

THE COUNTRY TEACHER AT WORK

BY

FRANK J. LOWTH

PRINCIPAL ROCK COUNTY RURAL NORMAL SCHOOL
JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN

Author of "Everyday Problems of the Country Teacher"

NEW YORK
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1930

COPYRIGHT, 1930,
BY THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

All rights reserved — no part of this
book may be reproduced in any form
without permission in writing from
the publisher.

Set up and electrotyped. Published July, 1930.

To that important and worthy company of American one-room rural teachers — an army of over one hundred fifty thousand — many of whom throughout the United States have cordially received the author's first book — *Everyday Problems of the Country Teacher* — this second volume is dedicated with warm regard and in the earnest hope that it may still further aid these young people in carrying forward their urgently needed task of training country boys and girls for effective social-civic participation in our American democracy.

PREFACE

There is little excuse for any author to inflict a preface upon his readers unless such foreword somewhat justifies itself by satisfying some rational need. The main purpose of this brief prefatory statement is to indicate why the title of this book is a suitable designation for the organization of materials and to characterize in general the nature of the contents.

The unifying idea of *objectives* (a term which has been used in the title of each of the five main divisions of the book as well as in two chapter titles) is the key to the selection and organization of the present subject matter. The notion of ultimate and significantly purposeful ends should characterize all profitable study of rural-school as well as of other educational problems. When teachers and supervisors become clearly conscious of enduring aims and principles in educational practices and procedures, more certain progress will be made in habituating boys and girls to effective social-civic participation.

The suggestions presented in the following pages stand about midway between those which are general, abstract, and often impractical, on the one hand, and minute, detailed teaching devices, or class exercises, on the other hand. Doubtless there is an important place for both types of discussion but the following chapters contain material which cannot properly be classed under either head. It is hoped that in selection of topics and in method of treatment, the author may have succeeded in rendering a needful service to the ambitious, working rural teacher as she is engaged at her

daily tasks. The chief thought has been actually to help this earnest teacher through the presentation of useful and usable materials. The reader will not find much in the way of purely theoretical considerations; such as there are serve only as the explanatory basis for practical suggestions and illustrations, which make up the bulk of the volume.

This book is the direct outgrowth of the writer's experience for many years in training rural teachers in a county normal school at Janesville, Wisconsin, and in the supervision of graduates in country schools; it would not have been possible without such experience. Many of the paragraphs in the following chapters have been used repeatedly in oral discussions with many classes of young people, although in different relations and settings and very likely with different wording and emphasis. The writer believes that they will be found of practical value and usefulness in all institutions where rural teachers are being prepared for their work.

The author is unquestionably indebted indirectly, if not directly, for both information and inspiration to numerous writers, educational and otherwise, whose books he has read during the past thirty years; quite evidently, it is impossible to give individual acknowledgment of such indebtedness. The writer has lived long enough to have witnessed many educational fads come and go, and he has noted with satisfaction the inevitable persistence of fundamental principles and procedures. At the present time, we are apparently in the midst of a transition period in which practice has not kept pace with the later developments of well-accepted theory. It seems true, however, that the rural school is clearly not the place for experimentation in the field of unsettled educational practices or processes. Therefore, the reader of this book will not find herein materials or procedures of doubtful soundness or validity.

Grateful acknowledgment of indebtedness is hereby made for careful readings and valuable suggestions to Dr. C. C. Van Liew, of The Macmillan Company, New York City; to Mr. O. W. Neale, an experienced conductor of rural-teacher institutes, and director of rural education, State Teachers College, Stevens Point, Wisconsin; and to Mr. J. C. Brockert, formerly a county superintendent, and now for many years principal of the rural-teacher training department in the Platteville (Wisconsin) State Teachers College.

Mr. Walter E. Larson of Sawyer, Wisconsin, state supervisor of rural schools in Wisconsin for a number of years, has read the entire manuscript, and has made many highly practical suggestions. Mr. Larson's long, direct, and intimate contact with rural-school conditions, needs, and problems especially qualifies him to pass judgment upon the work and service of the rural teacher. Miss Elda L. Merton, assistant superintendent of schools in Waukesha, Wisconsin, has rendered valuable assistance on the chapter pertaining to seatwork activities, as a result of her fruitful experience in grade school supervision and also in the field of authorship. The writer appreciates the service rendered by these constructive and helpful critics.

