

### Pessimism.

It is very discouraging to hardworking and sensitive teachers and school officers to have people constantly referring to some period in the past generally when "we were boys," and comparing adversely to the present, the state of affairs then. "Behold the men we are, and look at the young men growing up." "When we went to school we studied what we wished, and now you are compelled to study all kinds of useless branches." "Everything is going to the bad." "Teachers now have an easy time. They used to have to begin work at daylight and cease only at dark with few, if any, holidays." "Natural science, drawing, and such subjects, are only a waste of time," etc., etc.

If it is any consolation to us, it may be said that the above views are not by any means confined to matters educational, but a similar conflict is going on all along the line of progress. It is also encouraging to be told that a generation ago, pessimists existed. History, geography, and grammar, had as hard time to be introduced as other branches are having at present, and there are some even now who do not think knowledge in these subjects beneficial. There are also those who believe the old time stage coach to have its advantages over modern means of locomotion, and there are even those who deny that the world moves.

That the young men and women growing up are the equals of past generations, goes without argument. They may not know as much about some things as their fathers and grandfathers at present, but they are falling into line and doing the world's work as it has never been done before.

It is a good thing for us that ripe scholarship has always existed here and there, but it is very evident that knowledge is more generally diffused now than at any previous time in the world's history.

Books, papers, magazines, and literature of all kinds, enter more or less into the homes and lives of everyone. Progress is the watchword of the age, and it is all due to the enlightenment of the people. The schools are the backbone of a nation, and they must keep step with the times. They must not follow—they must lead. If text-books get out of date, they must be changed. The curriculum must be added to as necessity arises. There are sure to be grumblers whatever may be done, only let it be hoped that pessimism will not enter into high places, and the fountains of progress be clogged at their source.

The knowledge gained by study of such subjects as science and industrial drawing has almost revolutionized the world. Do not take pessimists too seriously, and remember, as we grow old we nearly all become conservative.

### Reading in the First Grades.

If proper methods are followed, nearly half the work of teaching reading is over when the pupil has mastered the primer and all that properly belongs to that stage. Good teaching will enable him to pronounce any ordinary syllable and therefore to pronounce the great majority of words that he has used in conversation. If in addition to this he has formed the habit of being interested in whatever he reads, he can be easily led to read any juvenile book suited to his tastes and mental development. We often see children of seven or eight or even six years who can read with comfort and keen delight the historical points of the Bible, the A. L. O. E. series, the Swiss Family Robinson, Robinson Crusoe, and other works of like character.

That this very desirable result is not secured in the case of three-fourths of our school children, is owing to defective methods. Reading and re-reading the primer and the first reader until thoroughness is secured is just the way not to succeed. The primary reading lessons should not be read after the pupil's interest in the subject begins to flag, that is, they should be read only once.

The most of the reading lessons should be composed by the pupils themselves—the expression in their own words of what they have learned from observation or experiment of the world around them. Nature lessons thus become the best lessons in reading, spelling and writing that can be found.

Miss Gilman gives expression to some valuable thoughts on this subject, in substance as follows: The best teachers agree that children taught in this way learn faster. There must be thorough drill upon the common words and idioms. Phonic work would give the power to recognize new words. It is the *power* that we are working for—the power to grasp new words and thoughts. There will be little difficulty in reading in books if the pupils understand and are keenly interested in the thought of the sentence. Select from the readers the lessons that relate to the science work. Those who teach in the country have working material in trees, flowers and living things, treasures too often unappreciated. Out-of-door observation is a very important part of the work, giving inspiration which will secure mental growth.

The children have something interesting and instructive about which to think, talk, write and read. Because they are interested they learn faster, more easily and naturally. Besides learning to read they are working in language, geography and the sciences, and developing physically, mentally and spiritually.

The one thing needful for this delightful work is a teacher full of enthusiasm, who can through earnest study work out her own plan. Only let her begin with faith, learning of Him who taught from birds and flowers and blessed the children.