

SUBSTITUTION OF TEACHER FOR TEXT-BOOK.

IN my opinion, the greatest fault in the schools of our country lies in the professional weakness of our teachers. Consequently, in my judgment, the next step in raising the standard of our schools should be directed toward increasing the professional strength of the teachers, and in this paper I shall endeavor to point out where the weakness lies, as well as to suggest a remedy. By "professional strength" I mean the ability to apply expert knowledge in practice. In the domain of medicine, professional strength must be measured by the degree of ability to diagnose disease and apply the proper remedy. From this standpoint an individual may possess all the traits of moral character desirable in an ideal physician,—sympathy, cautiousness, punctuality, conscientiousness,—and yet be a weak diagnostician, and, consequently, a poor practitioner. In like manner the professional strength of the teacher must be measured by the ability properly to apply recognized educational principles in teaching. While, in order to be an ideal teacher, more is required than the ability to conduct a recitation scientifically, yet the ability to teach is fundamental. One who does not possess a character destined to exert a good moral influence on the child should never be granted a license; yet moral strength, in itself, no more constitutes professional strength in pedagogy than it does in medicine. Before our ideal individual is worthy the name of "teacher," she must add to her moral traits a knowledge of pedagogical principles, and skill in their practical application.

In stating that our teachers lack in professional strength, I do not refer alone to the schools of low standard. While the difference between our best and our poorest schools is, in certain respects, enormous, the variations are great, mainly, in regard to professional spirit and ideals and in the general plan of work, the differences in the quality of the teaching being confined within much narrower limits. In a word, the weakness on the part of the growing teachers does not lie in ignoring scientific principles, nor in the lack of desire and effort to do the best for the child; it lies simply in the lack of

the required knowledge and skill to properly apply recognized principles in teaching. The rapid spread of professional enthusiasm among our teachers is certainly a hopeful indication; but we must guard against falling into the common error of mistaking it for professional strength. To entertain the belief that enthusiasm, coupled with an earnest desire to do the best for the child, is all that can be desired in a teacher, is to arrest the growth of our schools at a very early stage of development. That additional elements are needed, to place the instruction on a scientific basis, I shall now endeavor to show.

In my opinion the fundamental purposes in elementary teaching are two: first, to develop power,—the power to observe, to reason, to do; second, to aid the child in storing in his mind a fund of useful knowledge. Other factors, however important they may be, are, nevertheless, merely incidental.

Of the old school of teaching it may be said that the end and aim is the acquisition of knowledge; it appeals almost exclusively to the memory, and does but little toward the development of power. On the other hand, our most radical reformers are inclined to look lightly on the acquisition of knowledge, and to recognize as important only the development of power. Of course, on sober thought, we cannot fail to realize that both sides must receive due attention. The school that would turn out pupils with a mass of information, but without the ability to think; and the school that would send into the world pupils able to reason, yet absolutely ignorant of facts,—would present an equally sorry spectacle. While the broader aim is fully recognized by our progressive teachers, it nevertheless so happens, in the vast majority of instances, that for lack of sufficient professional knowledge and skill, they fail to carry their theories into practice,—that, in spite of their severe condemnation of the memory system, they themselves are slaves to it.

That the mode of teaching in vogue, in our progressive, as in our non-progressive, schools, is destined to cultivate the memory rather than the power to reason, is proved alone by the fact that, in the subjects particularly adapted to appeal to the reasoning faculties—the so-called thought-studies—the pupil is required to obtain his ideas by reading the text-book in advance of the recitation. If it be the teacher's aim to lead the child to think, it is necessary for her to apply the principle that the child must be told nothing that he is able to find out for himself. To compel the child to study the lesson from the text-book in advance of the recitation, is to violate this

principle *in toto*, because by this means he is directly told by the text-book every point that he might be able to reason out for himself. In order properly to apply the principle, it is necessary to bring the new matter before the pupil for the first time during the recitation period. It is then, and then only, that the teacher is enabled, by means of skilful questioning, to lead the child to find out for himself whatever it is possible for him to discover. Facts that the child is unable to discover must be told to him by the teacher. Simply to hear children recite lessons that they have committed to memory is a very easy matter, and requires no expert knowledge or skill; but, by means of questions, to lead the child to think, involves both science and art.