F. J. L.

JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN
June, 1930

THE COUNTRY TEACHER AT WORK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CITIZENSHIP AND CHARACTER OBJECTIVES

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. CHARACTER — CONDUCT — CITIZENSHIP	1
II. PERSONAL INFLUENCE IN DISCIPLINE	33
III. THRIFT FOR TEACHER AND PUPIL	54
IV. PUBLISHING A SCHOOL PAPER	87

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES: GENERAL

V. OBJECTIVES IN TEACHING	99
VI. INSTRUCTION — INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL	125
VII. RATIONALIZING THE RECITATION	165
VIII. TEXTBOOK: USE AND ABUSE	189
IX. KEEPING RECORDS AND MAKING REPORTS	209

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES: PARTICULAR

X. READING: STIMULATING ASSIGNMENTS	264
XI. LANGUAGE: ORAL AND WRITTEN	297
XII. CIVICS: LOCALIZED AND VITALIZED	312

REALIZING OBJECTIVES: TOOLS AND SKILLS

XIII. DEVELOPING DICTIONARY SKILLS	334
XIV. LEARNING TO USE THE LIBRARY	368
XV. TRAINING BY EDUCATIVE SEAT ACTIVITIES	387

SCHOOL AND TEACHER OBJECTIVES

XVI. A RURAL SCHOOL OF THE FIRST CLASS	425
XVII. PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL OBJECTIVES	462

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPENDIX

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS AND SUGGESTIONS

	PAGE
A. EVALUATION OF PHYSICAL PLANT	481
B. EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTION	486
C. EVALUATION OF TEXT	490
D. MORALITY CODE FOR CHILDREN	496
E. BOOKS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS	503
F. EDUCATIONAL COMMERCIAL MATERIALS	512
G. TEACHER'S CONTRACT	514
H. PUBLISHING AND SCHOOL-SUPPLY COMPANIES	516

CHAPTER I

CHARACTER — CONDUCT — CITIZENSHIP

If the schools of America are to prepare boys and girls for actual participating citizenship, then the course of study and the daily moral and social guidance must bear fruit in right conduct. Undoubtedly the great purpose of all education is the development of such sound character, or strength of personality, as will make for the best interests of the individual as well as of the various social groups with which he comes into daily contact. Probably no more important chapter in any book could be written than one which deals with character, conduct, and citizenship. Any teacher who thinks of her work with children in terms of wholesome, effective citizenship will not go far astray in her educational practices and procedures. All the work of the school should take into account the character and the personal conduct of pupils as matters of vital concern to the individual, to the family, and to the state.

I. Interrelations and dependencies. Character is what we really are and reputation is what people think we are. Conduct is the raw material out of which character is made. Matthew Arnold said long ago that conduct is three fourths of life. It is probably equally true that conduct is made up of at least three-fourths habit. It is our reactions to our environment from moment to moment and from day to day that determine the general nature of our characters. Character is the outcome of innumerable acts of conduct. Unless we encounter situations which demand thinking, our

daily conduct is largely a matter of habit. Kilpatrick says that "character is the organized aggregate of working habits." Our ideas, ideals, and habits determine our conduct and they also certainly indicate the kind of characters we now possess. A teacher should use the subject matter of the course of study to develop correct ideas, ideals, and habits, thus insuring daily conduct that benefits both the individual himself and his social groups.

Above everything else, the schools must stand for good citizenship and they must consciously and directly develop such citizenship. No community, state, or nation can ever rise higher in civilization than the character of its individual citizens makes possible. Education for effective citizenship is the type of education we need in America. The good citizen is the one who possesses the good character. Character is the stuff of which the citizenship is composed. The public-spirited citizen who does his civic duty in the community is the citizen whose character is made up of the proper and adequate ideas, ideals, and habits. These personality qualities have direct relation to effective social-civic service for the community, where they function constantly. The good citizen informs himself on public affairs; he votes; he faithfully discharges duties of public office — all because in some way, through home, school, church, and other agencies, he has secured those elements of character which prompt him to such active, sympathetic social participation.

