

Efforts have been made to introduce kindergarten work, but have met with little success. The best work has been done at the Kaianai School, and its excellence indicates the interest and intelligence displayed by the pupils. At Stratford also it has been introduced, and the high attendance on days when previously the attendance would have been low shows how it appeals to the pupils. As the department now makes grants to schools where kindergarten work is taught to the lower classes, and where allied but more advanced work is taught to the higher classes, greater attention may be induced. But something more is needed, and I consider that in the larger centres of population kindergarten schools for pupils under our present school-age should be established. In the older countries, where the value of kindergarten work has been long recognised, much of it is undertaken with pupils at an age lower than that at which they may be entered on our rolls, and at an age when the training is most beneficial. Pupils would "learn in play," and would come to our preparatory classes equipped with knowledge and training acquired by methods conformable to child nature, and there would be no necessity for "unlearning," as is often the case with pupils who have received unskilled instruction. Moreover, the children would be more favourably disposed towards school-work, by no means an unimportant item so far as progress is concerned. Such special schools as I have referred to could be established only in the larger towns, but in centres where the attendance at the school is over a certain number—say, 150—children between the ages of four and five might be admitted and an extra pupil-teacher appointed. Much might be done by the Boards, but it would be better for the Department to recognise and acknowledge the need, and provide such financial assistance as may be necessary to equip a kindergarten department and to carry it on efficiently.

A charge often levelled at our education is that it is a system of cram. Even if this low estimate of our aims as educationists be not justified, many writers—including Spencer, Lyon Playfair, and Matthew Arnold—have indicated dangers it would be unwise to ignore. Even such is the testimony of a "fair unimpassioned judge," Sir John Lubbock, who says, "Our great danger in education is, as it seems to me, the worship of book-learning—the confusion of instruction with education. We strain the memory instead of cultivating the mind. Too often, moreover, the acquirement of knowledge is put forward in a form so irksome and fatiguing that all desire for information is choked, or even crushed out, so that our schools, in fact, become places for the discouragement of learning, and thus produce the very opposite effect from that at which we aim." Here naturally arises a question: "How far are these charges true in the case of our schools?" Well, it certainly is untrue if the aims of the highest educational authorities are carried out; and, as regards the instruction imparted, no general answer can be given, for good teachers do not cram, while bad ones do. At one time when books were few and ignorance was prevalent a *quasi*-cram system may have been excusable, but the old order has passed away, though, unfortunately, cram methods have lingered after the need for them has ceased. Of late years there has been an educational revolution, and the method of acquisition rather than the knowledge acquired is considered of paramount importance. The methods by which a child acquires its knowledge are observed, and upon the results of the observations, combined with the teachings of experience, are based the methods of education. Any method which warps the mind or checks the development of the reasoning powers must be discarded. The memory, if it be improved at all by such methods, is surcharged with a heterogeneous mass of ill-assorted facts, while the intellect suffers from mental indigestion. By thus defining a bad method I have indicated also the characteristics of a good method, which imperatively demands that the pupils must be led to observe and reason, and it is only by studying "child nature, child need, and child capacity" that we can obtain an intelligent insight into the true scope of education and of the methods by which it can be obtained. From such a study certain principles are enunciated, and to these a good method must conform. How many lessons would be condemned by teachers themselves if before being given they were tested by what may be termed the "method gauge"? A lesson should not violate the following principles, though for any lesson some more than others may be applicable: Teach from the simple to the complex, from the particular to the general, from the concrete to the abstract, from the indefinite to the definite, from the empirical to the rational, from the outline to the details, from the physical to the mental, from the near to the remote, and generally from the known to the unknown. The bald statement of the principles may convey little information to one not a student of educational methods, but most, if not all, of the defects in our work may be traced to violations of one or more. Take, for instance, one example. I have previously pointed out how in the geography of Standard II. the pupils cannot give local illustrations of the definitions they learn, "an island or a peninsula being to them merely a string of words they are required to commit to memory" (Report, 1895). The same defect is referred to by Inspectors in the Home-country under the head of "absence of local colouring." Now, if the instruction proceeded "from the known to the unknown," or "from the near to the remote," or "from the physical to the mental," such a result would be impossible. "The teacher should begin by drawing attention to the physical features with which the pupils are familiar. Creeks, gullies, mountains, &c., should be pointed out and studied. . . . as far as possible each geographical term should be associated with its corresponding local feature, and should call up a mental picture of that feature. This being done, it is easy to proceed 'from the known to the unknown,' for the geographical features of the world are in the main merely a reproduction of the school district on a larger and grander scale" (Report, 1895). Examples such as this may be multiplied *ad lib.* A teacher who does not consciously or unconsciously thus test his lessons cannot hope to succeed in carrying out the true aims of education. A method that is not founded on principle is a mere accident, making failure or success equally uncontrollable, and is "at best a mere combination of expedients, with no consciousness of purpose and