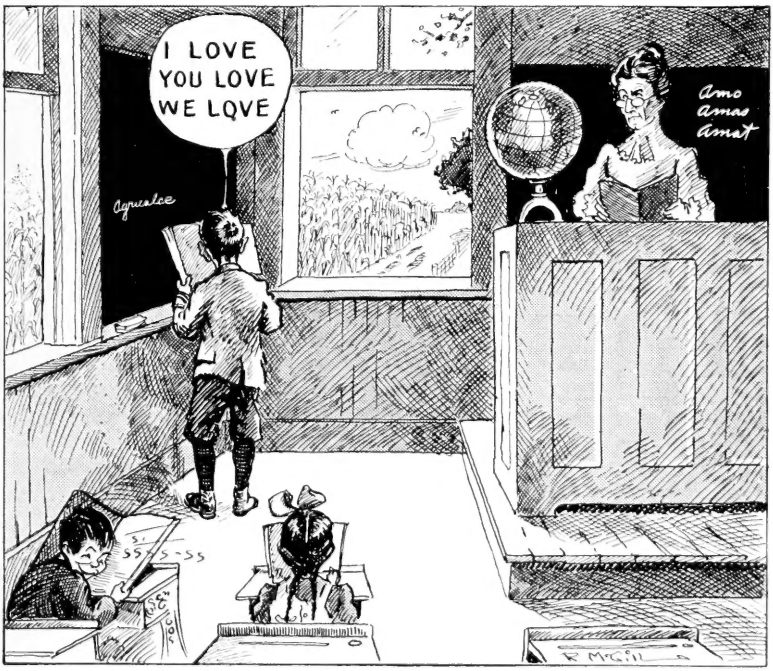
HOW TO VITALIZE THE TEACHING OF AGRICULTURE IN THE RURAL SCHOOLS

ROTATE THE SUBJECTS



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P. G. HOLDEN, Director
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REMEMBER, that in the rural schools, the younger children know what is taught to the 7th and 8th graders —in fact they actually help their older brothers and sisters do the agricultural work at home and in the school. Then why not give them something new each year?

HOW TO VITALIZE THE TEACHING OF AGRICULTURE IN THE RURAL SCHOOLS

Rotate the Subjects

THE teaching of agriculture will not be a real success so long as we teach exactly the same things over and over and over again year after year. Neither will it be a success, if in our attempt to popularize the subject, we skim all the interesting things the first year or two, leaving nothing crisp, and fresh, and new for the teachers who follow.

Let us Rotate the subjects, thus having something new and live each year. The following indicates how it can be done—in fact, how it is actually being done in some of the states:

1st Year. TEACH GROWING THINGS — **Farm Crops; How Seeds Grow; Depth To Plant; Corn; Oats; Alfalfa; Weeds; Gardens; also Removing Stains; Sewing.**

2nd Year. MAKING THINGS — **Rope Knots; Splicing Rope; Fly Traps and Screens; Cement Tanks, Steps, and Posts; Farm Tools and Machines; Canning; Home Conveniences.**

3rd Year. LIVE THINGS. — **Animals; Poultry; Birds; Insects; Cooking.**

4th Year SOIL AND HOME — **Soil Fertility; Cultivation; Moisture; Sanitation; Beautifying the Home; Social and Community Work.**

When the four years' work is finished, start in again with the first year's work. By this time the older pupils have graduated and the work will be new again to both teacher and pupils.

Rotation of subjects gives the pupils more agriculture, keeps the work live and real and vital, and makes it easier for the county superintendent, who usually has little or no help in rural supervision. He can train his teachers for one line of work, while it is very difficult to train them for all lines of work.

JUST HOW SHALL WE PUT AGRICULTURE INTO OUR RURAL SCHOOLS IN A SIMPLE, PRACTICAL WAY?

HOW is the State Superintendent going about it to put Agriculture into the rural schools? Shall he attempt to put it into all the schools of the State at once? No; it can not be done this way.

Let him select ten or fifteen of his livest county superintendents, bring them together for three or four days, and train them how to teach a few definite things. Then he should actually help these county superintendents start the work, stay with them, and see them through with it.

How is the County Superintendent going about it? Shall he try to put Agriculture into all of his schools, a hundred or a hundred and fifty of them at once? No; it can not be done this way; it never has been, and it never will be done this way.

Let him follow the same plan as the State Superintendent. Let him select ten or fifteen of his livest, best teachers, bring them together for a week at the County Institute, and train them in teaching the few definite things which they are to take up next year. Then help these teachers start the work in their schools, stay with them throughout the year, and see them through with it.

Next year the State Superintendent can add a few more counties, and the County Superintendent can add a few more schools. By starting this way, it will not be many years until Agriculture will be taught in every rural school—and taught in the right way.

