

Jack built," after the manner of the old story-tellers; not a picture of the house, nor a plan of it, nor yet a long description; but, "This is the house that Jack built." Here it is; look at it; observe it; go all over it from garret to cellar. "This is the malt that lay in the house that Jack built." Here, again, the "This is"; and we acquire this idea by precisely the same method as was used before;—by examining, studying the thing itself.

So we go on, step by step; individually and severally the rat, the cat, the dog come under our observation, till we reach the ultimate object of our study in this direction, and triumphantly announce, "This is the cow with a crumpled horn that tossed the dog that worried the cat that caught the rat that ate the malt that lay in the house that Jack built." And to any doubter who questions the important bearing of this knowledge on some science of the olden time I would reply, in the words of the oracular Jack Bunsby, "Whereby, why not? If so, what odds? Can any man say otherwise? No. Avast, then!"

Up to this point we have been placing ourselves in the attitude of the scholar; have followed his train of thought, and observed the working of his mind. Let us now station ourselves by the side of the teacher, and view the thing from his standpoint. The scholar has simply to concentrate his energies on the objects that are presented to his mind, one by one, and by so doing he has at last, as we have seen, distinct and connected ideas, not only of the individual objects, but also of their connection with, and relation to, each other; but the teacher's work is far more comprehensive. He has to know the things themselves, in their relation and order of dependence, and also to arrange the work so that they shall be brought before his pupils in their

natural order. He has, perchance, to tramp through meadow and marsh, through brake and brier for his delinquent bovine; and to brave all sorts of dangers before he has his procession of the cow, the dog, the cat, the rat, the malt, and the house (with Jack in the background), marshalled ready to present to his class. For let me tell you, this obtaining and preparing of illustrations is no small item in the teacher's work.

Suppose the teacher, omitting all the careful preparation, comes down on his defenceless pupils like a thunderbolt with, "This is the cow with a crumpled horn that tossed the dog that worried the cat that caught the rat that ate the malt that lay in the house that Jack built." And teachers often do expect pupils to learn statements fully as complex as this, with the additional difficulty, that the terms used and the thoughts expressed are more abstract and puzzling to the pupil than those in the illustration I have taken. What wonder, then, that the unfortunate scholars are simply paralyzed by the avalanche of words, for to them they will be, can be, nothing but words! What wonder that, not knowing where to begin nor what to do, they oftentimes do nothing at all. They may have a confused idea that the lesson has something to do with a cow, and a rat and a dog, and malt (and the chances are two to one that they will not have the faintest glimmering of light on the malt matter); but, as to their carrying away any definite ideas, that is utterly out of the question.

There is a mistaken idea prevalent among those who have not studied the matter, as to the meaning of the word *topics*. They say, "They may do very well for some grades of schools, but in the primary schools you cannot use them." Why not? *Topics are simply distinct subjects of thought.* Surely the teacher may give