

There is a great deal written here about the wonderful work of the British Navy, and one does feel proud of it and thankful for it. But it is terrible to think of the brave young fellows who have gone out as soldiers to fight on land and who will never return.

The Plaza, New York.

Truly yours,
K.L.F.

DEAR EDITOR,—I have been reading a letter in "The Times" from Sir Harry Johnston in which, discussing the coming scarcity of food, he says: "all children should be encouraged to give up useless guinea-pigs, white mice, and tame rats, and other uneatable pets, and keep rabbits instead," (the rabbits to be kept for table purposes). In the lean times that thoughtful people see before us might not this act of sacrifice be a good and practical way of doing their bit for P.N.E.U. children of schoolroom age, especially in cases where they have a governess to superintend them. Where this is not practicable it might be possible for children to keep fowls or even goats, or again some parents could give children their own piece of kitchen garden, just as heretofore they have had their own piece of flower garden, and encourage them to grow vegetables seriously. If these ideas appeal to P.N.E.U. members, would it be too much to ask that some expert on these subjects would help the experiments by occasional notes of advice in the PARENTS' REVIEW.

Yours truly,

HILDA FREMANTLE.

May 26th, 1916.

DEAR EDITOR,—It may possibly be of interest to some of your readers to hear of a little plan in our family which has given both children and grown-ups much pleasure. It is so ordinary and unoriginal, and yet I have met lately several families to whom it was a new idea. It is first that each of the children has a portfolio—preferably of coloured linen, with initials on the outside—in which he collects and keeps reproductions of famous pictures. I often give them a new one on birthdays, and Christmas usually brings several, in the shape of "art cards" or presents. One of the girls began with, and more or less keeps to, the 1/- Medici prints, another is by way of going in for portraits only—a third began with the Perry pictures, and so on—but they all put into their portfolios anything really attractive that comes their way. I started each of them with a portfolio and about three pictures by the same artist, as a birthday present.

Yours truly,

MAY NAPIER.

Erratum (omitted)—English Music in Shakespeare's Days, by ARTHUR BATCHELOR.

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A LIBERAL EDUCATION

NO. I. THEORY *

BY CHARLOTTE M. MASON.

An Important Experiment

I NEED not waste time in attempting to convince the reader of what we all know, that a liberal education, like justice, religion, liberty, fresh air, is the natural birthright of every child. Neither need we discuss the scope of such an education. We all "pray," with Dean Colet's schoolmaster, "for the children to prosper in good life and good literature." Also we are aware that the two are interdependent, that good life implies cultivated intelligence, that, according to the Platonic axiom: "knowledge is virtue," even though there are exceptions to the rule. Educated teachers are not slow to perceive the part the humanities play in a worthy scheme of education, but they are faced by the enormous difficulties which are admirably summed up in a recent work. "The tragedy of modern education," the author says, "has been the prolonged failure of Humanism to secure conditions under which its purpose might be realised for the people at large." † It is because we of the Parents' Union School have succeeded in offering Humanism under such conditions that we believe the great problem of education is at last solved. We are able to offer the humanities (in the mother tongue) to large classes of children, from illiterate homes, in such a way that the teaching is received with delight and freely assimilated.

* Read before an Educational "Course" at the Training College, Bingley.

† "Citizens to be." By Miss M. L. V. Hughes.

Here I must pause to acknowledge our indebtedness to a School in the West Riding and to the singularly liberal-minded educational authorities under which it works. To have discovered certain principles, to have seen them act successfully upon thousands of children during a quarter of a century, was not a fully satisfactory achievement, because "the people at large" were not touched, and these are the objective of the educator, as of the patriot. But the difficulties seemed insuperable. What could be done with large classes, few books, a lamentably short period of school life, and children from illiterate homes? A lady, who is known for her educational zeal, succeeded in interesting certain heads of schools in the West Riding in the organisation through which we work, the Parents' Union School. One of these Heads adopted our syllabus and methods, and her success was extraordinary; the teachers said it was new life to them, and certainly the children appeared to be remarkably vitalised. The educational authorities were impressed, and it is the success of that school, which no longer stands alone, that encourages us to bring the matter before other teachers.

One swallow does not make a summer, we all know, but the experience of this one school shows that it is possible to carry out a pretty full literary programme joyously and without effort while including all the usual school activities. Wireless telegraphy was, so to speak, in the air before the first Marconi message was sent, but that first telegram made it possible for any passenger on board a Channel steamer to send a wireless message. Just so, the experiment in the Drighlington school places the conditions for a humanistic education at the service of any teacher. I am much impressed by the amount of work of this kind which is already being done in our schools. I heard the other day of a man whose whole life had been elevated by a single inspiring poetical sentence which he heard as a schoolboy; we have been told that "the man in the street" cannot resist a row of books; we are told too that the war has made us a nation of readers, both at home and in the trenches, readers largely of the best books in poetry and history; is there no credit due to the schools for these things? But teachers are not satisfied, their reach is greater than their grasp, and they are more aware of the barren and sordid lives about them, of the "dull, unfeeling barren ignorance" which prevails, than of any success they have yet attained. Therefore they fret under the time limitations which seem to make it impossible to do anything worth while in such vast subjects as History and Literature, for example.

