

PREFACE.

THE elementary school is perhaps the most important social institution of the present day. We all readily affirm that the education given there should bear direct relation to life, not in any narrowly utilitarian sense, but in a large and vital way. At the same time, we must admit that the school is often justly criticised, because the education obtained there is unpractical, formal, unregardful of life and its needs. Hence, it is necessary constantly to remind ourselves that in all the various activities included in the course, the school should aim at imparting practical knowledge and skill, while developing an alert and intelligent attitude of mind in regard to each subject of study.

Among the activities included in the curriculum of every girl's school is needlework, and when we consider the future needs of the large majority of the girls in the elementary school, we cannot deny the importance of this subject. It is scarcely less essential that the different members of the artisan household shall be healthily, thriftily, and suitably clothed, than that they shall be well and economically fed. But those acquainted intimately with the children in our elementary schools know how ill-clad many of them are; their garments too often lack wearing quality, fitness, and beauty, because cheap, ready-made clothing, the product of sweated labour, is readily accessible, and many of the mothers have not the skill and knowledge to make better and more efficient garments.

Hence comes the necessity for the intelligent teaching of needlework in the schools. As with the other domestic crafts, the cookery and laundry work, lack of training in so many homes compels the school to supplement their deficiencies.

The passages quoted in this book, from official utterances of the Board of Education, show that the wasteful and mechanical teaching of sewing in past days is no longer authorised. The way is now free for the teacher who,

seeing in each of her young charges the possible future mistress of a home of narrow means, is anxious that each girl shall leave school efficiently prepared to look to the ways of her household, so far as the skilled use of needles and scissors will allow.

To such a teacher this book will be of great service. Its practical character is apparent in every chapter. It is practical from the point of view of the experienced teacher and of the hard-pressed mother of a family, both inured in their different spheres of activity to the careful management of money and time. The young and inexperienced teacher will perhaps find the counsels given in Parts III. and IV. of the book, on the planning of schemes of work and the method of presenting the various topics to a class, specially valuable. It is easy to see that the book is the outcome of long, personal experience as a teacher of the subject. On the one hand, questions of suitability of material, the supply of good patterns, cost, etc., are considered and difficulties are anticipated and met. On the other hand, the subject is so handled from the teaching point of view, as to stimulate the learner's interest and intelligence, because every teacher knows that successful teaching depends not only on a clearly realised goal towards which efforts are directed, but also on insight into the nature and needs of the child. Naturally, much that is taught will be forgotten in the years immediately following school days. The memory cannot long hold details of measurement of particular garments. But the child taught on the plan given in this book will have acquired such a lasting knowledge of principles, as will enable her to plan and construct garments under the actual conditions of life. Another valuable feature of the book is the stress laid upon the choosing of pretty and dainty materials and trimmings in the making up of the garments. It is sometimes forgotten that the teaching of needlework gives opportunity for the training of taste in the choice of clothes, a training sadly needed, as the crudely coloured and over-trimmed garments of the cheap shop testify. Besides, as the writer points out, a child will work with much more zest at the pretty and dainty article than at that which is dull and unattractive in appearance.

The teacher who, out of the fulness of her own experience, has written a book that will be useful to fellow-teachers, is to be congratulated, and the writer of this book has certainly earned her meed of congratulation.

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