Moreover, it is not only in regard to power, but also from the standpoint of knowledge, that the ordinary use of the text-book renders impossible the application of the principles of scientific teaching. In regard to knowledge, it is recognized by the new school that more is required than to lead the child to store in his mind a chaotic mass of cut-and-dried facts. This, indeed, is regarded as the bane of the memory system. The aim of progressive teachers is to aid the pupil in building, so to say, a solid and permanent mental structure, consisting of fundamental ideas, based upon concrete facts, which themselves shall ever remain fresh and active, forming a fund of ready knowledge. In short, what they desire to secure is not "dead" knowledge, but knowledge which in itself is stimulating, which will create a many-sided interest in the affairs of life, and which will lead to activity when the school days are over.

To construct a mental fabric of this nature, it is necessary to bring the ideas to the notice of the pupil in a psychological order. It is only when we progress slowly and systematically, *from the known to the unknown, and from the concrete to the abstract*, that the facts may be properly welded together, and lead to the formation of clear fundamental ideas. To employ the ordinary text-book method means a failure to apply these principles, for two reasons: (1) in the text-book the facts are not arranged in a psychological order, but merely in a logical one; (2) in the text-book the facts are presented in too rapid succession. We frequently find on a single page sufficient mental food for many lessons. The average child is able to commit to memory a very large number of facts in a comparatively small time, and thus aid the teacher in covering ground. But facts committed to memory in rapid succession serve no permanent purpose,

because they are not digested, and consequently do not become an organic part of the individual. They serve to carry the pupil through a recitation or examination; but when this temporary end has been realized they lose their vitality and are soon lost in oblivion. In order that the mind of the child may be properly led from the known to the unknown, and from the concrete to the abstract, the teacher herself is obliged to take an active part in the work. Owing to a lack of psychological arrangement and the crowding of facts in the text-book, it is necessary for the teacher to digest the ideas that she wishes her pupils to obtain, and to make such plans for the recitation as will enable her to bring these ideas before the class with sufficient deliberation and in a psychological order of succession. It is only thus that the recitations will extend beyond the sphere of lesson-hearing, and partake of the nature of actual instruction.

In our schools it is rare to find recitations that may be regarded in the light of instruction. In the thought-studies, where scientific teaching is particularly required, the mechanical teachers attempt to do little, if anything, beyond hearing the pupils recite their lessons, either in the words of the book or in their own words; the progressive teachers, in addition to hearing the pupils recite what they have studied from the text-books, will take pains to explain obscure matters, to elaborate, and, when possible, to illustrate points by means of pictures, charts, and apparatus of various kinds. But it is clear that, even in the latter instance, the recitations are based on lessons studied in advance from the text-book, so that they still must be regarded as lesson-hearing, though in a modified form. True instruction will not be obtained until the teacher is substituted for the text-book, as it is then only that the principles of teaching can be properly applied. To suggest the removal of the text-book, without recommending anything in its stead, might justly be regarded as destructive criticism; but surely no one can construe my remarks in this light when I offer, as a substitute, the teacher herself.

Of course, merely to discard the text-book does not in itself suffice to render the instruction scientific; it simply constitutes the first essential step toward placing the teaching on a scientific foundation. Indeed, the early attempts to teach without a text-book are necessarily exceedingly feeble. To reach any degree of proficiency in scientific teaching is difficult, and involves years of study and practice. If we, as Americans, should feel unequal to the task, it would be better to retain the text-book. But if we believe that we

are able to do what our German colleagues have long since accomplished, then there is nothing to be gained by waiting. There is a constant complaint on the part of our teachers that the profession is not properly appreciated, but it certainly will not be, until it is made worthy of appreciation. So long as the American standard remains so low that a graduate of a district school, without further preparation, is eligible for membership in the profession, a license to teach cannot command any special respect. In Germany the word "teacher" stands for something; in our own country it stands for nothing.

The argument concerning the text-book method applies, of course, to the thought rather than the formal side of education. Where there is no thought-content, as in the mechanism of reading, writing, arithmetic, drawing, and music, the text-book question scarcely comes into play. In these studies, which necessarily involve an enormous amount of repetition of identical facts and processes, a fair degree of proficiency may be obtained by the ordinary mechanical teacher. A child that reads and adds every day of his school life cannot help learning to read and add, provided his mental condition be normal. In the formal lines much can be done to improve the results simply by a skilful application of modern methods and devices, even when the principles of scientific teaching are not strictly observed. And in these lines some of our teachers are doing admirable work.

