

It becomes, then, the business of teachers to supply, in assigning and hearing recitations, this deficiency in our text-books; and to do this, "teaching by the page" must be abandoned in most cases, and teaching by topics substituted. Especially does this apply to teaching geography, grammar, history, and the higher branches of natural science.

The person who teaches these branches at the rate of so many pages a day is not to be denounced, for he is doing the best he can, and a wearisome time he has of it, too, no doubt; but he, no less than his pupils, is to be pitied—pitied, not for any thing that has befallen him, but for some thing which has not befallen him. But, to teach by topics instead of by pages, it is necessary for the teacher to know, not only what is in one text book, but what is in other text-books on the same subject. In short, he must understand the subject he proposes to teach, and keep his particular text book as a guide—as a servant, not as a master.

It is not to be expected that more than a limited outline of any subject can be given in our ordinary text-books, yet in many cases this skeleton is presented to pupils as a specimen of the complete man. Is it any wonder that they find it "dry bones?"

Again, teachers and text-book makers will do well to study the nature of the process by which the young mind becomes acquainted with the facts around us. The smallest boy or girl in our schools will tell us that wood burns if put in a fire. But, you say, here is a piece of wood from Africa; it is piece of a palm tree; are you certain that this will burn? "Yes, it will burn for it is wood," will be the probable answer. The child has perhaps never seen more than two or three kinds of wood, yet by a method of induction it concludes that all wood burns. An hour's lecture on the chemical constitution of our bodies, the atomic theory of matter, and the relation and the effect which the atoms of a certain imponderable ether have upon the rotary motion of the atoms of animals and vegetable matter, will not convince your pupils one tithe as forcibly that a red hot piece of iron will burn their hand if brought in contact with it, as will one accidental collision with a heated poker.

Yet, could we not deduce from the one as conclusive a proof as from the other? Certainly, but it is not the kind of reasoning for which the child is prepared. In youth the great, and, we may say, almost exclusive source of knowledge, is perception through the senses. Hence, the more teachers can illustrate by means of objects, the more they can bring demonstration to bear upon the perceptive faculties, the more successful will be their efforts.

To accomplish this, it will be found that text-book teaching, as opposed to oral teaching, and page teaching as contrasted with topical teaching, will be found wanting if weighed in the balance.
—*Clinton Democrat.*

Normal Schools.

Normal Schools in this country are of comparatively recent date. The mode of conducting them is still a work of experiment—with some of us, at least. The experience of normal schools in Europe is not in any great degree available to us. We must determine for ourselves the best method of conducting schools for training teachers. That is our work—not to build up institutions to rival our academies and colleges, but institutions to prepare teachers for the common schools. This I regard as a work worthy of the ablest and best-trained minds.

Our work is, to prepare men and women to become teachers. *How shall we teach our pupils to teach?*

How did we, who are "deemed and taken" to be teachers, learn to teach? Did we not all learn to teach by teaching, or by trying to teach, just as we all learned to walk by walking, or by trying to walk? At the outset, we followed the example of those who taught us. We selected one or more of our teachers as a model or as models. We did not servilely imitate them. Their example gave direction to our course, which was perhaps subsequently modified, corrected, improved, by our experience.

Teaching is an art. The teacher is an artist; he is a professor of the finest of the fine arts—that of developing, directing, "giving form and pressure" to the immortal mind. His mode of acquiring skill is analogous to that of the painter. The painter selects his models, not that he may copy them, but to aid him in developing his conceptions of excellence. He also catches something of the spirit of his model—practises a kind of unconscious imitation, which is not at all inconsistent with originality. In like manner, the teacher may catch something of the spirit of his model, and practise an unconscious imitation.

In the fine arts, or, rather, in the other fine arts, the importance of models is fully admitted. No amount of instruction on the principles of an art, and no amount of effort under the guidance of those principles, will supply the place of models. Principles themselves can be taught most effectively by skilful exemplification.

The first thing that we need for the benefit of our pupils in normal schools is good teachers—model teachers. The very best educational talent should be secured. What we want is, not doctors of divinity and of law and of philosophy, and mistresses of arts and devices, but men and women who know how to teach.

In the next place, we should teach our pupils the branches which they will be called to teach—reading, spelling, arithmetic, geography, penmanship, the English language. Other branches should be added; but I think these should be taught in the normal school. Two objects will be gained by this:

1. The pupils will be acquainted with the studies they will be called to teach.

2. In the process of being properly taught, they will learn to teach; they will, at least, be made familiar with good models. This I regard as far more important than lectures on the art of teaching.

Some suppose that the normal school teaches the elementary branches from an unfortunate necessity—the pupils come so imperfectly prepared that the normal school must turn aside from its proper work, that of training its pupils in the science and art of teaching, to drill them in studies with which they ought to be familiar before they come.

From such I differ. I would teach the pupils these studies because I regard it as one of the most efficient means of teaching them to teach. Let the pupil be taught by one who knows how to teach, and he will be apt to go and do likewise. I grant that it is the province of the normal school to teach the principles of the art of teaching—that is, so far as is practicable. It requires some degree of mental discipline fully to understand what is meant by a principle, and its relation to a rule deduced from it, for one's self. We must adapt our instructions to the capacities and mental condition of our pupils. It may be easy for us to lay down principles systematically; but it may not be easy for our pupils to understand us. We should teach principles so far as we can; but I apprehend that to pupils in the normal school they are best taught in connection with class-instruction, as exemplified in the teaching received.

It may be said that, by requiring a higher degree of attainment as the condition of admittance, the course could be elevated. That is true. But is the object of a normal school to secure as elevated a course as possible, or to use the means best adapted to make good common-school teachers? If this be the object, then one of the means should be thorough instruction in the studies they will be called upon to teach.

With this instruction should be blended what is usually termed normal instruction, or instruction in the art of teaching. When a topic has been properly presented to the class, in a manner adapted to the condition of the class, attention can be called to the proper method of presenting it to minds in a different condition. The pupil will thus get the idea that the best teaching is that best adapted to the minds of those taught. You may give a lecture or course of lectures on the modes of teaching arithmetic, or you may blend that instruction with the presentation of the successive topics of instruction. The latter, I am inclined to think,