

Our heart's desire is for something infinitely better—for the strenuous fervour of impetuous youth, pure, honest, brave, and generous. And first and foremost in this moral training should be inculcated the fact that labour is a blessing in disguise, the foundation of all true prosperity, the only valid plea for existence, the most potent protection from folly and vice. There is a growing tendency to regard work as a necessary evil to be shirked as much as possible, and to consider life tolerable only when spent in a constant round of pleasure and amusement, even at the risk of moral degradation. Far otherwise thought the poet who wrote

Is it so small a thing
To have enjoyed the sun
To have lived light in the spring
To have loved, to have thought, to have done ?

After this statement of the newer educational ideas, which we trust may be of benefit to some of our younger teachers at least—for what teacher worthy of the name does not crave an ideal?—we pass on to consider the question of the increased burden supposed to be thrown upon teachers by the newer methods. And here we should like to say that in our opinion these methods, far from adding to the actual school-work of the teacher, really render it lighter and more pleasant. There is now a greater sense of freedom in the general management of the school, more variety both in the subjects taught and in the manner of treating them, and a fuller opportunity of turning to the best advantage the predilections of the teacher and the circumstances of the taught than existed under former conditions. In one sense there is an increase of work, for which, however, there is compensation in the advantages enumerated: systematic preparation of work and of materials for illustration (hitherto, of course, indispensable to the genuine teacher) has now attained proportions formidable to the lukewarm or inexperienced teacher. That this point should be emphasized is no small good. The old system which made it possible for a teacher to go day by day through the same stereotyped routine without break or variety, without, in many cases, any preparation for the day's work as it came, was ripe for condemnation. Careful preparation no doubt calls for a slight exercise of self-denial on the part of the teacher, encroaching, as it may do, on the "honeyed indolence of evening hours" to which he has been accustomed; but it is well for him to face the question boldly whether the discomfort entailed by such slight self-denial is not to be preferred to the regretful sense of the fruitlessness of misapplied labour.

The style and quality of the annual and quarterly schemes of work presented to us are still, in a good many cases, unsatisfactory; though we gladly admit that there are many honourable exceptions which meet with our heartiest approval. Of the inferior samples, some are lacking in necessary detail; others are ill-adapted to the educational needs, and take little advantage of the educational opportunities, of the district; others do not show any principle of selection or make any use of correction; finally, some are impotent, scrappy, soulless transcripts of the printed syllabus. So much are we impressed with the advantages to be derived from good schemes of work in systematizing and correlating the work done in the various school-subjects, and in rendering easy and simple the estimation of each quarter's progress, that we would impress upon teachers the absolute necessity of giving the matter their utmost care and consideration. In connection with this subject, we have to express surprise that so little advantage should be taken of the privilege of grouping, liberally granted by the regulations. It is simply painful to contemplate the waste of energy involved in giving separate reading-lessons to each class in a school, the total roll-number of which is, say, twenty.

In connection with the quarterly examinations now conducted by the teachers we desire to point out, that, while the standard of the teacher and of the Inspector need not be identical, there is at present in some districts too great a degree of divergence between them. The teacher's optimistic nature may in some cases account for this; but in other cases we are inclined to suspect that the lowness of the teacher's system of marking is induced, either by purely local considerations affecting his position, or is adopted to avert for the time being the consequences of his own lack of energy or skill. However this may be, we have no wish to interfere with any teacher's liberty in the matter. We have simply to point out that continued disagreement between the Inspector's and the teacher's estimate of the work done in any school, and especially of the work done in the higher standards, must ultimately give rise to a suspicion that something is wrong somewhere, a state of things which the Inspector certainly is, and the teacher as certainly ought to be, anxious to avoid. When speaking on this subject we may be allowed to say that too frequent examinations should be avoided. It should be continually borne in mind that education, rightly so called, is a continuous process in which each almost imperceptible advance is the result of subtly working forces; not, as some seem to conceive it still, as a forced preparation, by unnatural leaps and bounds, for regularly recurring examinations.

In our judgment cram is a still-decreasing quantity in our schools. This is a matter, however, on which we scarcely dare to dogmatize since even such a weighty authority as Mr. Birrell declares that no one will persuade him that cramming has not become such a fine art as to enable a candidate "to simulate knowledge to an extraordinary extent." On one point we may reassure the public—that in none of our schools, in regard to the ordinary school-work, is there anything like overpressure; indeed, the main danger we apprehend (in the case of a few schools) is of an entirely opposite description.

In some of our higher grade schools the education of the infants is carried on in a most satisfactory manner, considering the meagreness of the staff allowed. It seems to be taken for granted that an infant-teacher can manage a greater number of children than a teacher of one of the higher standard classes can. We feel thoroughly persuaded that this is not the case. Even though it is granted that the course of instruction is simpler and makes less demand on the teacher's resources in an infant-room than in a higher class—a concession which, on psychological grounds, we are not disposed to make—it must be remembered that children coming for the first time under the influence of school discipline present very great difficulties indeed to the teacher in charge. Their native restlessness has to be checked; their undisciplined impulses have to be turned into profitable channels; and, finally, their attention, fitful and easily distracted at first, has to be cultivated till it becomes a powerful instrument