It is in the subjects involved in building up the thought-content of the mind that the teacher finds the golden opportunity to carry her ideals into practice. It is from the ideas presented in them that the child secures that fund of knowledge which will exert a strong influence in determining his ideals and interests in life. The most prominent among these studies are geography, history, and the natural sciences. While, in the old school, the time devoted to these branches is small as compared with that given to the formal ones, in the growing school the tendency is to bring the thought-studies more and more to the foreground.

The fact that the thought-studies are destined to come ever more into prominence renders doubly urgent the necessity for teaching them in a way that will do most toward the development of the faculties—moral as well as intellectual. It is admitted by perhaps all our educators, that, of the standard subjects in the curriculum, geography and history are the most poorly taught. In my opinion they will not be satisfactorily taught until the text-book method is abandoned and the principles of teaching are properly applied. As to the natural

sciences, in some of our schools the work is conducted on scientific principles, but, taken all in all, there has been, thus far, very little science-teaching in our country. Most superintendents have hesitated to introduce this line of work, on the ground that the teachers are not prepared to care for it properly. Those that have held sway longest are perhaps physics and physiology; and these, in all but individual instances, are still taught by the text-book method.

In spite of their bar to scientific teaching, there has been strong opposition to the removal of the text-books, and particularly for two reasons: it is claimed that, if the text-book should be abolished, the child would not acquire the ability to use books; and that the removal of the text-book would cause the teacher to do the work for the pupil, so that the child's mind would be no longer properly disciplined. Both objections are, in my opinion, entirely unfounded.

First, the fundamental purpose of education does not lie in teaching the child how to use books; this is simply an important incident, which it is well for the teacher to bear in mind. Again, to study a lesson from the text-book does not teach the child how to use books; it simply leads him to perform a task, either to please his teacher or to avoid punishment. To know how to use books is to understand how to look up sources of information, and this ability cannot be acquired by committing to memory the words of the text-book. By directing the pupils to write compositions, and by frequently calling for debates, in each instance suggesting lists of works to be used for reference, more can be done in a few exercises than can be accomplished by years of lesson-study. Further, the ideal does not lie simply in teaching the child how to use books; it lies rather in developing a love for them, and, consequently, the desire to seek them. Under proper instruction the pupil will become so much interested in his subject that he will voluntarily go to them for further information. There is nothing that so much tends to destroy the love for books as the drudgery involved in committing lessons to memory, and the happiest day of many a child's life is that on which he hands in his books. Lastly, the abolition of the text-book does not at all imply discarding the use of books; in certain subjects they will always be required.

Second, when the teacher takes the place of the text-book, the child is by no means relieved of a task; on the contrary, in a recitation conducted on scientific principles, the child is obliged to perform intellectual labor more severe in character, though less dull and

mechanical, than when he commits the contents of the text-book to memory. When he studies the text-book, he acquires his information simply by exercising his memory; in a scientific recitation, on the other hand, he is obliged to bring many of his faculties into play in order to accomplish his task.

A consideration of the reasons for the lack of professional strength will now be in order. With a clear comprehension of the causes, the remedies will suggest themselves.

The demand for good teachers is very small, the conditions under which licenses are granted being exceedingly liberal. The management of the school system, in our country, being a purely local affair, it is entirely at the mercy of local politicians, who can raise or lower the standard at their pleasure. In perhaps the majority of instances the teachers' examinations are of so low an order, that a certificate can be earned by one who has enjoyed no more than a grammar-school education, with or without a little extra coaching. In some localities a high-school education is required, and in a few instances appointments are given to those only who, in addition to a fair amount of scholarship, have obtained some professional training in a normal school. Of course, to guard against this extreme laxity, nothing would suffice short of the adoption of a national standard, which, however, cannot for the present be expected.

In the places where trained teachers are sought, there is, of course, a demand for professional strength. But is the teaching in these places markedly superior to that in other localities? The answer, unfortunately, must be in the negative; for the degree of excellence found in a given locality is by no means determined by the proportion of trained teachers in the corps. This condition of affairs, naturally, can be interpreted only in one way, namely, that the normal schools fail to graduate their pupils with the required foundation.

