

In no department of the preparation of a teacher for his life-work is more thorough training needed than in the modern conception of educational theory. Before he can properly be regarded as a fit educator, his mental processes have to become saturated with the all-embracing principle that the child's development must proceed through the exercise of its own self-activities, by way either of play or of work, in intimate relation with its immediate surroundings. He must further be equipped with a varied knowledge of the practical applications of the principle in every subject with which he has to deal, and to this end must possess a much more intimate acquaintance with the psychology of the young mind and with the world of nature forming its environment than any but a privileged few of our teachers have ever attained to. Educational theory and natural science furnish the bedrock of the superstructure, and in neither of these essentials have we so far made even a remote approximation to the lowest ideals of European countries in the training of their teachers.

The new syllabus, to which we have now to address ourselves, makes greater demands than ever on the qualifications of the teacher, and renders better training imperative. Above all other subjects better training in science, which in this connection may be taken as including geography, is demanded not only in regard to the details of teaching-method, but in the range, depth, and realism of the knowledge acquired. It is particularly unfortunate that science, as at present taught, is the feature of our schools in which their efficiency reaches its lowest ebb. Unsystematic, without co-ordination of parts, rarely commendable, and frequently inferior as it is in method and substance, it presents the teaching in its weakest aspect just where true elementary education requires the school to be strongest. The fault lies partly in the school-equipment, which is commonly insufficient; partly in the exigencies of a programme which allows barely an hour weekly for the subject under favouring circumstances; partly in the existing scheme of inspection, which in most cases has to take method for granted, inquiring only into result; but mainly, we believe, in the fact that the science-training of the teachers themselves is materially defective. With those who have not enjoyed the advantages of a college laboratory it could scarcely be otherwise. In our Normal School the scientific apparatus and illustrative objects at the service of those employed do not suffice, so far as we have ever seen, even to treat the topics experimentally, much less to furnish the means of carrying out a scheme of lessons on a realistic basis. With such an inadequate provision it would be strange indeed if the instruction did not prove barren of any real informing influences, and the barrenness finds its true reflection in the schools. With a teacher who knows his subject much may be done on proper lines, as has often been pointed out, with "simple and inexpensive" apparatus; but no simple and inexpensive training in real study—the only study of things that counts—will serve for the teacher, or give him the requisite power to deal in any effective way with the topics in school. On the absence of a sufficient amount of science-teaching in the training of teachers the Commissioners to whose report we have already referred lay great stress, regarding the defect as of very serious import. "An intelligent attitude to modern industrial and commercial activity," they justly point out, "demands a far greater amount of science now than was requisite in the past," and, recurring frequently to the matter in its various aspects, they strongly urge the necessity of making much fuller provision for a proper realistic treatment in the training college and in schools. It behoves us to learn a similar lesson and speedily mend our ways.

In geography, as in future to be interpreted, the scheme outlined constitutes a revolution in methods and objects of study, and our schools and schoolmasters are to be excused if their mental and material equipment is not yet in a position to deal properly with the newer features of which the conception itself is new—at least, to New Zealand schools. The scheme is drawn on admirable lines, and gives promise of educational developments of the greatest value. Possibly to attempt all contained in it may prove to be beyond us, but, if the method be right, that possibility need not give us serious concern. That the ideal to be sought is worthy of our best efforts no one can question, and in any case we have to remember that to strive in the pursuit of worthy aims is in itself a profitable ambition. Who, besides, will be prepared to deny the truth so quaintly expressed in the familiar lines of George Herbert?—

Who aimeth at the sky  
Shoots higher far than than he who means a tree.

The keynote of modern education is realism. This is fully recognised in the syllabus that is henceforth to be our guide. Towards natural phenomena the attitude of teacher and pupil must now undergo a complete change. Facts within the daily life and experience of the children must be studied realistically. All learning must be from the things themselves, not about things. The teaching must as far as possible engage the self-activities of the pupil and bear directly on his surroundings. All this, with much more of a similar nature, is excellent in conception, and quite in accordance with the true spirit of the educator, but the educator like other workmen must have his tools. This raises a very practical question—of apparatus, appliances, expense—which has to find an early answer. To provide smaller schools with "simple and inexpensive" apparatus sufficient for science-teaching need raise no difficulty, but behind this there is the graver question of laboratories for district high schools, and possibly for others of the larger type. Proper provision for the accommodation of handwork and domestic-economy classes has again to be considered, and that immediately. Further, for general illustrative purposes many things are wanting which must be furnished before the intentions of the new syllabus can be carried out according to the spirit and method of its prescriptions—sets of weights and measures, pictures and diagrams, physical maps and models, museum specimens with cases to contain them, balances and magnetic compasses are among those to be included in the list. With these matters, the size, shape, and lighting of rooms, and the form and proper adjustment and disposition of the seating accommodation, more particularly in infant departments, require reconsideration. Suitable infant