Bedales School.

The Bedales School, near Petersfield, Hampshire, is a private secondary school, established for the purpose of making an experimental test of certain reforms which the enthusiastic principal, Mr. Baddeley, thinks desirable in the traditional methods of secondary education.

The new departures may be indicated briefly as follows:—

(1.) Believing that the ordinary public school is defective inasmuch as it removes boys from many of those influences found in every healthy home, the headmaster has adopted the principle of the coeducation of boys and girls, and the attempt is made to train the two sexes together so that there may be between them not so much a feeling of rivalry accompanied often by a woeful ignorance of their respective aims and powers, but a mutual co-operation and natural intercourse in work and, to some extent, in play that is or should be characteristic of family life. It is thought that by making some approach to the conditions of a home the school may succeed in softening without enervating the boys, and in strengthening without unsexing the girls. So far as I saw during the brief visit I made the institution succeeds in its object to a remarkable extent. This part of the experiment is not altogether new, as the coeducation of boys and girls has often been carried out before in boarding-schools established by the Society of Friends. But the idea has rarely been applied before on the scale of Bedales to boys and girls of the class who usually go to separate secondary schools. [Of course, co-education in day schools is common enough in many parts of the world, notably in America, but it stands on a somewhat different footing, inasmuch as day pupils are subject in their homes to many of the conditions sought to be created here. For a partial discussion of coeducation in American High Schools the reader is referred to remarks under this head in the account of the schools of Chicago.]

(2.) Far more time is given to manual instruction and to open-air pursuits than is usually given in either boys' or girls' secondary schools, the object being to bring the education of the growing youth of both sexes into a closer relation with the facts of nature and of human life.

(3.) Although the classics are not neglected, there is far greater choice of programme than is afforded, at all events, to boys in an ordinary English public school, and pupils intended for any profession are enabled to get a training which, while it secures a fair degree of general culture, gives a sound preparation for their future profession, and a strong bias towards it; there is no attempt, however, to give any part of a special professional course.

(4.) In nearly all subjects the teaching is carried on according to the most modern ideas, and there is a great deal of freshness and originality about some of the methods employed. The staff consists of men and women highly qualified in their respective branches, who throw into their work a degree of quiet enthusiasm that cannot but infect their pupils. The master in charge of the work in mathematics and physics, Mr. Garstang, is a well-known writer on the teaching of these subjects. In his view, the recent change in the teaching of geometry is not carried out fully by the mere substitution of one Euclid for another, changing only the order of the propositions, with a little geometrical drawing thrown in. The real reform is the basing of the whole science upon concepts derived from physical facts determined by observation and experience, and the using of those concepts to establish deductively certain general principles of the abstract science, which are to be tested and applied again in practical examples and problems. It is accordingly not so important that the pupils should prove and memorise a large number of geometrical propositions, as that they should acquire the power of dealing with geometrical propositions and their practical applications from first principles. It is somewhat paradoxically said that they might be allowed to forget a proposition as soon as they had proved it, if they had in discovering the proof acquired the power of successfully attacking a similar question when it arose in the course of their work; but, in fact, if their knowledge is based on concrete and practical experience, to forget a leading proposition established in this way is the very last thing they are likely to do.

The experiment as carried out at Bedales raises the suspicion which has for a long time suggested itself to the minds of many teachers of geometry, that the setting of pupils to learn second-hand proofs of propositions is a mistake, that the propositions should be discovered by the pupils for themselves, and that the number of stock propositions might be greatly reduced—might be reduced, namely, to those which may in the strict sense be regarded as fundamental—that is, to less than half the present number. The time gained would be devoted to a really scientific treatment of the subject.

Science is treated on the heuristic method; the range of work covered is