Oklahoma is now following this plan, and Missouri will start next year.

I H C
MOTTOES

FOR

SCHOOL ROOM, HOME

OR

BUSINESS OFFICE

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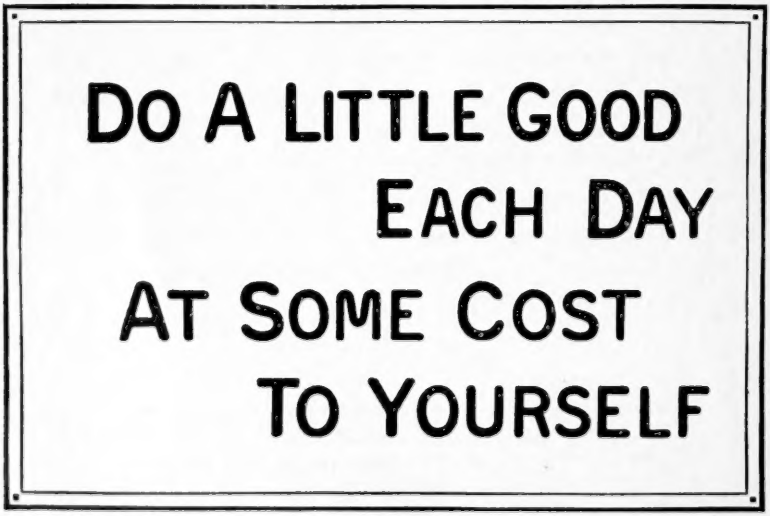

I WILL LOVE TO DO MY WORK

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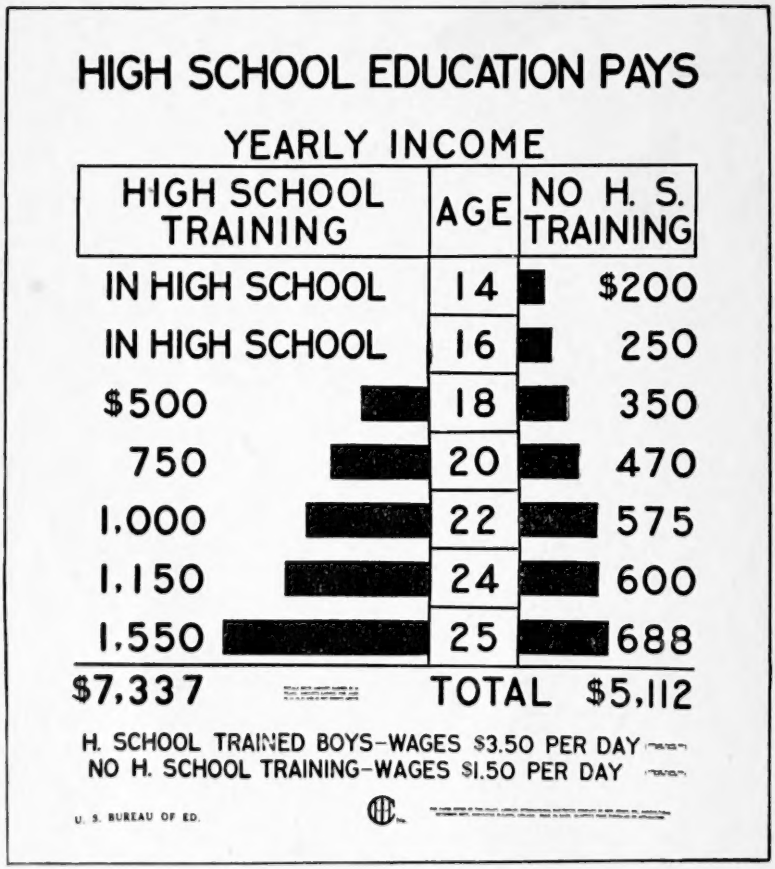
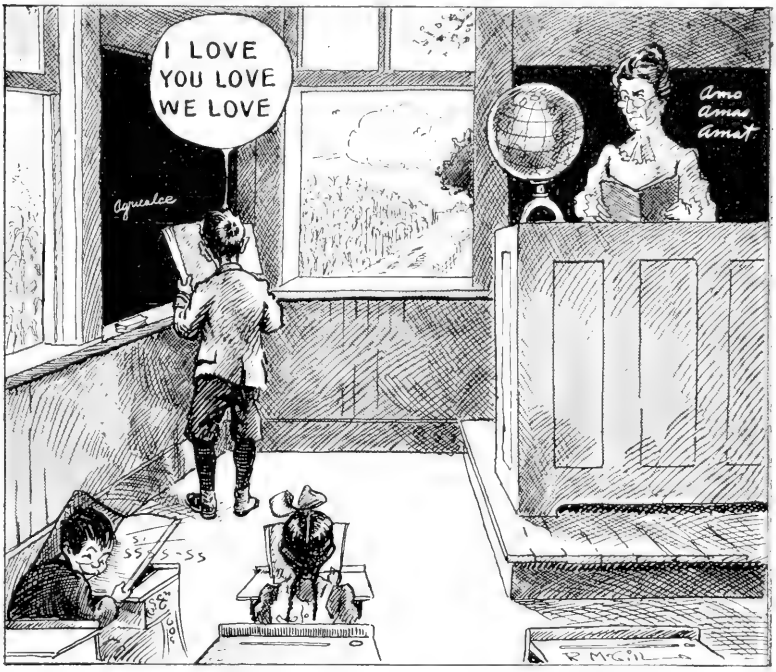


