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Our School Department.

Evergreen Trees.

By DR. D. W. HAMILTON, IN "NATURE-STUDY LESSONS."

Aim.—To interest the pupils in the beauties and uses of evergreen trees.

Materials.—Specimens of twigs and cones from pine, spruce, hemlock, fir, cedar or other evergreens of the district; also pictures or drawings of evergreen trees. Observations and experiences of the children.

Method.—1. What trees do you know? Can you see any trees from the school-room windows? Are they green in color? What color was common to all trees in summer? What do we call those that remain green all the year? Do you know the names of any evergreens? Let us become acquainted with some of our evergreens.

2. Look at real trees or pictures of them. What general shape is the tree? Is it taller than wide? Can you see the trunk? About how far up does the trunk run before the branches begin? In what direction do the branches run? How do the main branches compare in size with the trunk of the tree? Are they crooked or straight? Does the main trunk run the whole length of the tree? Compare the shapes of the evergreen trees with the shapes of those that have lost their leaves? Which are most likely to split open, and be ruined by heavy loads of any kind? Which kind carries the heaviest load? What do they carry? In the case of evergreens, on what part of each branch does the snow fall? Notice how the branches are arranged in circles like umbrellas, around the trunk. What is the purpose of this arrangement? Look at the tops of evergreens. Why are they green? Why are maple or elm trees not called evergreens? Look at the leaves of each kind of evergreen. How are the leaves arranged? What shape are they? How long are they? Are they sharp-pointed? What is the name of each? Examine the cones of evergreens and look for the seeds under the scales. Compare young cones with old ones. Why can't the seeds fall out when the cone is green?

3. Compare evergreens with other trees as to shape. Which has the more regular shape? Compare evergreens with others as to their leaves. Which kind of tree is more beautiful in winter?

4. Why are some trees called evergreens? Name some evergreens. How can you tell them apart by their leaves? Why do we use evergreens for Christmas trees?

5. Bring cones to school and leave them in the warm room. Notice the cones open, and the seeds fall out. Notice that the seeds are winged. Set up a small evergreen tree in the schoolroom and begin to decorate it for the Christmas closing. Collect twigs of different evergreens and try to tell them apart.

6. Make a drawing of the Christmas tree, and another showing it covered with presents. Read from Hiawatha about the use of evergreen trees by the Indians. Count the number of leaves on a twig, two inches long. Count the number of scales in a cone.

Why are certain kinds of trees called "evergreens?" Because they do not drop their leaves in autumn as the maple, birch or elm does, but are covered with green leaves all the time. They look green because their leaves are green. The evergreen trees, like the pines, spruces, fir, hemlock and cedar, always appear so well covered with leaves that we do not think of their dropping leaves at all. We all remember lying beneath some large evergreen on a carpet of needles—the leaves. All the leaves do not drop at one time, but the old leaves gradually become lifeless and fall at any season. Try to catch old needles in winter. Evergreen trees are much more regular in shape than other trees. The trunk or main stem runs to the very top of the tree, and the branches form circles around the trunk. Each branch runs out nearly straight, and the lower and older ones are bigger and longer than the upper ones. A new circle of branches is formed at the top of the tree every year. These circles of branches look like umbrellas spread

open one above the other, and the smallest one on top. Because the branches are arranged like umbrellas, and because they are covered with so many leaves, they hold the snow better than the branches of other trees. An evergreen loaded down with snow after a big snowstorm is a very pretty sight. The fruits of evergreens are called cones. A cone has many little overlapping stiff scales, and under each scale one or more winged seeds. When the cones are young, and until the seeds ripen, the scales are stuck together with balsam. When ripe, or when brought into a warm room, the scales open and let the seeds fall out. The leaves on evergreens are all needle-shaped and stiff. Sometimes they are in bunches, as in the pines. In the spruce they are all around the stem. In the fir and hemlock they seem to be on two sides chiefly. In the cedar the leaves are very flat and lie close to the stem. Our country would look bare and lonely without the beautiful evergreens.

"If Mother Nature patches the leaves of trees and vines, I'm sure she does her darning with the needles of the pines; They are so long and slender, and somewhere in full view She has her threads of cobweb and a thimble made of dew."

"I remember, I remember
The fir trees dark and high;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky."—Hood.

"Thus yields the cedar to the axe's edge
Whose arms gave shelter to the princely eagle."

The Christmas Number in the School.

Hundreds of teachers and thousands of pupils have already seen the 1920 Christmas Number of The Farmer's Advocate and Home Magazine. It was mailed last week, and by this time it has been read in schools, homes, libraries, and under many different circumstances. The Christmas Number has much in it for the school. First of all, there are the illustrations, which cannot fail to inspire within the pupils an appreciation of nature and a desire to learn more about the things illustrated. The teacher can turn these to good advantage by getting the children to discuss them, or to write short essays based on these pictures. The geography lessons taught in the school can be enlivened and made more interesting by referring to such articles as "The Spirit and Extent of Agriculture in Western Canada," "Dairying the World Over," "The Great Clay Belt To-day," "Straightening Kinks with Co-operation," and others of the numerous articles which give specific facts about various countries, or describe portions of those countries. Geography, when it embraces only boundaries, names of rivers, mountains, etc., is a dry subject indeed. Information about various countries, such as can be gleaned from the articles in the Christmas Number, will help to embellish the lessons and make them more interesting and educative.

The article, "Planting for Winter Effects" contains good information which might be used in adorning the school grounds. "The River of the Wintering" is historical in effect and has a local setting. "Lessons from Nature" contains many interesting facts that can be usefully employed when teaching nature study, and when one happens on one of Burns' choice selections in literature it would be interesting to read the article entitled "Robert Burns—Poet and Farmer," by Sandy Fraser.

There are other articles which we have not mentioned, and yet they have a direct bearing on what is being constantly taught in the school.

"From Wool to Woollens" describes the channels through which wool passes in order to become cloth. "The Cinematograph of Nature" is an appreciation of the natural beauty all around us, while "Then and Now—Lest We Forget" describes the progress in agriculture during the last half century.