

history lesson and general education of the child prepares the way, and the interest the children take in the model have a practical base.

I will suppose the subject to be a "leaf."

The teacher, standing by the tree with the children gathered round in a semi-circle, gives them a simple account of the life-conditions of the tree and the growth of the leaf, or (as lessons should be co-related) we may suppose the botany lesson has prepared the way.

The leaf is then taken separately as part of a whole, but perfect in itself. It should not be picked, but the teacher should select leaves in different positions, pointing to them in different parts of the tree, thus obliging the children to move their heads and eyes. He can do this in such a way that the exercise of the various muscles is equally divided, and the pupils have a mild gymnastic exercise without knowing it.

He now suggests that each child should select a leaf and "learn it by heart," timing them. Two minutes by the clock suffices.

It is not wise to prolong this memory-study. The child will be found to be breathlessly attentive during the first half minute and rarely needs more than that time to possess the form mentally in broad outline. The child's attention falls steadily if the form-study is prolonged beyond a very limited period.

At the word: "Time!" the study is interrupted. At the word: "Sketch!" the pupils turn their back on the tree and with a stick outline what they have learnt in the sand, making the first sketch with the left hand, while the right hand is held behind the back.

This sketch in the sand gives opportunity for an entire change of posture during which muscles that have been at rest are brought into play. The colour of the sand, too (if possible of a greyish tint, never white) forms a variation on the green colour the children have been contemplating.

The value of ambidexterity is a scientific study in itself, so I will not detailise the advantages of a system that has been most ably and fully discussed quite recently by leading authorities.

For practice it is advisable to make the first sketch with the left (and usually weakest) hand, while impression and interest are at their height.

It is important that the pupil should find his own stick, any stick, and indirectly be taught to feel that the simplest and most easily obtainable tools serve the purpose of him who knows. Avoid moralising, which is psychologically unwholesome unless handled with great pedagogical genius and tact. Teach this,

as other truths, practically. At a convenient moment, however, the story of Giotto or the young Michel Angelo, &c., may be told, and the children led to find the moral for themselves.

As the pupils conclude their work (some taking less than a minute to do so) they are allowed to spring to their feet independent of their fellows. Their eagerness, their vivacity, their pleasure is delightful to see. Even the dunce of the class is sure to produce something resembling a leaf.

These leaves, drawn with the left hand, are now discussed freely between teacher and pupil, and compared with the leaves on the tree behind.

This necessitates a constant turning from tree to drawing, from drawing to tree, and a very well-known gymnastic exercise is unconsciously combined with an intellectual one, with what advantage to both it is needless to point out.

Faults and failures recognised, the pupils are allowed one minute's memorising of the leaf (not more) before again drawing it from memory with the right hand, the pupils sitting as they please (of course presupposing that the sand is *dry*).

Finally, the leaf growing on a piece of stem is represented on the toned canvas mentioned before at a height convenient to the children, white or coloured chalk being used—preferably the latter—and no limit need be placed on the development of the drawing, the latter depending entirely on the child's taste and talent.

Pupils should be taught to colour their own chalks and difficulties should be placed in their way for them to vanquish by ingenuity.

If there are chalk-pits or chalk-cliffs near, an excursion to these and notes taken by the way—can form the basis of an English composition lesson. French and German conversation (where taught) aid in working up the subject—which natural science studies and a good microscope must solidify.

The effort to draw with chalk collected by themselves may not be a technical triumph, but it will surely teach them more than the *ad libitum* supply of the industrial article.

Excursions, presupposing properly organised and co-related out-door study, should form a very large part of school life.

Quite apart from their hygienic value they are very important in suggesting ideas on the development of culture, history of progress, origin of invention, industry and government in such a manner, that the pupil draws his own conclusions from experience and his

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)