HOW TO TEACH AGRICULTURE IN THE RURAL SCHOOLS

THERE is no longer any question as to whether or not agriculture shall be taught in the rural schools. Sentiment demands it; in many states the law requires it.

The word "agriculture" as used in this article refers not only to the subjects directly pertaining to farming, but also to anything pertaining to the life and welfare of the children and the people of the community—health, sanitation, home conveniences, social conditions, and community interests. In fact it includes



Developing an Interest in Grammar

anything which enables us to teach *in terms of the lives of the people and the needs of the community.*

School work along these lines is new. We are just now establishing methods and precedents. What we do within the next ten years will largely determine the future of the work. Let us start right, for methods are hard to change after they are once established.

In a few years some of the things we are now doing in school will seem strange to us.

Why should children at their period of greatest activity be

You Think This Is a Joke? No! This Is No Joke—This Is a Tragedy

compelled to sit quietly in their seats six hours a day?

At this age they are veritable dynamos of nerves, muscles, and energy. Can they whisper? No! Look out of the window? No! Use their hands and feet? No! They must sit still and keep "mum" except when called upon to recite.

How unnatural! Older people can't and won't stand it. A lecture an hour long taxes the endurance of most of us. If we, who are older, and have reached a period in our lives when we are naturally quiet, find it difficult to sit still one hour, how can we expect children to sit still for six long hours each day.

No wonder we get in school incidents such as cartooned on these pages. *Are these jokes? No! They are tragedies.* And tragedies for which the teacher is not to blame. She simply fell heir to a system. She is living up to her ideal of "keeping order." She is doing what is expected of her. In fact she would lose her job if she didn't do it.

The system must be changed. In fact, we are now rapidly changing it. Already, especially in our manual training and domestic science classes, considerable advancement has been made. Agricultural work, if properly taught, will help greatly to bring about better methods.

BOOKISH WORK AND SKIMMING ARE FUNDAMENTAL ERRORS IN OUR AGRICULTURAL WORK

TWO common errors in our agricultural work so far as now given in our rural schools are:

First—Bookish Work—We assign pages in a book—teach words, words, words, not things.

An eighth grade girl in a school where agriculture had been taught from a book for two years said, "We had examination in agriculture yesterday, and I'm afraid I won't pass. I hate agriculture."

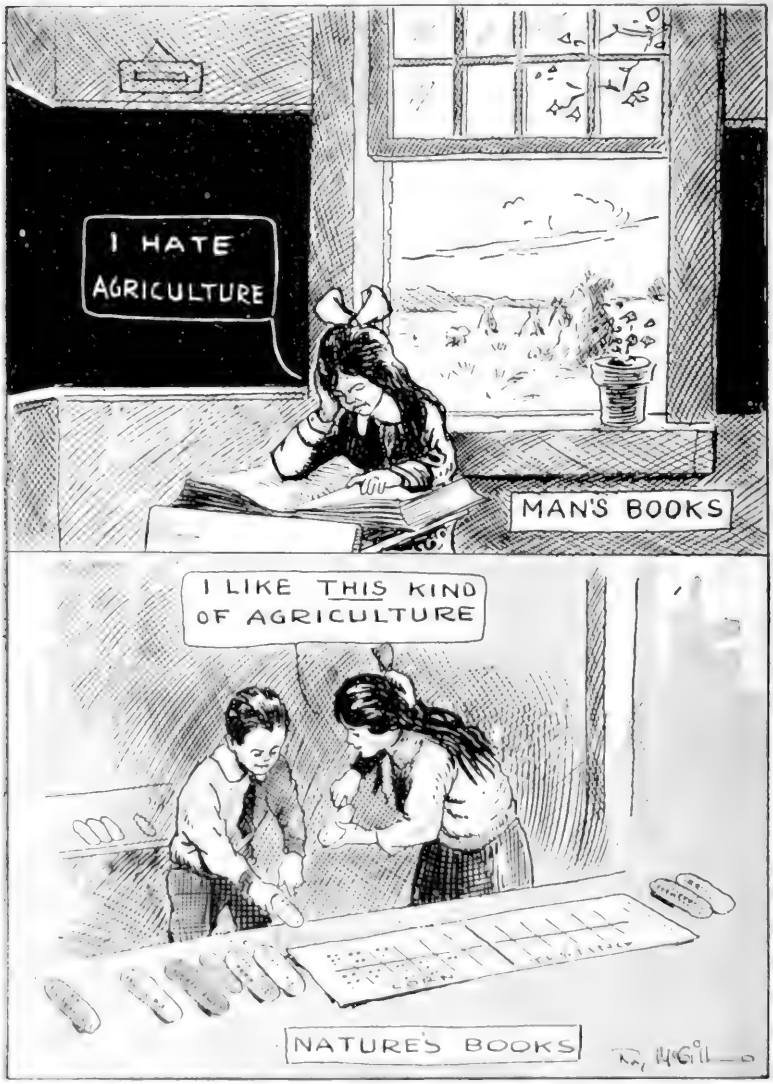
This girl was assisting one of our extension workers in corn testing—the first real agriculture (*i. e.*, study of things) ever put into her school. Remembering that corn testing was agriculture, she quickly added, "Oh, I don't mean this. I like *this* kind of agriculture."

