

HYGIENE—AGRICULTURE—PHYSICS—COSMOGRAPHY

The lessons in hygiene, agriculture, physics, and cosmography present the same characteristics, and are subject to the same rules as those in Familiar Science.

First elements, rudimentary notions of a practical character, these are the matter of the lesson.

The form is that of the object lesson.

The tendency and development of the lessons should be in keeping with the needs of the pupils.

These observations suffice. It is unnecessary to repeat what has already been said.

A simple remark, however, about the lessons in agriculture. Instruction in this subject should not be too bookish.

On the one hand, it should be based on certain scientific principles, relating, for instance, to mechanical improvements of the soil, to plowing, to manures, etc. These principles should be taught in class by means of easy experiments.

On the other hand, and this is the more important point, it should consist in exercises of observation, in fields and gardens—in visits to places where culture of different kinds may be seen: how grafting is done, trees trimmed, vegetables and flowers cultivated, bees kept, etc. And, in connection with those exercises, the teacher should endeavor to inspire his pupils with a love of the soil, he should discredit defective methods of culture, those not founded on reason and knowledge. If it be impracticable to make collective visits of inspection, let a certain number of pupils be asked to make them individually, let them be told what to examine, and let them be required to relate to the class what they have seen. They will be gratified to find that they are useful, and their observations will be listened to with curiosity. These observations will serve as a text for the teacher's remarks. The visits and remarks need not interfere in any manner with the regular and well-defined course in agriculture. In any case lessons in this branch should be so distributed as to coincide with the different things which have to be done or attended to in cultivating the soil.

What is important in rural schools is to keep the childrens' minds fixed on agricultural subjects. Teachers should learn to utilize for this purpose, object lessons, reading, dictations, arithmetical problems, etc. These exercises make an impression on the mind of the child, they monopolize, to a great extent, all his intellectual efforts during the years of his school life. If they often treat of agricultural subjects they will, without overloading the programme of studies, teach him many useful lessons, while making on his mind an indelible impression. And thus, without loss of time, the agricultural atmosphere, so much desired for country schools, will be created.

The course of agriculture will also furnish many opportunities of explaining to the pupils how to keep accounts written up to date, in connection with the different exploitations: an account for forage, an account for cattle, an account for the poultry yard, an account for the vegetable garden, etc. These special applications may be classified with the elements of agricultural bookkeeping already studied.