Suggestions On Rural Education

Dymond Thomas Southall

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Author: Dymond Thomas Southall

BOARD OF EDUCATION.

SUGGESTIONS ON RURAL EDUCATION

BY

T. S. DYMOND,

ONE OF H.M. INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS AND
ADVISER TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
IN RURAL EDUCATION.

TOGETHER WITH SOME

SPECIMEN COURSES

OF

NATURE STUDY, GARDENING, AND RURAL ECONOMY,

FOR

SCHOOLS AND CLASSES OF VARIOUS GRADES AND TYPES.

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PREFACE.

With the object of assisting in some degree in the adaptation of rural education to the conditions of rural life, specimen courses of special object lessons and of gardening were published by the Board of Education in 1901 and 1902. These pamphlets have been long out of print, and in revising their subject matter with a view to re-issue, it was thought desirable to extend the scope of the publications to all branches of rural education. Mr. Dymond was therefore asked to attempt in the present pamphlet to set out the educational needs of those who are to follow rural pursuits, to suggest the character of the instruction that would supply the educational equipment required to meet those needs, and to indicate the means by which in course of time such instruction could more generally and more adequately be supplied.

In reading the following pages it should be remembered that rural education has made great progress during the past few years. In the case of elementary schools, not only does the ordinary work of the schools show marked improvement, but practical subjects, such as gardening, woodwork, and domestic economy are now more widely taught, and a proper conception of the aims and methods of nature-study is fast gaining ground. While the Board hope that the issue of this memorandum may lead to still further progress, they deprecate any attempt unduly to hasten the introduction of rural subjects. This memorandum is merely intended to be suggestive, and the Board recognise that in only a small number of rural elementary schools could the suggestions it contains be carried out in their fulness for some time to come. In the case of manual subjects proper supervision of the pupils and proper equipment for the subject must first be provided for. Moreover teachers should not be encouraged to teach special subjects for which they do not feel themselves qualified and have no inclination; it is those subjects in which a teacher is himself most deeply interested that he can usually develope to the best advantage.

While inviting serious attention to Mr. Dymond's memorandum, the Board must not be thought necessarily to endorse every suggestion it contains.

January 11th, 1908. ROBERT L. MORANT.

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SCHEDULES.

Suggestions on Rural Education, with Specimen Courses of Nature Study, Gardening, and Rural Economy.

I.—RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.

Rural prosperity primarily depends on the prosperity of rural industry, and this, though principally determined by economic conditions, must also depend upon the intelligence, adaptability, knowledge, and skill of those engaged in it. The prosperity also of rural workers depends on the profitable use made of cottage gardens, allotments and small holdings by the men, and the domestic skill of the women. It must also be remembered that, in the country, people must depend for recreation on their own mental and physical resources, so that general culture has an important part to play in making country life attractive; and lastly, that the natural increase in the population usually necessitates a steady migration of young men and women from the country to the town, and education must be of such a kind as not to place these at a disadvantage. Such, then, are the considerations that should be kept in view in discussing rural elementary education.

Intelligence.—In rural industry there is very little work that is merely mechanical; on the contrary, of all pursuits there is none that requires more intelligence, and the development of intelligence should, therefore, be the foremost object of rural education. Possibly as the result of the old examination system, there is too often a tendency to regard education as the mere accumulation of knowledge. When this is the case teachers are tempted to give children too much help and to deny them the opportunity of self-help, of doing and puzzling out things for themselves. But the memorizing of lessons given by a teacher does not develop intelligence, indeed memory may be cultivated at its expense. Intelligence can only be developed by its exercise, and, therefore, teachers, assuming intelligence in the children, should lead them to depend more and more on their own resources and to act and think for themselves. It must be remembered that not only has intelligence to be developed, but the habit of applying intelligence to work and the things of everyday life has also to be cultivated. Allusion will afterwards be made to the means by which arithmetic, geography, and nature-study, among other subjects of the curriculum, can be utilized from both points of view in rural schools.

Rural Bias.—The second point that needs making is that while it is not desirable to give didactic instruction in agriculture