

# Uncle Sam Greatest Teacher in the World



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TRAINING A HORSE

(Copyright, 1911, by Frank G. Carpenter.)  
 WASHINGTON, D. C., 1911.—Uncle Sam, patriarch, is the greatest teacher on earth. He has an army of 18,000,000 common school children, and his common school teachers number more than 500,000. His public school property is valued at more than \$1,000,000,000, and he is spending upon such education about \$200,000,000 a year. He has hundreds of millions invested in academies and colleges, and in the neighborhood of 600,000 boys and girls are in yearly attendance upon them. These are big figures, but they fall short of showing what is now going on. Uncle Sam has been lying awake at nights studying how to bring education to all his children, and his plans include the grown-ups as well as the babies.

### Waking Up the American Brain.

Indeed, the national brain is being roused as never before. Every department of the government is stimulating it, and the wires are reaching out from here to every man, woman and child in the country. In this letter I want to show something of what is being done for the people outside the cities. The bulk of our population is in the country, and one of the greatest movements of the time is that for the improvement of the country school.

We all know of the little frame school houses. There are several hundred thousand of them in the United States. They popper the union, and in most cases each is taught by "one man or one woman. Some of these school houses have less than a dozen pupils. Kansas has more than 1,600 with an attendance of ten or less. Maine has more than 2,000 schools of one room each, and 300 of these have less than eight pupils. Michigan has 1,500 schools of ten students, and Nebraska has 1,200 of the same character. In Hardin county, Iowa, where the land is worth \$10 an acre and the farmers are comparatively rich, there are a large number of schools where the average attendance is less than six. In sixteen district schools whose average attendance is only five. The same conditions prevail all over the country.

### Going to School in Wagons.

The advanced movement provides for the wiping out of these little schools and the organizing of large ones at such distances apart that many of the children must be brought in carriages or wagons. It presupposes one large graded school for every twenty or forty square miles. The nearby children, and those who live on the outskirts ride. The schools organized have an attendance of several hundred. The pupils are given a thorough education and the child starts in at the kindergarten and comes out at the high school. In some schools the high school is omitted, and in most cases the years of graded school with a grade for each year, and in this way the country boy or girl gets a schooling which compares well with that of the best schools of our cities.

This consolidated school system is slowly working its way over the union. It is now in existence in thirty-two different states and there are more than 2,000 such schools in operation. It is estimated that the number will eventually be 30,000 and that two-thirds of the small rural schools which now exist will have been done away with.

The bringing of the children to school in wagons has been found to be of great success. The transportation per pupil costs but a few cents a day, and the expense is small in comparison with the advantage gained. In Massachusetts, where the system is in thorough operation and covers the state, the amount spent for transportation is about \$300,000 a year. In Indiana it is only a little less, and in Vermont it is about \$75,000. In Florida the schools have been consolidated in thirty different counties, and the cost of carrying the children to school is \$25,000 per school year.

### Passing of the Log Schoolhouse.

This movement means the passing away of the log school house, the school house and the little frame shack. It means the erection of big school buildings, well ventilated and lighted, with steam heat and all the comforts. I have



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SOUTHERN GIRLS STUDYING COOKING

before me photographs of some of these new country schools. Here is one at Kinsman, O. It is built of brick, with a slate roof and it has two stories and a basement. It has five class rooms, a laboratory and a library. It cost \$3,000 to build, and its pupils number about 100. Here is another one at Twin Falls, Idaho, in a district of thirty-six square miles and a population of 4,000. This is a finer building than that at Kinsman, and very much larger. The school there has an enrollment of 75, of whom 300 are brought in daily in wagons. Four years ago the ground on which the building stands was covered with sage brush. It has now been turned into a school farm, and the school has two acres of playgrounds. At the Ohio school it costs 6 cents a day per pupil to bring them to school. Another photograph shows a school at Trumbull county, Ohio, and another one at Greens Center, in the same state. One of these buildings cost \$7,000 and the other \$5,000. Each keeps eight or ten wagons to bring in the pupils. It is found that more children are going to school in the districts where the schools have been consolidated. There are now about 5,000,000 children in the country schools, whereas there should be 6,000,000 or 7,000,000. When this movement is well under way education will probably be compulsory everywhere, and every country boy and girl will get an education.

These new schools are especially adapted to the farmer and to farm life. In addition to the regular courses as taught in the city schools, they have some special studies bearing upon crops and home economics. I have before me an outline of the work of one of the schools. In the first and second years nature study forms a part and in the fourth year the geography is to a large extent physical, showing the work done by nature in preparing the soil for us. It also includes the distribution of our farm products all over the world. The higher grades have lessons in agriculture, and among the studies of the seventh and eighth years are cooperative enterprise in farming and matters connected with the farmstead and home. The children learn all about animals, and the boys are taught how to judge a horse and cow. The girls learn all about sewing and cooking as well as how to make the house beautiful and the home pleasant.

