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A RECENT BOOK OF LARGE
INTEREST

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRACTISE

Mr. Freeland defines practise as "Theory which has been discovered and tried in successful experience." He thinks that "during the next decade the ordinary common school is going to participate in the fruits of the works of such educational leaders as Dewey, Hall, Judd, Cubberley, and others," and feels that there is a crying need for concrete illustrations of practise "which embodies the philosophy of great educational leaders and is in accord with scientific results." His broad experience as supervisor of thousands of teachers in several different states enables him to write with this end in view and one must read the book in order to realize how well he has succeeded.

Advancement in modern school practise, according to Mr. Freeland, has been along four lines: first, methodology, including projects, problems, the use of interests and motives; second, the selection and organization of subject matter; third, hygienic procedure; and fourth, the realization of the proper individual-social balance. In discussing the newer methodology he forecasts the problems which will confront the young teacher who attempts to vitalize her work, and offers concrete solutions. In fact, the book is fairly teeming with workable suggestions from cover to cover. His treatment of the assignment is particularly happy, as is his comparison of teaching by topics and by problems. He surveys the "home-project" and offers instead a "home-school-project," supporting his scheme with illustrations from actual experience.

His discussion of motives and interests is sound to the core. He knows his psychology, not only from the laboratory but from contact with youngsters. Never once does he confuse amusement with interest, nor separate sustained effort from motive. "Hard work, good work, interest and happiness go together. . . . Every child who is realizing his inner nature, his true self, is doing good work,

Modern Elementary School Practise, by George E. Freeland. New York: Macmillan, 1920. Illustrated. 408 pages. (\$1.50.)

and enjoys it." In the motivation of work he insists that the child, even in the primary school, be allowed to peep behind the curtain at our deepest pedagogical secret, the "whys" of a subject. Not only would he have the child free to question, but the teacher is to seize the opening as an opportunity to bring home the need for this particular activity and thus stimulate the child to greater effort. Among his illustrations is that of a "Self-Study" book kept by an eighth-grade English class, which is novel and pregnant with suggestions.

"If properly presented, subjects taught in school are interesting to children." The discussion here centers around English and science. It is asserted that rhythm is a fundamental expression of the language instinct and the source of much worthwhile work in expression. Examples of children's rimes are also given. The author senses the importance of the child's outside reading and would have the teacher consider the development of good taste in literature a prominent feature of the regular school work, especially in the grammar grades. His treatment of the dramatic interest in the life of children is pertinent and is so clear that it should be of great value to beginning teachers. It is followed by three short plays written by children. He knows his boy and girl so well that he devotes an entire chapter to the dominant interest of curiosity, especially in regard to the physical world, and points out how the collecting instinct may be utilized in vitalizing the regular schoolroom procedure and in turning the collectors into little scientists. He realizes the extent to which children in these grades can acquire the habit of independent investigation, how like unto little research scholars they become under the proper guidance.

Mr. Freeland devotes the second part of his book to the problems connected with the selection and organization of subject matter. He says that we have passed through a traditional attitude, then through a hypercritical one, and are now attempting to evaluate our curriculum for the elementary schools scientifically. He offers standards for this evaluation and illustrates how they would function, especially in English and arithmetic. An outline of grammar is given.

In the third part of the book the author

concerns himself with the adjustment of school procedure so that the health of the child will be conserved. He includes a discussion of the hygiene of reading and dares to suggest that the little fellow in the primary grades is being subjected to an unnecessary strain in being required to "keep the place" in reading class. He suggests movable furniture, longer noon periods, frequent periods of relaxation, active methods of instruction, and many out-of-doors lessons. He demands a forty-minute daily period for physical education throughout the elementary school. He says, "Play is by far the most important subject in the curriculum," and again, "Teachers often worry about the time spent in such a way. The fact that much of the old-style arithmetic and practically all of the old type of grammar is a waste of time does not seem to bother the teacher nearly so much as the possibility of time's being wasted in play."

Mr. Freeland completes his book with a study of the individual-social problem in the schools of a democracy. He reviews the findings of psychologists in regard to individual differences and the adjustments in school procedure being made to meet the situation, including that of Burk's San Francisco scheme. He suggests flexible assignments and courses of study, with a maximum enriched course for the bright child. He closes the book with a treatment of the socialization problem. His review of the use of the morning exercises as a project is both timely and helpful.

This book merits the careful attention of any teacher, be he kindergartner or college professor, who is striving to bridge the gap between the principles of modern educational theory and his classroom practise. Its use in normal schools and colleges of education paralleling courses in illustrative teaching and lesson planning will be unlimited. But it is peculiarly a book with a message for the teacher of the grammar and upper grade child. There Mr. Freeland's touch is surest; there his illustrations are happiest.

Teaching is the most responsible, the least advertised, the worst paid, and the most richly rewarded profession in the world.—
Ian Hay.

XII

BRIEF REVIEWS OF OTHER BOOKS
OF EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

LEARNING TO WRITE—*Suggestions and Counsel from Robert Louis Stevenson*, compiled by John William Rogers, Jr. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920. 225 pages. (\$1.35.)

Who better than Stevenson learned the craft of writing—the power to communicate "the communicable thrill of things". Who ever took more pains to achieve a technique, toiling "like a miner buried in a landslip," and yet never forgetting that "literature should be cheerful and brave-spirited"?

His life was too short to grant the book in which he had meant to tell us all he knew about how to do it. So another has gathered up, without comment, into one volume many precious "hints of the proper craft" which we have been catching at here and there in Stevenson's reminiscences and counsels.

"I had vowed that I would learn to write. That was a proficiency that tempted me; and I practised to acquire it. . . . I always kept two books in my pocket, one to read, one to write in. . . . Whenever I read. . . . a passage that particularly pleased me, . . . in which there was either some conspicuous force or some happy distinction of style, I must sit down at once and set myself to ape that quality. . . . That, like it or not, is the way to learn to write; whether I have profited or not, that is the way."

One is, of course, reminded that this was the identical method hit upon by another boy, Benjamin Franklin, for teaching himself that clearness in writing which later gave him a share in more of those honored "scraps of paper on which our nation rests than fell to any other statesman. Stevenson is right: "The business of life is mainly carried on by means of this difficult art of literature."

The compiler has included essays, parts of essays and letters, bits of autobiography, and miscellaneous observations, which all blend admirably into a practical and most inspiring doctrine of the writer's art.

"If a man love the *labour* of any trade, apart from any question of success or fame, the gods have called him. . . . In the wages of *life*, not in the wages of the trade, lies your reward."

"I used to write as slow as judgment. . . . I am still 'a slow study' and sit a long while silent on my eggs."

What the short-story writer "can not vivify he should omit. . . . Beware of realism; it is the devil; 'tis one of the means of art, and now they make it the end! . . . Man's one method, whether he reasons or creates, is to half-shut his eyes against the dazzle and confusion of reality."

E. P. C.