

BOARD OF EDUCATION.

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PART 1.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.



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[Introductory Letter to Volumes 10 and 11 of the Series.]

To SIR GEORGE KEKEWICH, K.C.B.

Secretary of the Board of Education.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to present to you the accompanying volumes of Special Reports on various aspects of education in the United States of America.

For many reasons, and not least on account of the close relationship between the English-speaking peoples, American education has always been a subject of special interest to English students. Of recent years this interest has rapidly increased, and the educational methods and experiments in the United States are watched by many English teachers and students with a marked degree of sympathy and attention.

I desire to take this opportunity of thanking many of the chief educational authorities in the United States for their courtesy in supplying information for these volumes; and especially Dr. W. T. Harris, United States Commissioner of Education, not only for the warm welcome and wise guidance which he willingly gives to English students of education visiting America, but for the well-known series of reports issued under his direction. The latter are, in range of topics, in mass of information and in the liberality of their distribution, unrivalled in the world. My cordial thanks are also due to President Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia University in the City of New York, for much valuable information, for help in the revision of some of the proofs and for the assistance derived from the *Monographs on American Education* published under his editorship for the Paris Exhibition of 1900.

I beg leave also to express my thanks to Sir Joshua Fitch for his kindness in contributing an introductory paper to these volumes.

To each report is appended the name of its author, and it should be understood that the latter alone is responsible for the opinions therein expressed.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

MICHAEL E. SADLER,

Director of Special Inquiries and Reports.

December, 1901.

CONTENTS.*

	PAGE
1. The Study of American Education. Its interest and Importance to English readers.	1
By Sir Joshua G. Fitch, LL.D.	
2. Moral Education in American Schools. With special reference to the formation of Character and to instruction in the duties of Citizenship	11
By Mr. H. Thiselton Mark, Master of Method in the Day Training Department, Owens College, Manchester.	
3. The Constitution of the City School Systems of the United States	255
By Mr. A. L. Bowley, Trinity College, Cambridge; Lecturer in Mathematics at Reading College; Lecturer at the London School of Economics and Political Science.	
4. Summary Account of the Report of the Educational Commission of the City of Chicago, 1898	263
By Mr. A. L. Bowley.	
5. The Public School System of Chicago	281
Prepared by Dr. E. B. Andrews, late Superintendent of Schools in Chicago, revised and completed by Mr. A. L. Bowley.	
6. The Public School System of the City of New York	305
By Mr. A. L. Bowley.	
7. The Public School System of Boston	323
By Mr. A. L. Bowley.	
8. The Public School System of St. Louis, Missouri	335
By Mr. A. L. Bowley.	
9. The Public School System of Philadelphia	349
By Mr. Edward Brooks, Superintendent of Public Schools, Philadelphia.	

* Volume XI. of Special Reports contains further reports on Education in the United States of America. See p. 537 below.

	PAGE
10. A Sketch of the development and present condition of the System of Education in the State of Minnesota, with an Appendix dealing with Minneapolis and St. Paul	367
By Professor D. L. Kiehle, Professor of Pedagogy at the University of Minnesota.	
11. Note on School Attendance in the Public Schools of the United States	397
By Mr. A. E. Twentyman, Assistant-Director of Special Inquiries and Reports.	
12. Some points of Educational Interest in the Schools of the United States	401
By Miss Alice Ravenhill, Inspector of Hygiene and Domestic Economy under the Technical Instruction Committee of the County Council of the West Riding of Yorkshire.	
13. The Training of Teachers in the United States of America	421
By Miss M. E. Findlay, Lecturer at Southlands Training College, Battersea, S.W.	
14. Teachers College of Columbia University (New York)	461
By Dr. James E. Russell, Dean of Teachers College.	
15. "Nature-Study" in the United States	489
By Mr. R. Hedger Wallace	

[An article on the teaching of Domestic Science in the United States by Miss Alice Ravenhill will appear in a volume of Special Reports devoted to the teaching of Domestic Science now at press.]

APPENDIX.

PROFESSOR HODGE ON AMERICAN SYSTEMS OF NATURE-STUDY.

