

ON THE FIELD TRIP.

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The changes in subject matter in a number of our school and college courses and the new courses offered have added a new perplexity to the teacher's list. Botany, zoölogy, agriculture, nature study, physiography, commercial geography, geology and even arithmetic and sketching are calling for field trips, or opportunity for outdoor study of the things read about on the page or seen in pictures. Most of our teachers never heard of such field trips, much less ever made any, when they were students. If as observing as they should be, however, they have seen the common plants and animals, and have noted some of nature's changes. They have visited a factory, a wharf, a river, beach or mountain, have measured a corn crib or a floor for a carpet, but to put a class through these exercises is, apparently, not considered an easy matter. A variety of difficulties arise and try to interfere with the enterprise.

In the first place the class must be orderly, if any thing is to be learned on the trip. Sometimes the pupils must be cared for in mills or in parks or forest where a dozen things might injure the careless or venturesome meddler, or be injured by him. The attention must be held and usually the class kept together even though new and diverse things attract the individuals. Then honest work must be done. If pupils are allowed merely to kill time or to talk and prattle of things unrelated to the excursion, valuable time is lost, and the pupil is really worse off than when the trip began.

Then there is the business end, the assembling of the class, providing transportation and obtaining permits. Since this end of the program comes first, here is a good place to begin answering some of the questions arising when an educational excursion is planned.

It should be understood that the trip is as much a part of the work as is the recitation, and usually that a written or verbal report of things seen is as important as is a review or sum-

mary of some assigned reading. These understandings if followed up by starting on time and gathering up the reports when due, not only furnish training in promptness in the first case and in English in the second, but they add dignity to the excursion, make its government easier, and give the pupil a goal to attain from the very beginning. He goes out knowing that his standing depends in part upon what he brings back and embodies in his report. Promptness in starting and conformity to a program during the trip add very much to the comfort as well as to the profit. The pupils need not know much of the program, but they must realize that there is one.

The comfort of the members of the class must be considered and allowed to guide to some extent. When the purpose of the excursion can be as well served, the meadows, fields and lake or river side should be seen in the afternoon instead of in the morning while the dew is on the grass and shrubs. Advise with the class as to lunch, clothing, and wraps that will be needed. Large parties are always to be avoided. Only a limited number can see and hear during the open air demonstration, and the teacher can not supervise personally more than a small number. The size of the party may be determined by the number meeting together for quiz and recitation work or for laboratory exercises. Twenty makes a good number for a field party. A smaller number is better than a larger.

Now for the real mission of the excursion. The class is out to learn, to collect, or to catch an inspiration. The teacher must be doing and must be enthusiastic. His own industry, not his wisdom, will inspire the excursionists. Jestings, joking, punning and making irrelevant remarks will not inspire the class if it does keep them jolly. No class needs these things.

Each pupil should have some definite thing or things to see or study. All may work on the same question or, where possible, each on a separate one. The teacher may select the problems, suggest them or let the pupil find them according to the stage of the pupil's knowledge, and, consequently, the ease with which they can be found. Let the pupil state his problem in his note book and then enter upon its solution. Nothing can be done until he

has a clear notion of what he is going to do. His first duty, then, always, is to state his problem. This done many of the difficulties are removed.

While the pupil is at work the teacher should let him alone. Follow his work closely enough to see that he is getting good results. Be ready to aid him but do not tell him things he ought to see. He may be questioned and suggestions may be given, but bear in mind that his interest increases in considerable measure when he can discover something himself. Some teachers have a "know it all" air, but it does no harm frankly to say, "I don't know." The wisest come to that on many points. Nothing so disgusts the pupil and lowers the teacher as dodging. Hedging may wisely be done, but don't pretend to know what you do not know. Out with it and take the consequences. If you should have known it the incident may do you good. If it was out of your reach the pupil will recognize that fact and you will have won instead of losing.

After the trip look over the reports, which have come in on a designated day, and then discuss them with the class, explaining common errors and asking pupils to explain rare ones. Maps, sketches, diagrams or even photographs may form a part of the report, which should go back to the pupil corrected. Suggest places to look up related facts or phenomena either for correlation or for comparison. Often it is wise to have the pupil reproduce his work, drawings and explanation, before the class, if others have not worked upon the same problem.

If possible, and it usually is, the teacher should have visited the place or gone over the excursion previous to doing so with the class. This will help him in making his program and in finding problems for the investigators. Where not possible to see first, advantage can of course be taken of other's seeing.

Excursions properly prepared for and systematically carried out need not be a bug-bear but a pleasure. The teacher feels himself grow as he increases his mastery of the subject, but his inspiration comes from seeing the pupils' intellectual stature increase in the new experiences and to witness the silent joy on his mental face as he grasps new truth.