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EDITORIAL

It is trite to say that we live in a scientific age, but the statement needs to be reiterated and reflected upon, with particular reference to its significance for education. In spite of the ever increasing activity in scientific investigation in the past half century, in spite of the cogent arguments that have been offered from Herbert Spencer's time to the present day for a greater consideration of science and the development of the scientific point of view in education, in spite of the titanic struggle now in progress, which is showing so conclusively to the nations involved the importance of thorough training in the natural sciences, public education is still dominated by traditional aims, and little is being accomplished in inculcating the scientific temper of thought. The recent investigation of Mr. Harris Hancock in *School and Society* shows that the majority of our leading men are entirely under the domination of the mathematical-classical ideal, and are almost impervious to the need for general information as to the progress of science.

**The Teaching of
Natural Science**

Of the four subjects that are of fundamental significance in any scheme of education, viz.: English, natural science, social science, and art, there would seem to be abundant reason from a study of the trend of contemporary life for putting natural science second only to English in its importance for education, yet the teaching of natural science presents a sorry spectacle of inadequacy or misdirected effort all along the line. In the elementary school there seems to be a reaction against the little time and attention that was formerly devoted to science teaching. Nature study has stood still or even declined in popularity, geography scarcely receives the relative amount of time that was formerly devoted to it, and physiology is taught largely in the interests of prohibition propaganda.

In the high school the enthusiasm for the study of science, which was so general a few decades ago that it threatened the existence of some of the other subjects, has died down, and the number of pupils taking science have relatively lost rather than gained ground. Science courses in college seem to be dominated largely by the aim of training for higher specialization, and the tendency is to eliminate more and more of the general student body. The teachers of science themselves are largely responsible for this. There has been too much insistence on consecration to scientific method, and the formal disciplinary idea of science as developing accuracy of method in thinking has come to be the lode star of science instruction. As a result the claim is made that elementary pupils are not sufficiently mature for the development of the scientific attitude of mind. The observational study of nature has been decried and flouted as unscientific, and little has been done to improve or develop the study of science in the elementary schools. In the high schools the teachers have been college trained, and have tended to carry over the methods by which they were taught to the pupils which now confront them. As a result, forms of physical experimentation and the mathematical aspects of physics have received undue attention at the hands of high school teachers. In college the cultural and general aspects of science are obscured by the technical and mathematical treatment, and those who do not intend to make professional use of the subject prefer to stand aside. The teaching of science needs a complete reorganization from bottom to top from the point of view of developing the keenest possible interest in the student for a broader knowledge of scientific discoveries in the world about him.

J. C. B.