Here is the contrast. One sort of agriculture is bookish, dead, has no appeal to the children, and no effect on the community; the other is full of life, of interest, of influence.

We mean to cast no reflection on books. They are helpful; they are necessary; but they are not the end in themselves.

They must be used as tools, just as an axe is used as a tool—a means to an end.

Then, too, we must remember that, in rural schools, the younger children learn much by listening to the recitations of the older ones. If the same text is used year after year, the children hear recitations on the same lessons, the same chapters, again and again.

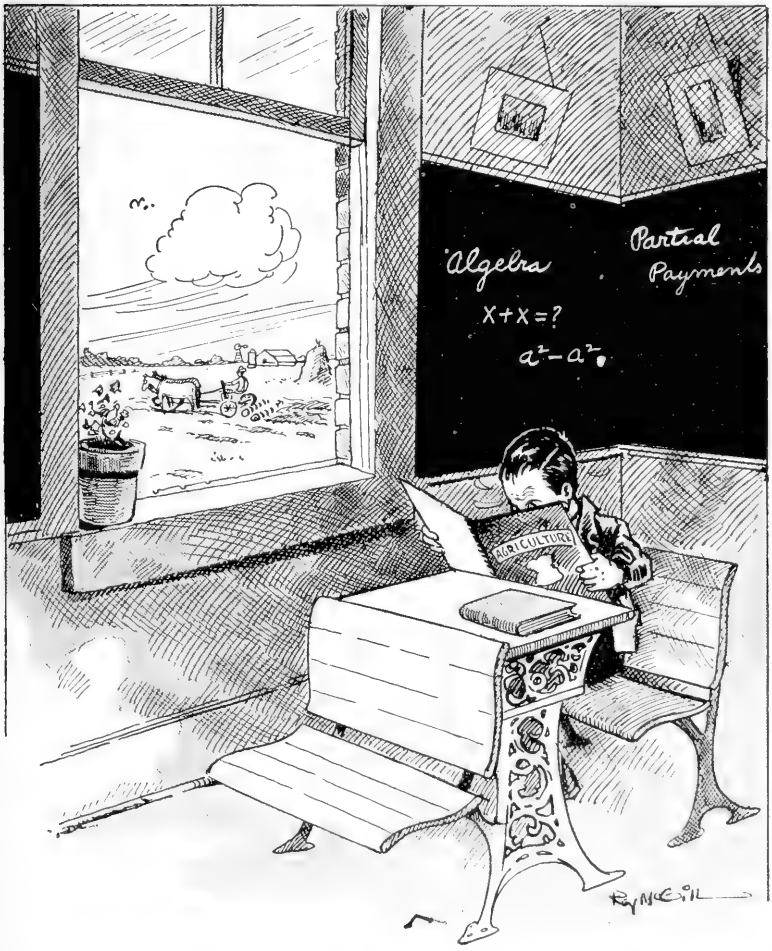


There's a Wrong and a Right Way to Teach Agriculture

The work, even though taught in an interesting way, soon gets stale. It's the same thing over and over again, year after year—a one-crop system that is fatal to interest and enthusiasm.

Second—Skimming—On the other hand, if no book is used and the teacher is left free to select whatever phases of the subject she wishes to teach, what are the results?