II. There is a reason. There is a reason for everything, if we can only find it. We live in a world of *law*, not *chance*; every effect has its cause. In character building or the development of personality the basic laws of learning apply with the same force as elsewhere. There is a central nervous system with its nerve cells and their bonds or connections;

physiologically, moral education is nothing more or less than the establishment of pathways for the discharge of nervous energy in ways that are socially approved and accepted. The three principal laws which apply in all types of learning are: law of exercise, law of effect, and law of readiness. There is space here for only a brief discussion of these laws, but teachers should understand and make use of them in all their teaching, whether they are dealing with the mental, the moral, or the physical nature of their pupils.

Teachers have always applied the *law of exercise*, which is called by some writers the law of use, and which implies its correlative, disuse. If acts of courage, honesty, kindness, or fidelity are repeated often enough in the presence of situations which call for them, habits of courage, honesty, kindness, and fidelity will ultimately be formed. The law of exercise underlies drill or practice, which occupies so much of the time of the country teacher. The law applies with equal force in learning to spell *privilege*; in fixing the fact that 7 plus 8 are 15; in attaining skill to write one's name; in securing proficiency at typewriting or operating a car; in fixing the habit of chewing food sufficiently; or in habituating oneself to telling the truth.

Not so commonly, however, have teachers made use of the *law of effect*. This law means, essentially, that one tends to repeat (or to seek) those actions or responses in life situations which satisfy an inner need, want, or urge; and, conversely, that one does not commonly repeat (or seek) those reactions which produce a feeling of dissatisfaction or annoyance. Only those reactions which the child likes to repeat result in the most effective learning. This includes of course those cultivated likes and dislikes which we call interests. Too often in the past teachers

have not seen to it that results which are satisfying and pleasurable were associated with the learning process. In the end, therefore, the development of character depends upon those acts on the child's part or, as we commonly put it, upon that *conduct* in which the child himself finds pleasure and takes satisfaction. It is only in response to an inner urge — an urge that must be gratified — that the child ever cultivates the habit of lending a helping hand when he finds a comrade or an animal in distress, or of sticking honestly to the rules of the game on the playground. Of course it is true that so far as moral issues are concerned the law is blind, that is, *unmoral*. Under its operation the child might be cruel or dishonest just as long as acts of cruelty or dishonesty give him inner satisfaction. This dilemma is of course only to be met by bringing the child face to face with the ends or objectives which society approves. That subject is discussed later in this book.

The *law of readiness* is not exactly the same as the law of mind-set, as some writers seem to infer. However, readiness and mind-set are closely related, and both have reference to the *poise* of the organism for reaction or response. The ball player, for example, is *poised* for the next play; or the debater is *poised* for ready argument. Fatigue therefore decreases readiness, and rest restores it. The general attitude of the learner, his store of ideas, his acquired skills, his habits of thought and action, his feelings, all have to do with the individual's readiness to react.

The teacher may make use of coercion or force, but any teacher who understands the laws of learning and of all human growth and development will see that her main function is to change the ideas and attitudes of her pupils, and to secure willing responses to right motives. Correct moral habits are built up through particular responses to

particular social situations. The function of the school is to furnish adequate social situations, and then so to motivate pupil activities that natural, willing, cheerful, spontaneous responses will be the result (*i.e.*, to apply the *S-R* formula — *situation*, or *stimulus*, followed by *response*). Unless the child's reactions spring from inner conviction the obedience is unnatural, strained, and unavailing in the shaping of personality. Right conduct and good citizenship are the product of right thinking and feeling.

With smaller children forced obedience may sometimes be necessary, as indicated elsewhere, because the individual may not be able to understand the reasons for the desired and desirable conduct. As soon as possible, however, the character of the response should be raised to a higher level. If the school system affords rich social opportunity for natural, whole-hearted social response, the individual child will find satisfaction rather than annoyance in his reactions. Real satisfying experience on the child's mental and moral level is a vital necessity. Book situations are often unreal and do not produce the desired change of character. As Professor Kilpatrick suggests, three things are essential: (a) a sensitivity to what is involved in the moral situation; (b) a deliberate weighing of the various and varying elements of the situation in order to arrive at some decision; and (c) the actual doing or responding. A true moral act always comprises all three of these factors. Essentially, character is the net product of many acts of conduct. Particular responses to particular situations ultimately build up an organized system of habits, the physiological basis of which are the bonds or connections between the nerve cells.

