THE PRESENT STATUS OF INSTRUCTION IN HYGIENE IN THE TRAINING COLLEGES.

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ABSTRACT.

IN the prefatory memorandum of the regulations for 1904, issued to the training colleges by the Board of Education, along with other counsels and directions for the preparation of the students in the principles and practice of teaching, it is affirmed that they should be instructed in the general conditions necessary for making a room healthy and keeping it so, be well acquainted with the rules of personal health, based as far as possible on physiological principles, while women students should know the nutritive value of food-stuffs. Five alternative programmes of topics related to the professional side of the work are appended, from which each college must select one. These courses vary as to the relative prominence given to psychology, logic, history of education, and other matters covered by the term Science and Art of Education, but all assign about equal place to an outline of subjects included under school hygiene.

The first point to be borne in mind is that the school hygiene is but a part of one subject in the training college curriculum variously termed, "principles and practice of teaching," "science and art of education," "technical training," &c. Again, this subject of which school hygiene is a section is but one of about a dozen different studies, acquaintance with which forms the professional equipment of each student. School hygiene is thus one of a crowd of competing branches of knowledge to be studied during the two years of training: whether it should have a paramount or equal or subordinate place among the crowd will perhaps be variously determined.

The teaching of hygiene, though not formulated as such, is practically in the hands of several members of the staff in each college. For instance, the teacher of gymnastics will give some theoretical instruction and practical rules relating to exercise, games, and other topics included under the heading "physical training," together with such knowledge of the

muscular, respiratory, and circulatory organs as she may deem necessary. The teacher of reading will lecture on the care of the voice and how to produce it economically. The science lecturer will include the chemistry of air and water in her syllabus, while the biology or nature study programme may cover a short course in elementary physiology. The mistress of method, *i.e.*, the member of the staff responsible for the professional training of the students, lectures on the health conditions of a school building and the symptoms of disease and other physical defects among children. Such a division of labour as this must inevitably result in overlapping and scrappiness of teaching. Much that should be included will be omitted, and the parts of the subject that *are* covered are not likely to be co-ordinated or made to rest upon coherent scientific knowledge. As a rule the teaching is not in the hands of experts, and by experts I mean people with the special training and the special diploma of some such body as The Royal Sanitary Institute. Since, as I have shown, instruction in this subject is always part of a larger whole, physical training, pedagogy, elocution, etc., only a few hours are allotted to it. Six to 15 hours out of a total of 90 or 100 given to the theory of education are the average share that falls to hygiene. To these must be added about as many more given in the science or physical training lecture-room.

The subject has been too much a matter to be got up from text-books, and has not been based sufficiently on first-hand evidence. The science teaching in the training colleges has of late years, however, included much more laboratory practice on the part of the student herself, and experiments and dissection are much more frequently than hitherto the source of the knowledge acquired in the chemistry and physiology parts of the subject.

The number and kind of the practising schools used by the training college determine the data available for knowledge of such matters as space, ventilation, light, warming, seats and desks, and other school conditions. Where the schools in the neighbourhood are antiquated in type, they must be used as warnings rather than as exemplars. Very little opportunity is afforded in schools that are not under the control of the college for the study of defective physical conditions as short sight, deafness, nerve-weakness, etc.—if, indeed, it is possible to have such opportunity outside of a hospital or without prolonged experience in one school. Certainly, if in the future every teacher will be expected to have a comprehensive knowledge of the science and practice of hygiene, then much more attention must be given in the training colleges to this subject than has hitherto been the case.