

This is one of the first requisites in preparing to give a new lesson. For the new lesson must have some logical connection with what has been previously taught, that is, it can be interpreted only by what has been retained from previous lessons, and so it is impossible to properly aid the learner to assimilate the new with the old, unless we know what the latter is and how it stands in the learner's mind. If this is not known we may waste time in two ways.

*Presenting too easy stimulus.* In the first place: We may dwell on what is already perfectly well-known to the learner, and thus quench rather than excite interest by monotonous repetition what has lost all charm of novelty. The tendency of certain modern (American) methods is strongly in this direction. Ingenious minds have been long in travail to discover a royal road to learning; they have at last discovered it by the simple expedient of removing difficulties instead of developing strength to conquer them. It appears to be thought that the teacher can take the place of the learner by properly preparing the material, that is by atomizing knowledge—the mental aliment—and administering it in homeopathic doses to the recipient mind. Or, if some admit that the child must himself climb the arduous ladder that leads to the high plane of capacity and skill, the ladder, it is thought, can be freed from all its arduousness by infinitely diminishing the distance between the rounds. If anyone thinks this is too strongly put, let him open almost any educational journal or recent educational work, and he will find abundant proof of the prevalence of the theory: “develop strength by making things easy.” Witness the infinitesimal doses prescribed in “model” number lessons, language lessons, etc. Witness the “mob” of questions that the young

teacher is recommended to ask on three or four lines of a “model reading lesson,” a mere scrap which can never enter into organized knowledge, nor have any effect in organizing faculty. Witness the trivial “development” questions recommended for the development of ideas which are already in the child's mind—if he has a minimum of brain power—as clearly as they can be there in his presumed stage of mental growth.

Is it necessary, is it good “method,” to give forty or fifty pages of questions on the numbers from one to five? Are from 100 to 300 questions required for reasonable practice on the number two? as e.g., How many thumbs on the right hand? How many on the left? How many on both hands? John had one apple and his sister gave him another, how many had he then? Two birds are sitting on a tree, if one bird flies away how many will be left? How many eyes has Willie? If he shuts one how many will remain open? And so on, if not *ad infinitum*, certainly *ad nauseam*, so far as concerns every child with a modicum of brains. Reasonable repetition is necessary—necessary to skill in certain work in the primary stages, necessary to the accumulation of the right experiences and the development of mental and moral power in all stages. But there is a point at which it ceases to be of any value for the growth of either knowledge or skill. Unintelligent repetition cannot strengthen intelligence, and so *drill*—the mighty instrument of little men—may be carried to a point where it is not only useless but positively pernicious.

In primary schools, perhaps in all schools, incalculable time is wasted in a wearisome monotony of *drills*, tending to form merely sensuous associations, and continued long after such associations have been actually formed. Let the teacher be on his