

was sent to Europe, by the State of Ohio, to observe the European systems of instruction :

"Before the child is even permitted to learn his letters, he is under conversational instruction, frequently for six months or a year, and then a single week is sufficient to introduce him into intelligent and accurate plain reading.

The teacher brings the children around him, and engages them in familiar conversation with himself. He generally addresses them altogether, and they all reply simultaneously; but whenever necessary, he addresses an individual, and requires the individual to answer alone. He first directs their attention to the different objects in the schoolroom, their position, form, color, size, materials of which they are made, etc., and requires precise and accurate descriptions. He then requires them to notice the various objects that meet their eye in the way to their respective houses; and a description of these objects, and the circumstances under which they saw them, will form the subject of the next morning's lesson. Then the house in which they live, the shop in which their father works, the garden in which they walk, etc., will be the subject of the successive lessons; and in this way, for six months or a year, the children are taught to study *things*, to use their own powers of observation, and speak with readiness and accuracy, before books are put into their hands at all. A few specimens will make the nature and utility of this mode of teaching perfectly obvious.

In a school in Berlin, a boy has assigned him for a lesson, a description of the remarkable objects in certain directions from the school-house, which is situated in Little Cathedral street. He proceeds as follows: "When I come out of the school-house into Little Cathedral street and turn to the right, I soon pass on my left hand the Maria place, the Gymnasium, and the Anklam gate.—When I come out of Little Cathedral street, I see on my left hand the White Parade Place, and within that, at a little distance, the beautiful statue of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia. It is made of white marble, and stands on a pedestal of variegated marble, and is fenced in with an iron railing. From here, I have on my right a small space, which is a continuation of the Parade Place; and at the end of this, near the wall, I see St. Peter's Church, or the Wall street Church, as it is sometimes called. This church has a green yard before it, planted with trees, which is called the Wall Church-yard. St. Peter's Church is the oldest church in the city; it has a little round tower, which looks green, because it is mostly covered with copper, which is made green by exposure to the weather. When I go out of the school-house to the lower part of Little Cathedral street, by the Coal Market, through Shoe street and Carriage street, I come to the Castle," etc.

Professor Bache says: "exercises of speech and thought, the first subject on the above list, constitute the breathing in as it were of the child, and being at the very threshold of instruction, try the teacher's skill more than many a learned branch. He must teach the pupil to think, taking care that his thoughts are expressed in appropriate words. Pestalozzi, who first practiced upon this idea, drew the child's attention to the human frame, as the subject of contemplation; others have preferred to bring him in contact with nature in general, by making simple natural phenomena the basis of the inductive lessons; others not surrounded by nature, make man and his dwelling their theme; others introduce simple lessons on objects of nature and art, which can readily be presented to the child for his examination, and on which, as a basis he rears the superstructure of natural history, physics and technology in his advanced course. All these are good in their way, but such as I saw tried seemed to depend for their efficacy upon the circumstances of the school, and to be better or worse as the child found means to apply his newly acquired powers of perception to observe for himself. Of all the plans, when the school is rightly situated for it, a reference to nature produces the best training of the heart as well as the mind of the child."

Mr. Sears, successor to Mr. Mann a Secretary of the Board of Education of the State of Massachusetts, now President of Brown University, so long ago as 1851, insisted that more precision should be given to the knowledge of children in regard to forms, colors, proportions, measures, distances," etc. After the earliest lessons in objects, he says "that language (oral, of course), in connection with things, will begin to receive particular attention. Not only the name of things, and of their properties, relations and uses, but the proper conversational forms of expression, the easy and natural use of language as an instrument of thought, in describing what has been observed or conceived of, become more and more an object of attention."

The main obstacles to the introduction of these *object lessons* will be found in the fancied want of time, and in the real want of competency in teachers. It is a common fault for teachers to condemn

themselves to a set routine of recitations so numerous and long as absolutely to preclude all chance for teaching. Strange as it may sound, it is nevertheless true that multitudes of teachers have so many lessons to hear that they get no time to teach, and thus fail to do the very thing they are employed to do. Any proposition to introduce a new exercise they will at once dissent from, since it would break in upon the lessons which they feel themselves compelled to hear.

But should they be convinced of the folly of allowing recitations to banish entirely the higher business of teaching, many, it is feared, would be found lacking both in the knowledge and experience necessary to conduct these exercises successfully. The art of *Pedagogy* as taught in the celebrated normal or training schools of Germany, consists mainly in the ability to bring the principles of science down to the explanation of common things and lead the mind from common things up to the comprehension of abstract science. Let any one, for instance, attempt to tell a class of little children all he knows about the human eye or ear or hand—about a leaf or an ear of corn, and see how quick he will expend his stock of information, and how soon his little auditors will silence him with their eager questions for information he cannot give. Says, Hon. A. J. Rickoff, Supt. of Public Schools in Cincinnati, from whose Report we call the preceding extracts:

To give instruction in common things in such a way as to interest and improve those who most need it—those children who have the least home culture—requires no little study and skill upon the part of the teacher. Perhaps no branch now pursued in the schools will require so much. Industry of research, taste and judgment in the selection of materials, and tact in imparting the instruction, can here have the fullest exercise. No one, however experienced or learned he may be is qualified to take up for the first time any subject, though the most common place, and give a lesson upon it to a class of children, without special study. It should only descend to such particulars as, by their simplicity, may be easily apprehended by the child's mind, and yet the essential elements should all be embraced. The process must be a regular one; that is, it must not pass at random from one part to another, but follow the order pointed out by the natural connection of things. It must be clear and precise, yet not prolix; it must be simple, playful and conversational, but it must have its definite philosophic end in view; it must aim not only to inform the mind and develop its faculties, but to train children in the correct and ready use of language.

We translate from the Lower Canada Journal of Public Instruction (French) the following specimen of an *object lesson*.

The design of these lessons is to cultivate the powers of observation and expression. The thing chosen as the subject of the lesson should be held before the class. Care must be taken to begin with questions that every pupil can easily answer. The attention of all is thus engaged and the little pupils, delighted that they are able to answer some of the questions, will strive hard to answer all. It is best also that each answer shall be a perfect sentence. For example if the question be What are houses made of? The answer should be, "Houses are made of wood, or brick, or stone," not merely "of wood, or brick, or stone." This rule is violated in the following lesson:

#### A FEATHER.

What is this that I have here?—A feather.

Whence did it come?—From a bird.

Can you tell how a bird would feel without its feathers?—It would be very cold.

What do we put on us to keep ourselves warm?—Coats, blouses and vests.

What do you call all these?—They are clothes, and feathers are the birds' clothes.—I gave you a lesson the other day upon the clothing of another animal; What was it?—Wool.—From what animal did it come? A sheep.—Wool is the clothing of the sheep and feathers are the clothing of the birds. Now look at this feather. (The teacher tosses it into the air.)

What do you see?—It flies.

If I toss this penny into the air will it fly the same way?—No it will tumble to the ground.

Why does the feather fly and the penny fall down?—Because the feather is light and the penny is heavy.

I wish one of the largest of you to tell me why a light clothing like feathers answers best for birds?—Not to hinder their flying in the air.

Yes; if they had heavy clothing they would soon fall down. You see then that the good God, our heavenly Father, takes care also of the little birds. He has said in the Bible that a little bird shall not fall to the ground without his notice. If he sees all the little birds; if he takes care of each of them; tell me, if you think