

the observation is really trained; the concrete objects and the child's experiences furnish the material for the language-training.

There should be fewer classes in schools taught by one teacher—certainly not more than three or four at the outside. In a country school in Switzerland, with forty-five children, I saw this plan being carried out with great success. For a large part of the time there were only two classes; for the remainder of the time there were three: when this was the case, the older children were engaged principally in study-lessons or manual work. Even the arithmetic and the drawing seemed to have some relation to the nature-study for the day. I do not think that any of the older children suffered because of the small number of classes. Our regulations already allow of this grouping; I wish I could say it was universally adopted. School gardens could be made of benefit to children much younger than those in the two or three upper standards. (The same is true of domestic science, but its treatment would have to be made much simpler than at present; and I imagine that we shall have to wait for teachers specially trained for such work in our training colleges, before this subject can be successfully tackled in a practical manner in our rural schools.)

Instead of its being harder to manage a single-handed school when the teaching is more concrete than when it is bookish, the contrary is really true, for the children listen less to the teacher and do more themselves. This is the experience both of Switzerland and America. At the same time I consider that the reduction of the average number of children under one teacher from forty to thirty-five is an urgent necessity; I wish it could be reduced to thirty. Wherever it is possible the problem should be solved in a still better way—namely, by the consolidation of single-handed schools into schools with two or three teachers. If parents once realised the great gain in efficiency rendered possible thereby, all local prejudice would disappear in the interests of the children.

To sum up—for the improvement of our rural schools we need to have,—

- (1.) Specially trained teachers;
- (2.) Co-ordination of subjects;
- (3.) Fewer classes;
- (4.) School libraries and museums;
- (5.) School gardens, or outdoor work for all pupils;
- (6.) Consolidation of schools wherever possible.

THE GEORGE PUTNAM SCHOOL.—THE CHILDREN'S DAY.

The George Putnam School, Roxbury, Boston, Massachusetts, is a school to which a great deal of interest is attached. Its headmaster is Mr. Henry L. Clapp, whose name is not unknown outside the States as a writer on educational subjects. Under his direction this elementary school was one of the first to establish school gardens. The whole course of nature-study in the school is well designed and well carried out. The chief topics are: In the winter, minerals and other objects capable of being brought under observation in that season; and in the spring, summer, and autumn, plants—their parts, their methods of growth, and their uses—together with insects and other animals associated with them as injurious or beneficial, or as dependent upon them; the weather, the soil, and other physical conditions are also observed. The lowest classes begin with the study of shells, flowers, and butterflies and moths. Plants and insects are reared on the school premises. The gardens are threefold:—

1. One part is for the cultivation and observation of wild flowers, weeds, and other wild plants, including ferns.

2. Another part is allotted to the work of individual children. The work of children in any class is also available for observation by children in other classes.

3. The remainder is devoted to class experiments on a larger scale. All parts of the garden show the thought of the teacher and earnest and careful effort on the part of the pupils.

Every observation of natural objects or phenomena has a corresponding note upon it in the pupil's note-book, not dictated by the teacher, but set down in a brief, businesslike, but natural way by the child himself, and illustrated by drawings with pencil and brush wherever necessary. By looking at the note-books of a child that had passed through the grades, one could obtain as intelligent a view of the programme of nature-study as by reading the headmaster's syllabus. Largely as a result of the work done in previous years by the co-operation of teachers and pupils, there is a splendid school museum, especially of minerals and of mounted and pressed plants. I was fortunate enough to visit the school when it was "the children's day" in several of the classes. That day comes once a fortnight, and then all the questioning is done by the pupils, and the