The first year all goes well. The teacher selects the interesting things, the important things, the things attractive to the children. The cream is taken from every subject.



Another Tragedy—His Face Buried in a Book When There Is a World of Material All Around Him

The second and third years other teachers try to find things to study, but they can not find as interesting things as the children have already had. If some of the things already partially studied are taken up, the pupils say "Gee, we had that last year."

Such an arrangement affords a chance for freedom and originality and is better than doing bookish work, but it lacks plan and system. There is no consecutive work. We get nowhere. Each year the picking gets poorer and poorer. In a short time all enthusiasm and interest is gone and agriculture becomes a dead subject.

FOUR-YEAR ROTATION PLAN

The *Four-year Rotation Plan* corrects these errors. Have one year devoted to *Crops*, the second to *Making Things*, the third to *Animals*, and the fourth to *Soils*.

Do the same thing with the girls' work. Don't try to teach Sewing, Canning and Cooking all the same year. Have Sewing and Removing Stains one year, Canning and Home Conveniences the second year, Preparation and Cooking of Foods the third year, and Sanitation, Social and Community Work the fourth year.

The outline on the following page will show clearly what we mean by a Four-year Rotation.

The first and second year subjects are indicated a little more fully than the third and fourth year subjects.

A Modern One-Room School—Note the Kitchen on the Left and the Play Ground Apparatus in the Background—Trees and Shrubs Should be Planted to Make It Attractive

SUBJECTS FOR A FOUR-YEAR ROTATION

The subjects are merely listed under the different heads. Remember that they should be modified to fit the various regions

1st Year

CROPS

Corn.—Harvesting Seed Corn — Storing — Testing — Cultivation—Corn Root Worm —Corn Root Louse.

Alfalfa.—Importance of Alfalfa—How to Get a Stand—When to Cut.

Oats.—Treatment for Smut —How to Build a Shock.

Seeds.—How Seeds Grow —Depth to Plant—Knowing Seeds.

Weeds. — Worst Weeds — How to Kill Weeds.

Garden.—How to Make a Garden—What to Plant—How to Cultivate.

***Sewing.**—Making a Sewing Box—Threading a Needle—Making a Knot—Hemming a Towel—Making an Apron, etc.

Removing Stains. — How to Remove Ink, Iodine, Grease, Tar, etc.

2nd Year

MAKING THINGS

Rope. — Tying Knots — Splicing Rope — Making a Halter.

Cement.—How to Mix Cement—Making a Cement Step, Tank, Post.

Farm Tools and Machines.—Importance of Good Tools and Machines—Setting Up a Corn Planter—How to Use Tools—Care of Tools and Machines.

Fly Traps and Screens.—How to Make, Use, etc.

Putting Out a Fire.—Use of Fire Extinguisher.

Home Conveniences.—Casters under Wood Box—Arrangement of Kitchen.

Cold Pack Canning.—Making a Homemade Outfit—Making Jar Holders—Canning Tomatoes.

3rd Year

ANIMALS

Why Keep Live Stock
How to Feed
Testing Milk
Killing Pests
Diseases and Remedies
Protecting Birds
Preparing and Cooking Food
Setting Table

4th Year

SOIL AND HOME

How to Save Moisture
Why Rotate Crops
Making Soil Fertile
Drainage and Irrigation
Testing Soil
How to Keep Well
Getting Trees, Shrubs, and Pictures for School and Home
Getting Folks Together

***Note**—The boys' and girls' work should not be sharply divided. Remember that boys and girls up to twelve or thirteen years of age are interested in the same things.

When this four-year rotation is finished, we can start in again with the first year's work. By this time the older pupils have graduated, and it has been so long since the first-year subjects were studied, that they will be new and fresh to both teachers and pupils.

Select Subjects That Belong to the Region—In selecting the subjects, use material that belongs to the region. During the Crop year, the teachers in the Corn Belt should study Corn, Alfalfa, Oats, Clover, Timothy, etc.

In the South the teachers should study Cotton, Bermuda Grass, Lespedeza, Winter Oats, Sugar Cane, Peanuts, etc.

In a fruit and truck gardening section, small fruits, strawberries, and vegetables should be studied. In selecting the subjects, remember that the important principle is to teach in the terms of the lives of the children.

Fit the Work to the Needs of the Community. If Alfalfa

Studying Corn in a Corn Belt Rural School—Cook Co., Ill.

is selected as a subject for the Crop year, we should not try to teach everything there is to know about Alfalfa. Let us ask ourselves this question, "What one, two, or three things can I do to encourage the growing of alfalfa, and to increase the profits from it in this community?"

Answering this question will help us to distinguish between things which are merely interesting and things which are vital. To know that alfalfa was grown in Rome is interesting; to know how to get a stand of alfalfa is vital. It does no harm for teacher and pupils to know things which are merely interesting, but in our teaching we must put the emphasis on the vital things.