III. Courses in morals and manners. In 1923 the Federal Bureau of Education issued *Bulletin No. 42*, entitled "Analytic Survey of State Courses of Study for Rural

Elementary Schools." This survey was prepared by Professor Charles M. Reinoehl, at that time on the faculty of the University of Arkansas. Under the head of Manners and Morals Professor Reinoehl writes as follows :

This subject holds the least prominent position among the subjects of the curriculum (Table 15). Twenty-seven states provide outlines or suggestions for the training of children in manners and morals. It is advisable to give suggestions in state courses regarding the training of children in proper manners and morals, but providing graded outlines on the various virtues is not justified by practice.

The dominant aim of moral education is the development of proper attitudes, giving rise to worthy conduct. The most frequently stated reasons for training in manners and morals are: (1) to cultivate a sense of moral obligation and duty; (2) to produce law-abiding, law-respecting citizens; (3) to arouse high moral ideals; (4) to kindle ambition and instill confidence; (5) to develop a moral character.

State courses of study are, in general, against formal instruction in morals at school. The most effective way of training children in manners and morals is, in all probability, through the regular lessons and in connection with all school activities.

There are numerous virtues for the training of children. From 25 to 50 of the leading virtues may well be selected for occasional special attention during opening exercises. Opportune times at psychologic moments should not be lost for special lessons in conduct.

TOPICS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MANNERS AND MORALS
ARRANGED IN ORDER OF THEIR FREQUENCY
OF APPEARANCE IN 27 STATE COURSES
OF STUDY

Appearing in 80 per cent or more of the courses —

Obedience	Patriotism	Truthfulness
Honesty, reliability	Politeness	Courage, bravery

Self-control	Kindness to animals	Courtesy
Justice, fairness	Industry, good work-	Regard for others
Kindness to others	manship	

Appearing in 60 to 80 per cent of the courses —

Charity	Good manners	Reverence
Cleanliness	Helpfulness	Self-respect
Neatness	Generosity, hospitality	Patience
Promptness	Service	Faithfulness
Respect	Coöperation	Responsibility
Accuracy	Personality	Punctuality
Fidelity, loyalty	Cheerfulness	

Appearing in 40 to 60 per cent of the courses —

Gratitude	Health	Perseverance
Nobility	Thankfulness	Leadership
Forgiveness	Right conduct	High ideals
Duty	Self-reliance	Purity
Love	Orderliness	Unselfishness
Temperance	Honor	

A content that is vital to the life of children is also vital to their moral development. Courses in arithmetic, history, reading, language, and geography should become more truly moral courses by having woven into their outlines the socialized moral contents vital to a child's life. The most effective way of presenting morals in courses of study is, in all probability, through the regular lessons in all subjects. Courses in the various subjects are lacking in helpful suggestions on effective correlations.

Every subject should be made a moral subject. A subject of study consisting of material so selected and so organized as to influence behavior in some desirable way is, undoubtedly, a moral course. If this is to be the ideal of the new rural course, then many state courses need to be so rewritten as to contain the functional material that results in desirable conduct.

IV. Courses in citizenship. In the bulletin mentioned in the preceding section the following recommendations of

principles for guidance in the improvement of courses in citizenship for rural schools are suggested :

1. Ungraded general suggestions provided for the teaching of each citizenship subject
2. Graded outlines in history provided for grades five to eight
3. History and civics outlined with language in the four lower grades. History and civics outlined together for grades five to eight
4. Manners and morals made a part of the socialized moral content of every subject
5. Training for intelligent citizenship made dominant
6. Study of American history in upper grades preceded by the history of Europe in story form
7. Those content materials in history selected that explain the present
8. Community civics emphasized with less attention to mere facts of government
9. Material organized about live problems on a level with the ability of children. National history broken up into lengthened periods for study
10. Selection of those objective facts which should be quite generally known

V. A moral code for school children. A "Moral Code for Youth" was made public by *Collier's Magazine* some time ago. By September, 1929, over 300,000 copies had been distributed. The code, which, according to *Collier's*, grew out of a canvass of representatives of the largest religious denominations, and educational, industrial, civic, and social leaders, is as follows :

If I want to be a happy, useful citizen, I must have :

Courage and Hope. I must be brave. This means I must be brave enough and strong enough to control what I think, and