

answers covered a page and a half of "letter paper." They consisted, for the most part, (1) of statements of questions they would ask the pupils about the numbers and figures below six, to be sure that they were ready for this new knowledge; (2) of an examination of their knowledge of the number six; (3) testing their knowledge of the written and printed word "six"; (4) asking them if they would not like to know some way of denoting *six* except by the word; (5) making the figure and having them imitate; (6) drilling them upon the use of the figure in expressing the number in several groups of different objects, each containing six.

The teacher's criticism of these papers probably occurred at the next recitation, which we could not attend. Here was the idea of definiteness and successive steps, evidently; and from the point of view of teacher and class the question was generally well answered.

But was not the point of view badly chosen? Is it not bad teaching to give these young teachers the idea that so elaborate a process as the one described is necessary to teach a child the figure "6," when it already knows all the numbers to *ten*, and all the figures for numbers below *six*? Is it not magnifying too much the "mint, anise and cummin" of teaching to the neglect of more important matters? Or, perhaps better, is it not giving to young teachers a false notion of thoroughness? Is the method of teaching the digit "6," under the circumstances given, or under any circumstances, of sufficient importance to consume two recitation hours in learning it and one in teaching the figure to children, *provided* the teacher has a due appreciation of the necessity of making the pupils always associate the figure with the number?

Rote teaching is abominable for the reason that the symbols used are without meaning to the learner. In fact they are not *symbols*, but are treated as if they were the things themselves.

But is there not danger that in trying to avoid this Scylla we fall into the error of forgetting that the essential thing is that the figure or word shall carry with it its meaning, by the emphasis we put upon the *method* of securing this result? Is not the study of this infinite detail of *method* a use of energy that might be used upon weightier things belonging to method; and does it not tend to narrow the range of vision of the young teachers? There is much in the details of method that may be left to the teacher, provided he sees clearly the thing to be done. The effectiveness of a method lies in its spontaneity. Is it not such normal school teaching as we have described that brings the study of methods into unmerited contempt with many plain matter-of-fact people?—*The Public-School Journal*.

EDUCATIONAL OPINION.

A system of daily markings at the close of each school exercise may suit teachers who hear lessons without teaching them, but if the intellectual life of the school is to be awakened and fostered, the teacher must not be hampered by the imposition of mechanical devices. Mechanical perfection in a school is intellectual torpor, and a merit book I can regard in no other light than a letter that killeth. — *Superintendent Crocket, N. B.*

One or other of two things is inevitable, and inevitable by a natural law, if our secondary education is to remain as it is. The common school must deteriorate or the university must be lowered to a secondary school. The efficiency of a common school cannot be maintained unless it is brought into sympathetic touch with something higher than itself. The grammar schools, as organized, do not meet this want. The gap between the common school and the university is too great to admit of a direct uplifting influence. It cannot stimulate the common school by drawing it up into touch with itself, but the common school, like the heavier mass, must by the sheer weight of its members, drag the university down. If the province is not prepared to sacrifice the one or the other of these interests, and I am sure it is not, I see no way of preserving them than by supplying the gap that will unify, and bring into organic relation all the parts of our educational system.—*Supt. Crocket, N. B.*

As the great value of this kind of training (science of common things) is every year more clearly manifested, it becomes necessary for teachers to qualify for science teaching, otherwise they cannot keep abreast of the times and maintain their standing. It may be objected by some that holidays are required for needful rest and recreation. Extended experience, however, proves that change of environment, the intercourse of congenial companions and the pleasing mental stimulus of new ideas, are more pleasing agencies than ignoble rest. Summer schools, originated by the grand and good Agassiz, are every year becoming more popular and useful.—*Supervisor McKay, Halifax.*

The right spirit in a class is nearly everything. The method of instruction may be poor, and there may be many things about the order and gradation that are imperfect, and yet if the teacher has the power to arouse in the pupils a spirit of inquiry, and a desire to learn what it is necessary for him to know, the pupils will make advancement and the result of the school will be good. But without the right spirit, it is impossible to make a *good* school, however well it may appear to the visitor who cannot see below the surface.