In studying each subject take up a few concrete points, and aim to get definite measurable results.

TAKING A LITTLE FROM EACH LINE OF WORK EACH YEAR IS A FATAL MISTAKE

SOME one asks, ' Why not rotate by picking a little from each line of work each year? And again, why not make the work seasonal? We have a little of each of these activities at home every year, why not teach a little of each at school?"

That is, take each year a little from *Farm Crops*, a little from *Making Things*, a little from *Animal Life*, and a little from *Soils*. In the home work take a little Sewing, a little Canning, a little Cooking, and a little Sanitation each year.

At the first glance, to one who has not actually tried it in the district schools, this looks attractive.

But it is a fatal mistake. It results in skimming—in taking the most interesting and striking things from the work for all four years. It does more than anything else to make the teaching of agriculture a dead letter in our schools.

Observe that the *Making Things* year has been put after the *Crop* year. This blocks the tendency to skim because it introduces such a different line of work.

Knowing what is to be taught each year is a decided advantage. A good teacher can direct the attention of her pupils to the work which is to come, prime them for it, give them hints of the interesting things, and thus develop so great an anticipation that it will be next to impossible to keep the children out of school. This is the difference between real teaching and skimming.

Within each year's work we can and must as far as possible make the work seasonal. We must study harvesting seed corn in September and October; we must test it in the Spring; we must can fruit and vegetables when they are ready; we must make our fly-traps in time to send them home when fly season starts, and so on.

Don't think that the children will lose interest in a subject just because they don't study it every year. Once really interested, always interested. The things which interest us are the things we are taught to see. If we once really study birds, we see birds ever after; if we study weeds, we see weeds everywhere we go.

By studying one line of work an entire year, we can concentrate and arouse a keener interest than we could if we tried to teach things along a great many different lines.

Then, too, teaching a little of everything each year means poor work. The county superintendent can not prepare his teachers to do the work thoroughly.

Another reason for having all the crop subjects one year is

that there are points which are common to all crops, i. e., testing seed, depth to plant, crop improvement, etc.

For example, when we are studying the best depth to plant potatoes and corn, it is just as easy to add other seeds, and much more interesting because of the comparisons it enables us to make.

The fact is that it is so natural to plant the other seeds at this time that the teacher will plant them almost in spite of her efforts not to do so. The soil, pots, and everything are ready. Why not finish up this work while we are at it?

A *Four-Year Rotation* of subjects gives us a good working plan, but, as with any other plan, we must exercise judgment in following it. When an emergency comes up in the community, we should not be afraid to change the plan to fit the conditions. If we are working in the *Animal* year, and the seed corn situation is critical, let the school take time enough to help all it can in testing seed corn.

ROTATION OF SUBJECTS MAKES CLUB WORK EASIER

Often many lines of club work are started in a county at one time. As all the work is new, it is impossible to give each line of club work the attention that it needs.

T. W. Potter, State Club Leader of Idaho, Instructing Two of his Potato Club Boys

If the rotation plan is followed, the corn and alfalfa clubs can be started the *Crop* year; the canning clubs during the *Making Things* year, the poultry, pig, and calf clubs during the *Animal* year, and so on.

This gives a chance to get each club more firmly established. The work grows naturally instead of being introduced with a rush.

The corn club should not be dropped at the end of the *Crop* year or the poultry club dropped at the end of the *Animal* year. After such clubs are once established, the teacher can set aside one day a week or one day a month to discuss club work and give club members a chance to report.

ROTATION PLAN GIVES PUPILS MORE AGRICULTURE

The Rotation Plan enables us to give the pupils more agriculture. This is true even though they are actually members of the agricultural class only one year. We must remember that in the district schools, the pupils in the lower grades know what is taught in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, and take part at school, and especially at home, in helping their older brothers and sisters with the work.

SUMMARY OF ADVANTAGES OF THE ROTATION PLAN

Rotation of Subjects:

Eliminates Repetition.

