

guard against the "atomic" method in questioning—a cut-feed "method" which may be, presumably, suited to the capacity of the "missing link," but is a hindrance to an intelligent child. And indeed if the Yankee "method" become general, and the law of heredity fail not, in a few generations specimens of the M. L. will not be far to seek.

It is safe to assume that where there is a healthy brain there is mind; where there is mind there is capacity for attention, for self-active direction of normal power, and that this self-activity of mind works with effect, *because* it works with interest when operating on material that challenges effort. There is little doubt that many a child loses interest in the trivial things presented as mental pabulum, and is pronounced "dull" when he is only disgusted, and "inattentive" when it is but attentive to his own more interesting trains of ideas. The conclusion of the matter is, do not waste time and mental force in asking too many questions of the past—questions which are below the child's present capacity and attainments, which begin, continue, and end in the "concrete," which destroy interest, and hence disqualify the mind rather than prepare it for the reception and elaboration of new material.

*Teaching too difficult matter.* In the second place: The teacher must discover the child's knowledge in order to avoid the other extreme—the presentation of material which is beyond the child's power to assimilate. This error is, in British Schools, more common than that described in the foregoing paragraph, and is perhaps equally harmful. Learning is a process of interpretation, that is, the knowledge acquired yesterday must be used to interpret what is presented to-day. There is therefore learning only when there is bringing to bear past experiences upon the new material. If this

material is "above the learner's head," how is it possible that there can be assimilation? If A, B, C are related ideas in a certain topic, and the learner is in possession of A but not of B, it is worse than useless to present to him C; the mind cannot be brought into relation with C. There may be clear arrangement, fluent exposition, and apposite illustration, and yet on the part of the learner there is neither knowledge-growth, nor mind-growth; and the teacher is left to wonder how so "good a lesson" should be to the pupil words and nothing more. Even good teachers are prone to this error of asking questions of the future. A teacher of zeal and energy is anxious for the progress of his pupils; he is tempted to forget that there is no possibility of forcing progress—which is a thing of growth resulting only from the self-activity of the mental organism—he gives a long but lucid lesson; he has not time to test fully on retention, but finding that part of the lesson seems to have been fairly taken in, he hastily concludes that all has been appropriated. And so, when he proceeds to give a new lesson, logically depending on the last, he finds, after much waste of energy and much discouragement to the learner, that he has been vainly appealing to a power of comprehension that as yet does not exist.

It must never be forgotten that the apprehension—the interpretation—of the new matter must occur through what the mind has already within itself; that is to say, the interpretation—the true assimilation—occurs not merely through certain ideas or groups of ideas held in the mind, but through an increased mental power—capacity in a given direction, developed in acquiring such ideas. If, for example, a young pupil has mastered the number five, he is not only in possession of certain ideas concerning the number (as that 4 and 1 are 5,