

FADS IN MODERN EDUCATION

THERE is nothing new under the sun, says the Preacher. If he were to revisit the light among us with whom even steam is becoming something of an old story—if he were here in our age of automobiles, aeroplanes, electricity, and radium, he would certainly open his eyes very wide indeed, and admit that his statement was a great deal too sweeping. But it is surely a curious illustration of the aspect of truth reflected, however one-sidedly, in his words, that this subject on which I am about to write, was treated two thousand three hundred and thirty-two years ago last March, in the Theatre of Dionysius at Athens, before the astonishingly modern people of that antique city, by the comic poet Aristophanes. The comedy called by him the "Clouds," produced in the year 423 B.C., might quite justly though much less imaginatively have been entitled "Fads in Modern Education." It may be interesting to see what he made of the everlasting theme, still green and flourishing as the perennial folly of mankind.

The old-fashioned training of the Athenian people had been extremely simple,—music, in which they included literature for the mind, and gymnastics for the body. Everybody in that town, every free man, that is, learned to read and write, and play the lyre and sing. That was considered to be just as indispensable and as much a matter of course as that everybody should learn to swim where Athene like Britannia ruled the seas.

They were in no hurry about it. They gave the boys plenty of time. The pupil sat opposite his teacher on a stool, as we can see in many of the vase-paintings, and repeated everything after him until he knew it by heart. In this way he came to have his mind stored with a great deal of excellent literature. A vast amount of epic and lyrical