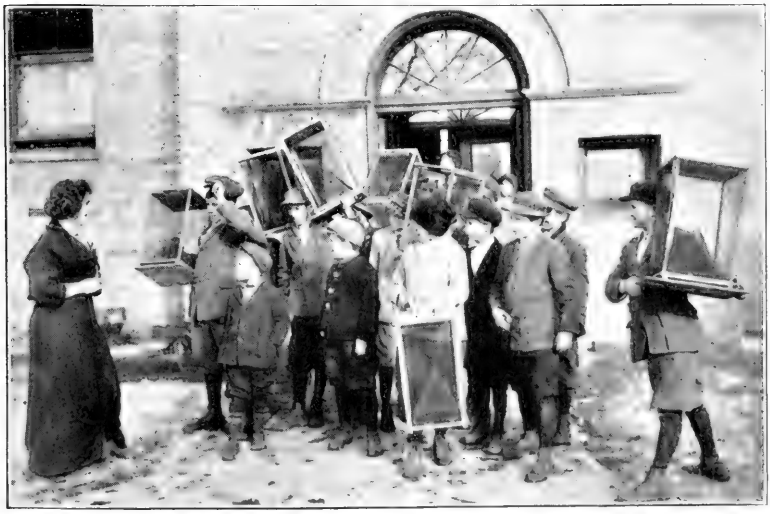
Prevents Skimming.

Keeps Interest Alive and Keen.

Makes It Easier to Prepare to Teach the Work.

Makes Club Work Easier.

Gives the Pupils More Agriculture.



Morton Grove, Ill. Pupils, Taking Their Fly Traps Home the First of March. Note the Snow on the Ground

JUST HOW CAN WE GO ABOUT IT TO PUT THE RIGHT SORT OF AGRICULTURE INTO THE RURAL SCHOOLS?

THE first question of the state superintendent and of the county superintendent is, "How can we work this Rotation Plan? How can we, who usually have little help for rural supervision, go about it to put agriculture—the right sort of agriculture—into our rural schools?"

Agriculture can not be successfully introduced into all the schools of any state or any county at the same time. *It must grow into the schools.*

Begin with a few counties and a few schools in each of these

Cook County, Ill. Teachers Training to Teach Agriculture

counties. This is what Oklahoma and Missouri are doing.

The Oklahoma Plan. In Oklahoma agriculture is required by the State Constitution. It has been taught for years in a desultory, hit-or-miss fashion. They have skimmed through books; taught words, not things; repeated the same subjects year after year; killed interest; made agriculture almost a dead letter.

Last fall they wanted to know how they could make the teaching of agriculture a reality, make it vital, make it worth while.

Twelve county superintendents, who are live wires, were

selected. These superintendents held a three-day meeting, studied how to teach a few definite things, and collected the necessary demonstration material for their work.

Men from the state college of agriculture assisted. The state college experts can not assist all the counties at once. It is more than they can handle; but they can find time to give quite careful supervision to twelve counties.

Each county superintendent selected from four to a dozen of his best teachers in whose schools agriculture is being taught this year. These teachers were given special instruction at the Teachers' Institute.

A Cook County Teacher, Trained in Group Shown on Opposite Page, Presenting a Lesson in Agriculture to Her Pupils

When the agricultural work was begun in these schools, the county superintendent and an expert from the state college visited each of the schools in turn and helped the teacher start the work right.

The county superintendent can help six or eight of his teachers, while he couldn't help a hundred or a hundred and fifty of them. His work is simplified, concentrated, made more effective.

The teachers are more likely to succeed because they have supervision, help, guidance, and material.

These six or eight schools in each county are becoming centers from which the right kind of agriculture is radiating to the other schools in the county.

Next year a few more counties and a few more schools can be added. In four or five years agriculture will be taught in every rural school and taught in the right way.

Missouri Adopts Rotation Plan. In Missouri the plan is to train three county superintendents from each of the five divisions, fifteen in all. Each of these county superintendents will give special training to four or six teachers. Ultimately the work will reach all the rural schools of the state.

Cook County Used the Plan. This plan of introducing agriculture was used in Cook County, Illinois, by County Superintendent Edward J. Tobin.

Six schools were first chosen as centers. Now the work is in every school in the county. This last year there were 2,387 children in the Garden Club work alone and their profits from the garden products were nearly $42,000. In 1915 there were 1,778 club members and they made a profit of $32,000.

KEEP NOTES AND TELL THE STORY

In starting agricultural work in a county, the teachers should keep complete notes on their work, preserve samples, take pictures, and tell others of their work.

Have the pupils present the work at neighborhood meetings.

One or more of the teachers should have the school present the work at the County Teachers' Institute and at Farmers' Institutes.

Report interesting features of the work to the local papers. The papers are glad to have news items and it helps to popularize the movement and to make it contagious.

SOME DON'TS

Don't Think You Must Know Everything. Don't think you must know all about agriculture in order to begin teaching it. Begin; you'll learn a lot about things as you go along.

It doesn't hurt, either, to say, "I don't know." Agriculture is such a big subject that none of us can know all about it. Saying "I don't know, but let us all try to find out," avoids prejudice and fosters the spirit of investigation.

Tell the boys to consult their fathers. Father appreciates the compliment, and it is well for us to remember that the man who has been farming for twenty-five years knows something about agriculture, especially about agriculture on his own farm.