In thus throwing upon the normal schools the blame for the lack of professional strength, I do not wish to imply that the work of these institutions has in no way proved valuable. On the contrary, it cannot be doubted that through their instrumentality much has been done to spread the doctrine of scientific teaching, and to imbue with professional spirit even many of those who have not had the advantage of a professional training. But while, in the theory of education, the work of the professional schools has been very helpful, from the standpoint of practice, in my opinion, they have for the most part proved failures.

That professional schools cannot be expected to turn out perfect practitioners is clear; but what we have a right to expect is that their students will be graduated with a foundation that will enable them later to develop in the right direction. That this foundation, as a rule, is wanting, is proved by the fact already mentioned, that the teaching by the normal-school graduates is not strikingly superior to that of teachers who have not had a professional training. If the graduates of normal schools have not sufficient strength to rise above their immediate surroundings, and thus show their superiority over the untrained teachers, then something must be wrong with the institutions in which they received their special education.

That the work of the practice departments, thus far, has been unsatisfactory, is but the natural result of their organization. The fundamental error lies in the plain and simple fact that those employed to guide the students in acquiring the art of teaching are not selected with a view to their fitness for the work. If students are educated in the art of teaching by those who themselves have not the slightest knowledge of the art, how can we expect the results to be favorable?

In establishing a city training-school, the main consideration appears to be to find a building easy of access, and containing a room in which the students may conveniently receive their instruction in theory. The absurdity lies in the fact that, without further ado, the building in which the training-class is placed is converted into a school of practice, and the regular staff of instructors are promoted to the rank of model teachers. The students now acquire the art of teaching by observing the work of these class-teachers, and instructing under their guidance. As the foundation for their future work is laid by what they here observe and do, is it difficult to account for the fact that, after graduation, they cannot readily be distinguished from untrained teachers? In the State normal schools a more direct effort is made to select specially qualified persons as model teachers. But even in these institutions, individuals really competent to instruct in the art of teaching are, comparatively speaking, very rarely found.

In view of these facts it is clear that what is most needed, in order that the professional strength of our teachers may be increased, is to establish, in connection with the normal schools, training-departments in which students may receive such instruction in the art of teaching, that they will leave the institutions with a foundation that will enable them to develop into scientific teachers.

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CHAUTAUQUA: ITS AIMS AND INFLUENCE.

THIS summer Chautauqua comes of age. It was in 1874 that a camp-meeting on the shore of Chautauqua Lake became educational without ceasing to be religious. This Sunday-school Assembly was the germ out of which has sprung an institution which may fairly be characterized as vast,—vast in its extent, vast in the manifoldness of its activities, and vast in its influence. Now that twenty-one years have elapsed since Chautauqua first began to attract the attention of the country and the world, it ought to be feasible to discover something of its real significance as a force in our national life. It has been extravagantly eulogized, politely ignored, and sneeringly derided. There ought at length to be a possibility, even in the compass of a few pages, of presenting an outline of what it is.

The term "Chautauqua" has a twofold meaning. It stands for the name of a place, and it stands for an idea. Of these two, it is the latter that is by far the most important. Originally, "Chautauqua" was the name of a lake lying in the southwestern corner of the State of New York, and at a distance, in round numbers, of 450 miles from New York, 70 from Buffalo, and rather more than 200 from Pittsburg. This lake is 18 miles long and from 1 to 3 miles wide, and is the highest navigable water on the continent except Lake Tahoe, being 730 feet above Lake Erie, and 1,400 above the Atlantic Ocean. The site of the Assembly was at first known as Fair Point. As it became customary to speak of the Chautauqua Lake Assembly, and then of the Chautauqua Assembly, it was natural to confer the name of Chautauqua upon the site itself, and this was done in 1877.

Chautauqua the place is a summer town of frame buildings and a very few tents, well provided with water, sewers, and police. Most of the buildings are cottages, but there are a few of larger dimensions, the most important of which are the Hotel Athenæum, the Amphitheatre, the Hall of Philosophy, and the College Building. The Amphitheatre and the Hall of Philosophy are roofed, but without walls; the former has a capacity of five or six thousand people, the latter of three or four hundred. During the months of July and