

For the REVIEW.]

Educational Conservatism.

Ever since organized existence found a place on the surface of our globe the conditions of life have been continually changing. The forms and habits of all living things are being constantly modified by their surroundings. When unable to adjust themselves to the changing conditions they soon disappear or sink to a lower form of existence.

The same principle characterizes the progress of human society and the advance in educational methods.

The changes necessary to the individual into harmony with his environment meet with much opposition and are often painfully slow, but when secured they produce a grateful harmony.

In education the intellectual conservatism of mankind is very marked. "It demands more than ordinary pedagogic genius to keep the mind always open at all periods of life to the access of new ideas."

Reforms in education seldom come from seats of learning. Our oldest and ablest educationists become so habituated to the ideas on which they were nurtured that they are unable to take in the full import of new ideas, no matter how anxious they may be for improvement. In the past, educational reforms seldom originated as the result of a definite searching after better methods. They arose from various extraneous causes. But the times are changing in that respect. We may expect that in future the employment of modern methods of scientific research will result in the discovery of the laws of mental development and the nature of child mind. In such a psychological laboratory as that of Dr. Stanley Hall's at Clark University scientific principles for the future guidance of educationists are sure to be worked out.

We need not wonder at the difficulty that many of our foremost educationists experience in becoming reconciled to an improved curriculum of studies. As Von Raumer remarks: "It is difficult for the unaccustomed sight to compass the greatly widened pedagogic horizon."

For example, to depose Latin from the authoritative place which it held for a thousand years seems like sacrilege, even though conformity to modern culture demands it.

Moreover, these changes imply vastly increased intellectual activity on the part of the teacher. The accustomed and therefore easy routine of thought that gives fairly good results in arithmetic or Latin would never serve in the teaching of science. It therefore requires a strong sense of duty and much zeal to cause a teacher to assume greatly increased

work with no apparent increase of reward, or at least of that kind of reward which he is capable of appreciating.

For the improved course of study, not only are better teachers required but vastly better and more expensive appliances are also demanded. Properly equipped laboratories are a necessity of the new education, especially in the secondary and higher schools. Seeing, then, that science teaching demands better preparation on the part of the teacher, harder and more active work while teaching, and more expensive apparatus, need we wonder that those whose principal stock in trade consists mainly in a certain amount of Latin, prefer the good old way?

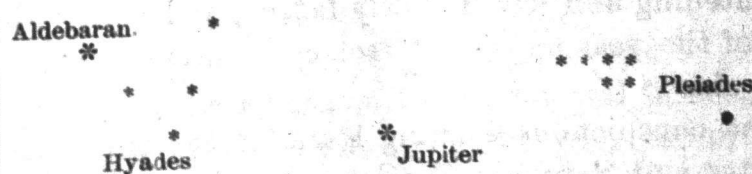
Another real hindrance to the ready acceptance of an improved curriculum arises from the many failures made by its advocates in attempting subjects which they were ill-prepared to teach.

Sir Philip Magnus tells us that "the methods of teaching science which have been, until very recently, uniformly adopted in most schools, are of little or no use for the real purpose of education, the training of the faculties, and the discipline of the mind."

It is therefore incumbent on those who would force science into the curriculum, that they use every possible means to have it taught so that its disciplinary value will equal that of the classics. BEORACHTER.

A Problem for Amateur Astronomers.

Most of the readers of the REVIEW have no doubt been watching the movements of Jupiter and Saturn during the recent clear evenings of March and April. In the western sky Jupiter will be visible for a few weeks yet, and his course in the constellation Taurus will be watched with the keenest interest by those who have been watching his retrograde and direct motions during the past six months. For two or three months he has been on his direct or eastward motion. The diagram below will give some idea of his position as seen on the 7th of April:



In January he was below the Pleiades, forming with Aldebaran (in the Hyades) and the Pleiades a right angled triangle, the right angle being at the Pleiades. He has since been moving upwards nearly in line with the ecliptic, in his eastward motion, making the angle more and more acute each evening. About the last of April he will be in line with Aldebaran and the Pleiades just to the right of the open part of the V-shaped cluster of the Hyades.