Don't Use Too Much Time. Don't use too much time, especially when first starting agriculture. It may cause dissatisfaction.

Take your people along with you—work with them until they want it, until they are a part of it. You can't go very far without having the sentiment of the district back of you.

Unless your people do understand what you are doing, some

one is sure to make a fuss about the work. You can't teach agriculture and have the children sit still like mummies—inactive—a penalty placed on action. The patrons must appreciate this fact.

A teacher must grow her community just as a county superintendent must grow his teachers.

Don't Begin With the School Garden. In rural districts, don't begin with the school garden. It looks simple, but it is one of the most difficult things to handle. Unless some one looks after it during the summer, it grows up into a fine bed of weeds, which brings discredit on the work and discourages further agricultural study.

Home gardens with a definite purpose in mind, and supervision, if possible, will prove a better proposition.

Remember That These People Know Something About Agriculture, Especially About Agriculture on Their Own Farms

Don't Begin With the Curious and Fanciful. Study the things that are of vital concern in agricultural work.

That clover closes its leaves, or "goes to sleep at night" is interesting, but knowing this fact will not help to increase the yield of clover.

It is well enough to bring in these curious bits of information, but don't let them take the interest away from the vital point. Recognize them as side issues.

Don't Begin With Incompetent Teachers. Don't start agricultural work with incompetent teachers. They make a failure of the subject and thus bring discredit on the movement.

They make just as much of a failure in teaching other subjects, but the patrons don't realize it.

ILLUSTRATED BOOKLETS

It is a good plan to make illustrated booklets telling the story of the agricultural work done in the schools. This gives the pupil a chance to put what he has learned into permanent, attractive form, and affords an opportunity for working out original ideas.

USE BOOKS AS TOOLS

We should use books as we use tools. Books are tools—a means to an end. Study things. If a book helps us to interpret things, use it freely. Often it is necessary to buy the agricultural text adopted by the county or state, but don't assign pages in it. Use it as a reference book.

Start an agricultural library. Secure all the available state and government bulletins, and arrange for a good way to keep them.

USE THE COMMUNITY

Every community has people who excel in certain lines of work. If there is a good corn man in the neighborhood, let us visit him, study his methods, invite him to come to the school and talk to the pupils, and better still, get an invitation from him to have the pupils visit his farm.

Let us make the most of the good agricultural methods we find in the community. If the very best farming practices found in every community were followed by all the people of that community, the agriculture of this country would be revolutionized.

GET RESULTS

After deciding upon a certain line of work, for any given year, let us not be satisfied with half-way results. If we are studying the harvesting and testing of seed corn, our aim should be to have every family in the community harvest and test their seed corn.

Let us measure our success in agricultural work not by what pupils *know* but by what we are able to get the pupils and the community to *do*. Most of us *know* more than we *do*. Most of our school work emphasizes knowing rather than doing. In fact, often we do not expect children to do what we have them learn.

We are like the missionary who gave his class the text: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." He dismissed his class, telling them that, when they had learned this text, they should come back, and he would give them another.

One pupil did not return. When the missionary met him again he said, "Why didn't you come back? Haven't you learned the text I gave you?"

The pupil said "No."

The missionary started to repeat the words, but the pupil interrupted, "Oh, me can say it, but me can't do it yet."

Agriculture offers us a splendid opportunity to put the emphasis on the "doing" side.

Translating our beliefs into realities is the height of efficiency.

"He who reads and reads and does not,
Is like him who plows and plows and sows not."

Our schools will be successful just to the extent to which they do translate our teaching into actual life, into right living. When they do this, then and then only, have our schools performed their real missions.

DO YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING?

We shall be glad to help any state, any county, or any teacher who wants to vitalize the teaching of agriculture.

Teachers' Guides for each of the four year's work are being prepared. The *Crops* and *Making Things* years will be ready first; the other two will follow later.

Some of the lessons are planned in detail so that any teacher can carry them out; others are merely outlined and a list of available helps given. Charts and slides on some of the subjects can be procured.

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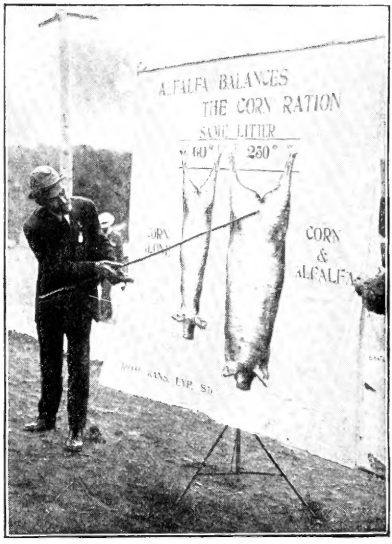

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