been taken from a well sheltered spot.

In addition to the common forest trees such as maple, beech, elm, oak, cherry, linden, poplar, cedar, pine, spruce with many others, it will be possible in many or most sections to have the pupils bring some few horse-chestnut, mountain ash, locust or weeping-willow trees, while, in every section, rose and lilac bushes may be had in abundance. The rose, however, is not so desirable as it is generally much blighted in the summer months.

Having arranged as to the kinds of trees to be planted, have the pupils ascertain as far as may be where these can be procured.

The day before the great day, for it should be a great day, state what tools will be needed to carry on the work of the morrow and arrange to have pupils bring such of these as they can get at home.

All roots may be severed about fifteen inches from the trunk, then the soil loosened by a spade until the tree can be lifted out. As few rootlets as possible should be broken off as it is largely on the preservation of these that successful transplanting depends.

A number of the boys should be detained in the yard to prepare places in which to plant the trees and, as the trees are brought in, each should be assigned to its proper place according to previous plans.

The teacher, or other competent person, should then proceed to prune off and trim the tops with a view to getting rid of superfluous branches and increasing their symmetry.

When nearly all the trees have come in, the work of planting may be commenced. But, before each tree is set up, the pupils who have brought it in should be asked to say to whom it is to be dedicated, and, as the tree rises, let three hearty cheers be given for the person honored. This contributes greatly to the enthusiasm and interest taken in the work.

Having completed this part we reach an important stage of the work, viz., that of planting the trees. The following directions, if pretty closely observed, will generally ensure success:—Arrange the roots and rootlets in natural positions, and about them throw in the finest soil, at the same time shaking the tree slightly to bring the soil and rootlets in close contact. If this

soil be very dry it is best to pour on a pail or half-pail of water which will have the desired effect. The remainder of the soil may then be shovelled on, enough being used to cover the highest root with two or three inches of earth. Do not place about the trunk thick, heavy sods, for these will prevent light showers of rain from penetrating to the roots, but see that the ground over the roots is pretty compact. About deciduous trees it will be found a good plan to place evergreen branches. These exclude the heat of the sun, retain moisture and do not turn off the rain.

Unless the season is a very dry one, transplanted trees will not need artificial watering. Should a long season of drought follow the setting out of the trees, and these show signs of succumbing, let them have a thorough watering once a week or every two weeks. This is much to be preferred to treating them to a sprinkle each day; in fact the latter practice is worse than useless.

But this last consideration has taken us past Arbor Day to which we must return and endeavor to answer a question which has doubtless been in the minds of many, viz., What have the girls been doing during this time in which the boys have been working so manfully? True, the girls have been almost wholly excluded from the exercises previously outlined, yet so far from being idle, they have probably been the more industrious laborers. Their duties have been just as carefully planned and provided for as those of the boys, and in accordance with arrangements here, you see several groups of bright faces bending over large evergreen letters which are being arranged to form suitable mottoes for particular parts of the school-room. Another company have in their hands a long line of evergreens prettily ornamented with tissue paper rosettes. This is to form an arch behind the teacher's desk. Several other girls are arranging pictures on the walls, some are suspending from the window-tops beautiful hanging-plants, while on the sills below rest many beautiful plants brought in in the morning. Outside are several circles of little maids, about as many miniature flower gardens. But here are some very happy children. They have wheeled in two pyramids of earth, and have paved these with small, round stones, except a small space on top of each in which a flower pot with its plant has been put. These stones have been white-washed and the hot sun has made them snowy white, and all the way from the gate to the school-door two parallel rows of pretty large stones have been placed and these have also received a white coat and look beautiful.

It would be a pleasure to enter more fully into details regarding the work of the girls and smaller boys, but perhaps enough has been said to indicate how they may be employed. If properly directed, or even with very little direction, they enter into the work with much enthusiasm and, as a result of their efforts, the remainder of the school year is rendered brighter and pleasanter for both teacher and pupils.

As to the utility of the boys' services, let Joseph Addison speak:—"I know of none more delightful in itself and beneficial to

the public than that of planting. There is something truly magnificent in this kind of amusement. It gives a nobler air to several parts of nature, it fills the earth with a variety of beautiful scenes and has something in it like creation. Nothing can be more delightful than to entertain ourselves with prospects of our own making, and to walk under those shades which our own industry has raised."

*COMPOSITION.

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THE power of composing is a double acquisition—it is the union of language and thought, and it is chiefly on account of this two-fold aspect that the subject is a difficult one with which to deal.

To teach language is not to teach knowledge, in the sense in which we usually understand knowledge. Language is the vehicle used in conveying knowledge, but while using the vehicle we are not expressly teaching its proper use. Though a large part of our language education is gained in this way, yet the indirect result is distinct from language teaching, properly so called.

On the other hand language is useless without thoughts to express, and so the attention is divided between the thought and its expression.

One of the fundamental principles of all teaching is that the attention must be concentrated on one thing at a time. Can this principle be applied in language exercises? In many of them it can. In the writing of essays, and compositions I think it cannot.

When pupils have finished the public school course they should be able to express themselves with correctness and taste. They should have at their command a tolerably large vocabulary, with clear ideas of the exact meanings of the terms they use. They should have a knowledge of the various sentence forms, and how to change sentences from one form to another by way of giving variety of expression. To this we may add, that they should be able to discern the *good* in composition from the inferior, that they may imitate the best forms of expression and avoid those that are not so good.

The question then is: How can these ends be best attained?

First in regard to words. The pupils are adding to their vocabulary day by day from the conversation of those around them; and from the explanation of unfamiliar words that occur in the reading lessons, and from knowledge lessons generally. It is well to keep a list of new terms explained and as an exercise in language, let sentences be formed containing these words correctly used. This will help to impress on the pupils' minds the exact meaning conveyed by the new terms. Another method of enlarging their store of words is by the teaching of synonyms. There are in English more words that are nearly synonymous than in any other language, because we have two sets of derivatives, one from Latin, the other from Anglo-Saxon, which are nearly parallel in meaning. In teaching these synonyms, we should show, not only that they have the

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