In some of these schools the work begins with the kindergarten and ends at the high school.

Take Lima township, Indiana. The consolidated school there contains 239 children, and of these ninety are in the high school. The teachers of the high schools are college graduates and those of the lower grades are normal graduates. The building has a reading room and a library, and adjoining the school grounds is a school garden of 200 plots. The children have a school paper, an orchestra and a band, and a boys-and-girls' club. They have athletics and also a lecture course. That school is made up of a consolidation of a number of one-room country schools, each of which had but one teacher.

**School Gardens and School Farms.**  
 Nearly all of the new schools have school gardens and little farms connected with them. In them the children raise vegetables and flowers. They study the soil and learn how and why plants grow. They are taught all about the work of the roots and stems and leaves. They are shown how to grow fruit and are taught budding and grafting by being made to do these things themselves. The agricultural department sends out a great number of bulletins for these schools with the intention that they be used by the pupils and teachers. One of these is entitled "School Lessons on Corn," which shows just how corn should be grown. Another bulletin deals with plant production and school exercises therefor. In this the children are taught all about plants by growing them themselves according to the directions. Another paper shows how to test farm seeds at school and at home. By means of this a child learns whether the clover or alfalfa seed his father is using is pure or whether it is mixed with weeds. He learns to know what good seed is and how well it pays to plant it. These school gardens are now being introduced into the city schools. A space as big as a hall bedroom suffices to make one. Upon this a half dozen vegetables can be grown and by rotation of crops these can be changed from time to time. In some cases vegetable and flowers are grown upon such a plot.

### Ten-Acre School Grounds.

Connected with some of the schools are hotbeds and orchards as well as barns for animals and pens for pigs. The ideal school should have about ten acres for farms, gardens and other work. It should have its poultry yard and its forest plot. The boys compete at home as to the fattening of pigs and also in plow-

ing, corn-raising and in the growing of strawberries and small fruits of various kinds. The girls have competitive examinations in house decoration and in the preserving of vegetables and fruits. Many new text books are being made for these schools. Educators are blocking out courses of study in agriculture and home economics of the various grades. Text books are being written on farm management, fruit raising, live stock, dairying and home making. The agricultural high schools are being supplied with barns, laboratories and practice shops. Many of them are equipped with libraries on farm subjects, and new books have been written to supply this demand. In the rural school books the illustrations deal with farm life. In his arithmetic examples the child figures on bushels of grain and the sale of crops, and in his geography he follows the wheat and corn raised on his home farm across the oceans and thus studies his over-seas customers.

### Uncle Sam's Agricultural Colleges.

In addition to the work in connection with the schools the government is doing a great deal through the agricultural colleges. Nearly all of these are supported by the states or the nation, and they now form one of the most powerful of our educational forces.

There are altogether sixty-five of these colleges, covering every part of the union. They own property which is valued at more than \$100,000,000, and their income is something like \$20,000,000 a year. They have about 7,000 students who are taking agricultural courses alone, and through their correspondence and other courses, counting none twice, they have 136,000 students.

In connection with these colleges a great deal of extension work is carried on. By this I mean through movable schools and the correspondence courses and in other ways, by which those who cannot attend college can study at home. In the correspondence course the students carry on their studies at their farms, and the work is directed from the colleges. By this means a man or boy in the wildest part of the far west or the south may get an education in farming or fruit growing. There are 30,000 students now studying that way, and this number will be increased to hundreds of thousands in the future.

The various extension schools are carried on by farm lectures and in other ways. The movable schools consist of grown-ups who gather together for fixed periods at certain places and are taught by the Department of Agriculture. It is advised that the classes consist of not less than eight nor more than fifteen persons who are over 18 years of age, and who are especially interested in the subject of which the course treats. The courses deal with home economics and with all sorts of farm topics.

### Agricultural Education.

And just here I want to speak about the bureau of experiment stations and the wonderful work they are doing along educational lines. This branch of the Department of Agriculture is under the charge of Dr. A. C. True, who has developed it to such a degree that its work now reaches every part of the country. It is of enormous value in its research work and its exhibitions of practical agriculture; and its educational work affects every man, woman and child in the United States. This bureau has to do in an advisory way with the agricultural colleges. Many of the stations are connected with colleges, and some of the officers are teachers therein. It does much in college extension work, and it is now sending out every year about 4,000,000 copies of bulletins containing agricultural information.