In the "Pedagogical Seminary" for 1900, Professor Hodge, of Clark University, has a series of articles on the "Foundations of Nature-Study" in the third of which (July, 1900) he discusses the "different plans and methods of Nature-study now in the field" in the United States. This survey we summarise, as it is of interest to note the opinion of a prominent American nature-study worker on the work of others in the same field. Professor Hodge finds twelve methods of nature-study current in the United States including his own, and he classifies them as (1) the book method; (2) the logical method; (3) the twaddle method; (4) the logico-twaddle method; (5) the scientific method; (6) the æsthetic method; (7) the museum method; (8) the mytho-poetic method; (9) the sugar-coated pill method; (10) the excursion method; (11) the knot-hole method; and (12) the active method, which is what Professor Hodge calls his own system. The book method Professor Hodge states has brought in the flood of juvenile books on "Nature," such as nature readers, nature stories, etc., that at present threaten to deluge the modern child. Professor Hodge also points out that it is a palpable absurdity to think that nature can be studied out of books instead of by first-hand observation. Genuine nature literature, he acknowledges, is a source of help and inspiration for nature-study, but it is not nature-study. In English literature we get the best nature lore that has been written in any language. One side of this nature literature—prose appreciation of nature—is represented by the works of Gilbert White, Thoreau, Burroughs, Jefferies, and others. Another side—the poetic interpretation of nature—is represented by the works of such poets as Wordsworth, Burns, Tennyson, Longfellow, Emerson, and Whittier. Nature literature studied as literature would not be the book method of nature-study, but under this head should be placed all attempts to learn in or through books "those things in nature which surround us on every side."

The logical method, according to Professor Hodge, is best represented by the various works of Mr. Jackman of the Chicago Institute, especially by his "Nature-Study for Grammar Grades." The first thing in such a scheme is a field lesson. Then this "nature-study" has a series of "co-ordinations" with "numbers, geography, mensuration, drawing, expression, mineralogy, soil analysis, meteorology, astronomy, botany, zoology, etc., etc."

The twaddle method embraces all creation "from the sun, moon, and stars down to fleas; from morals to mosquitoes." Under such a scheme of logical perfection the children are dosed with bald abstractions, as, for example, in the lesson on the cow—"notice that she has four legs and a cleft hoof with two toes."

Regarding the logico-twaddle method Professor Hodge writes: "When the rigours of adult logic are applied to an elementary presentation of a subject so infinitely complicated as the natural universe, the logic and the twaddle become tangled up beyond hope of separation." The general criticism on these logical methods is that they cover the whole realm of nature so beautifully, and everything is laid out in such orderly fashion that nothing could be better calculated to give a child a notion (or delusion) that he knows everything worth knowing about nature.

The fifth method is the "scientific" method, and this, according to Professor Hodge, is "not so comprehensive and pretentious" as the logical series. "It takes up some common group of things in the environment of

the child and treats it scientifically." "Science" in this method does not mean "organised common sense." Professor Hodge gives an illustration of this "scientific" method of nature-study. He found in one school a class facing a sketch of a bee on the blackboard; over this was written the word "Hy-men-op-tera," and the method of teaching was to point to this chart and ask what the part indicated was. Outside it was a nice summer day, flowers were blooming and bees were humming, but there was not a bee, dead or alive, inside this schoolroom, which Professor Hodge terms "a ghastly pedagogical charnel-house."

The aesthetic method, Professor Hodge states, usually inverts the proper relation of things. "Caterwauling" about the beauties of nature is not studying nature.

The seventh, or museum, method of nature-study is based, according to Professor Hodge, on the magpie instinct—a passion for heaping together all sorts of things to look at. This method, Professor Hodge states, "is inextricably tangled up with the logical and scientific methods." Usually the dead stuff stored in a school museum is there, he thinks, to be yearly resurrected through the aid of some reading or more advanced school book.

Under the mytho-poetic method Professor Hodge classifies those systems where children, having observed some natural phenomena, or after their attention has been drawn to it, are afterwards dosed with songs, poems, and myths relative to it *ad nauseam*.

The term "sugar-coated pill" is applied to such methods as attempts "to stuff in a modicum of 'scientific' information under cover of what some may be inclined to call 'poetry.'" This type of poetry is illustrated by quotations. The following four lines, taken from "The Setting Sun," is one of the samples:—

"Dear John, the sun is setting now,
Behold him in the West;
And all the children now must soon
Lie down and go to rest."

The excursion method is, perhaps, not an independent system, for it runs alongside of many other methods. It may be utilised for general demonstrations and practical examinations, and although the best things in nature cannot be studied in crowds (for actual nature-study must be individual), yet the method, Professor Hodge acknowledges, in a number of cases can be used to advantage.

The last method discussed in this review, termed the "active method," is Professor Hodge's own contribution to the list of methods, and developed, he tells us, because "in working through all the methods of nature-study" he had been "impressed at so many points by their passive, receptive character, and their flabbiness." Professor Hodge has recently published a nature-study manual, entitled "Nature Study and Life," which practically limits nature-study to the study of living things.

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