

broadened and cultivated is of ten times more importance, both in the lower and the higher ranks of life. We are not without some very significant experience on this point. In girls' schools (says the *Spectator*) we have long had a form of technical instruction of undoubted utility. Needlework is not only a beautiful art, but a necessary of our domestic life. It has received a large, perhaps an inordinate, share of attention in all the elementary schools of the country. From the point of view of those who desire to make the primary school effective as a preparation for the duties and responsibilities of an intelligent life, the amount of time and effort often spent appears to be out of all proportion to the value of the results produced. In fact, experience shows that needlework does little or nothing to improve the general capacity of the learner, and that proficiency in this one art may easily co-exist with dulness and mental vacuity, and with complete helplessness in regard to all the other duties and claims of life." Our contemporary concludes as follows:—"Subject only to the inevitable limitations of age and opportunities, the true educational reformer will recognize the claim of every English child to the best and most generous education he is able to receive. Whether we are legislating for Eton or for the humblest ragged-school, it behooves us to bear in mind that the first business of a school is to communicate the elements of truth, to awaken the faculties, to stimulate thought, and to place in the hands of the pupil the instruments of future acquisition. As a secondary and subordinate object, we may well aim also at imparting more of tactual and visual power, a fuller acquaintance with the material forces in the world, and greater skill in handling them. This part of training has been too much disregarded, and has a rightful claim to recognition; but to assign to it the first place in a scheme

of either primary or secondary education, would be to disregard all the best lessons of experience, and to bring about a mischievous reaction."
—*The Schoolmaster*.

ORAL AND TEXT-BOOK INSTRUCTION.—The difference between the oral and the so-called text-book method has been defined by Dr. William T. Harris in a paper on the "Teaching of Natural Science in the Public Schools," which is published in Barden's "School-Room Classics." In the oral method the teacher is the general source of information; in the other, the pupil is sent to the text-book. In neither is cramming with mere words considered good teaching; and yet, with a poor teacher, it may happen under either. The excellence of the oral method should be its freedom from stiffness and pedantry, and its drawing out of the pupil to self-activity in a natural manner. Its abuse happens when the subject is presented in a confused manner, or scientific precision is lost by using too familiar language or by too much pouring-in without exercising the pupil by making him do the reciting and explanation. The excellence of the text-book method consists in getting the pupil to work instead of working for him; in teaching him how to study for himself, and to overcome difficulties by himself, instead of solving them for him. Unless the teacher knows this and directs all his efforts to achieve this end, very great abuses creep in. Thus it may happen that the teacher requires the pupil merely to memorize the words of the book, and does not insist upon any clear understanding of it. Indolent teachers lean upon the text-book and neglect to perform their own part of the recitation. But in the hands of the good teacher the text-book is a powerful instrument to secure industry, precision, accuracy, and self-help on the part of the pupil.