The bureau of experiment stations deals also with the farmers' institute, a branch of which is under the direction of Mr. John Hamilton, the farmers' institute specialist. There were more than 600 of these institutes which had regular meetings last year, and they reached over 4,000,000 people. They had altogether 16,000 sessions. There are also a large number of farmers' institutes for young people and of farmers' institutes for women. The latter held 722 meetings in 1910. These farm institutes are largely supported by the state boards of agriculture, each of which has its institute director, and connected with him a lecture bureau, which sends out specialists to the institutes, giving them lectures on any farm topic they desire. Allied to these institutes are the county fairs, of which more than 1,200 are supported by the counties alone.

### Lantern Slide Lectures for Farmers.

Of late the Department of Agriculture has been sending out a number of illustrated lectures to be used at the farm

colleges, farm institutes, extension courses and the farm clubs all over the country. Each lecture has forty or fifty lantern slides connected with it, and also a bulletin of information describing the slides. Here, for instance, is a syllabus on the helpful hen. It is accompanied by forty-four slides, and it tells how to raise fowls and how to market them. Its pictures show all sorts of chickens and eggs, geographically depicting how fowls vary in their production from some hens which lay 250 eggs a year to others which lay none at all. The lecture states that our farms are now producing \$5,000,000,000 worth of poultry per annum, and the crop ranks among the greatest of these which come from the farm.

Another lecture relates to the care of milk, showing that our dairy crop is worth about \$900,000,000 per year, and how we have 18,000,000 milch cows in the United States to supply it. It tells just how the cow and its milk should be treated and how to get the most money out of all dairy products.

### Teaching Farmers from Trains.

Another feature of this educational work of Uncle Sam is carried on in connection with the trains. Last year fifty-two of our leading railroad companies were aiding the government in teaching farm education. They employed 239 school cars, and sent them over 40,000 miles of track. Their trains made 1,800 stops, and at each place a corps of expert lecturers delivered talks upon agriculture and domestic science adapted to the locality. The total cost of operating each train was something like \$35 a day, and the total amount spent was over \$50,000. This teaching reached hundreds of thousands of people. It embraced a total of about 4,000 days of lecturing, or a period equal to fourteen years of 300 days each.

Each of these educational trains had a locomotive, a baggage car and one or two coaches fitted up for lecture purposes. It also carried a Pullman car, with a dining room and sleeping quarters for the lecture force. The lecturers were from the national and state departments of agriculture, and from the colleges. The subjects were chosen to fit the locality where the lectures were given. In a dairy country the talks were on dairying, and the trains frequently carried dairy cattle, and specimens of butter and cheese, and all sorts of dairy implements to illustrate the work. In a fruit country the trains had fruit exhibits and in a stock country they had hogs and cattle of various kinds. In the wheat and corn lands the lecturers talked wheat and corn, and in some other places they talked cotton or truck gardening.

These educational trains have their advance agents. The farmers know when they are coming, and they gather in crowds at the stations. The railroads realize the value, and say that such education has materially added to their traffic. Indeed, the freight from the farms has much to do with paying the dividends of the railroads. In 1909 of all the freight carried 181,000,000 tons was made up of agricultural products. Of this \$7,500,000 tons came from the forest and 27,000,000 tons from the farms proper, while 20,000,000 tons were made up of animals and other products. The average received for this stuff, ton per ton, was far above that of coal and some other minerals. FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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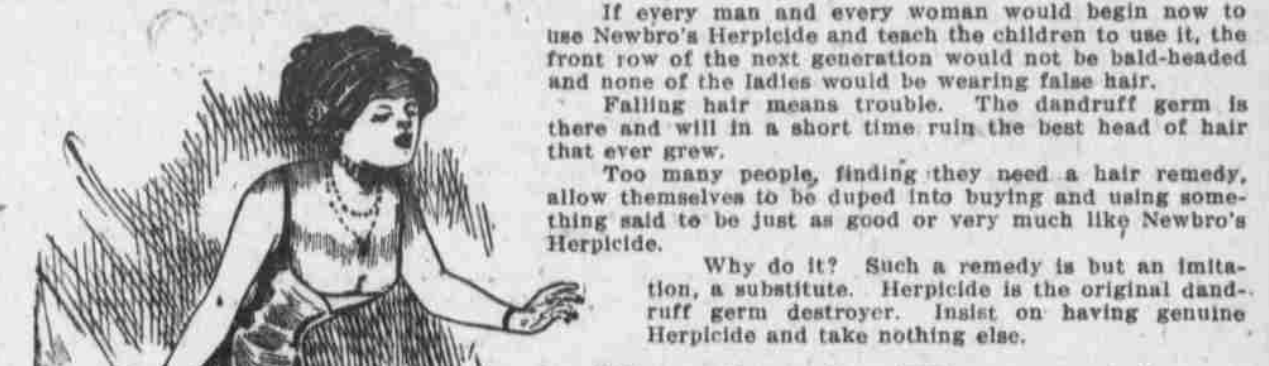
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