

For the REVIEW.]

Concentric Instruction.

[Abstract of Dr. Hall's paper before the Dominion Educational Association, Toronto.]

The present century is distinguished by the activity exhibited in the sphere of scientific and practical pedagogy.

At the present time educational thought and activity are being directed to child study, the unity of the subject-matter of instruction, and the adaptation of the subject-matter to the present condition and easy progress of the child. This trend in educational thought and activity is due chiefly to the influence of a few great men who wrote and taught during the first half of the present century.

The first of them, Pestalozzi, said: "I have clearly exhibited the highest principle in acknowledging observation as the foundation in all knowledge."

Fröbel "was dissatisfied with the disjointed and scrappy character of common school education." Herbart, the third of these, has directed the attention of educators to the study and observation of the child, to the proper order and connection of the subject-matter of instruction, and to the adaptation of this subject-matter to the present requirements of the child. The application of these principles to practical school work has already resulted in animating systems of education and in bringing order out of chaotic and congested courses of study.

In accomplishing this work Herbart has extended and utilized the essential principles embodied in the teachings of Pestalozzi, Fröbel, Rousseau, and others.

By him the sense-perceptions of Pestalozzi have been extended and assimilated with perceptions already present in consciousness.

The apperception has become the guide by which intelligent teachers are directed in the selection and presentation of the subject-matter of instruction. Even a partial recognition of this principle requires that the subject matter be graded, related and unified.

The material of study begun in the home should be continued, enriched and unified in the school.

In the selection and arrangement of this material attention is directed to the objective and practical side of education, as well as to the subjective and psychological. These home subjects consist of the beginnings of knowledge in language, moral and religious instruction, domestic and social organizations, varying and limited conditions, food, shelter, clothing, commercial and industrial ideas, vegetable and animal life. Indeed the home and its environment form "a world of its own." If these home subjects become the material of instruction in the schools, there need be no groping

after the "central" subject or "core" of study. The central subject is that which arouses and develops a many sided interest in the child, and around or to which the others most naturally adjust themselves.

This rounded course of home studies, selected, arranged and presented in conformity with the present attainments of the child, will cause him to exercise all his faculties, sustain a real interest in the work, and render educative instruction possible in the school.

Under these conditions the child is a questioner and investigator. He examines and tests everything within his reach and is therefore actively engaged in learning.

When the child enters school he frequently finds the subject-matter of instruction disconnected and unrelated with his home knowledge. He is unable to apperceive the new material, and soon becomes accustomed to chatter and imitate rather than question and investigate. The change that takes place in the interest, activity and naturalness of the child, after he enters school, is due chiefly to the disconnected character of the subjects of study.

As the child is unable to understand the work, the teacher is compelled to do for him what he would do for himself under proper conditions. The most abnormal results follow, the child becomes the passive recipient of material that he is unable to assimilate or understand. The desire for real knowledge diminishes and the use of words usurps its place.

Disinclination for real knowledge soon changes into aversion, and the active, earnest child becomes a morbid, dull recipient of disconnected, borrowed knowledge. Some maintain that knowledge and activity are closely related, and that the child's spontaneous activity is the force that sets the mechanism of the senses in motion.

Among the various home-studies, elementary geography is especially valuable on account of its human side or nearness to the child, and also on account of its relation to or source of relative subjects. In this study take the child to nature and give him an opportunity of seeing the objects of study with his own eyes, of handling them with his own hands, and of expressing the ideas received in his own words. In the study of this central subject what a number of related subjects come trooping along, as soil, climate, vegetation, animal life, food, clothing, shelter, industries, common and social life. These subjects are related to or a part of the central subject, and those who study elementary geography by studying nature must incidentally gain much knowledge concerning these related science subjects. The home studies are especially rich in material suitable for exercises in reading, language, history, literature, writing, drawing and music.