The Requirements of the Mind

I wonder does this uneasiness point to a fact which we are slow to realise, that the requirements of the mind are very much like those of the body. Both require, as conditions of health, activity, rest, variety, and, above all, food. There has been some tendency among us to offer gymnastics, whether intellectual or physical, by way of a square meal of knowledge, which is as if we were to invite a boy to Swedish Drill by way of his dinner; and that wretched misnomer, 'education,' is partly to blame! Flow, potency, not property, is the characteristic of mind. A child is able to deal with much knowledge, but he possesses none worth speaking of, yet we set to work to give him that potency which he already possesses, rather than the knowledge which he lacks; we train his reason, cultivate his judgment, exercise this and the other faculty, which we have no more to do with than with the digestive processes of a healthy child, and we all know that the more we meddle with these the worse for the child; but what if the devitalisation we notice in so many of our young people, keen about games but dead to things of the mind, is due to the processes carried on in our schools, to our plausible and pleasant ways of picturing, eliciting, demonstrating, illustrating, summarizing, in fact, doing all those things for children which they are born with the potency to do for themselves?

No doubt we do give intellectual food, but so little of it, so diluted, so made into pap-meat, that a child gets up as hungry as he sat down, or, worse still, in the state of inanition in which he is no longer consciously hungry. Let us have courage and we shall be surprised, as we are now and then, at the amount of intellectual strong meat almost any child will take at a meal and digest at his leisure.

Perhaps the first thing for us to do is to get a just conception of what I may call the relativity of knowledge and the mind. We must realise that knowledge is to the mind as food is to the body; that the mind receives knowledge, not in order that it may know, but in order that it may grow, in breadth and depth, in sound judgment and magnanimity; but in order to grow it must know.

The fact is that we are handicapped not so much by the three or four difficulties I have already indicated, as by certain errors of judgment, forms of depreciation, which none of us escape, because they are universal. We as teachers depreciate ourselves and our office; we do not realise that in the nature of things

the teacher has a prophetic power of appeal and inspiration, that his part is not the weariful task of spoon-feeding, but the delightful commerce of equal minds where his is the part of guide, philosopher and friend. The friction of wills which makes school work harassing ceases to a surprising degree when we deal with the children mind to mind, through the medium of knowledge.

We Depreciate Children

Next, we depreciate children, even though most teachers lay down their lives for their charges with amazing devotion. We have been so long taught to regard children as products of education and environment, that we fail to realise that from the first they are persons; and, as Carlyle has well said: "The mystery of a person, indeed, is ever divine, to him that has a sense for the godlike." We must either reverence or despise children; and while we regard them as incomplete and undeveloped beings who will one day arrive at the completeness of man, rather than as weak and ignorant *persons*, whose ignorance we must inform and whose weakness we must support, but whose potentialities are as great as our own, we cannot do otherwise than despise children, however kindly and even tenderly we commit the offence.

As soon as he gets words with which to communicate with us, a child lets us know that he thinks with surprising clearness and directness, that he sees with a closeness of observation that we have long ago lost, that he enjoys and that he sorrows with an intensity we have long ceased to experience, that he loves with an *abandon* and a confidence which, alas, we do not share, that he imagines with a fecundity no artist among us can approach, that he acquires intellectual knowledge and mechanical skill at a rate so amazing that, could the infant's rate of progress be kept up to manhood, he would surely appropriate the whole field of knowledge in a single lifetime. (It is worth while in this connection to re-read the early chapters of *David Copperfield*).

Do we ask for confirmation of what may seem to some of us an absurdly exaggerated statement of a child's powers and progress? Consider, in two or three years, he learns to speak a language—perhaps two—idiomatically and correctly, and often with a surprising literary fitness in the use of words. He accustoms himself to an unexplored region, and learns to distinguish between far and near, flat and round, hot and cold, hard and soft, and fifty other properties belonging to matter new

to his experience. He learns to recognise innumerable objects by their colour, form, consistency, by what signs, indeed, we know not. As for the mechanical skill he acquires, what is the most cultivated singing as compared with articulation and the management of the speaking voice? What are skating and ski-ing compared with the monstrosly difficult art of balancing one's body, planting one's feet and directing one's legs in the art of walking? But how soon it is acquired and the unsteady walk becomes an easy run! As for his power of loving, any mother can tell us how her baby loves her long before he is able to say her name, how he hangs upon her eye, basks in her smile, dances in the joy of her presence. These are things everybody knows, and for that very reason, nobody realises the wonder of this rapid progress in the art of living, nor augurs from it that a child, even an infant child, is no contemptible person judged by any of the standards we apply to his elders. He can accomplish more than any of us could in a given time, and, supposing we could start fair with him in the arts he practises, he would be a long way ahead of us by the end of his second year. I am considering a child as he is, and am not tracing him either with Wordsworth, to the heights above, or, with the evolutionist, to the depths below, because a person is a mystery; that is, we cannot explain him or account for him, but must accept him as he is.

This wonder of personality does not cease, does not disappear, when a child goes to school; he is still "all there" in quite another sense from that of the vulgar catchword. But we begin to lose the way to his mind from the day he comes to school. The fact is, we have embraced what Plato calls "that lie of the soul," the belief that "knowledge is sensation," that a child knows what he sees and handles rather than what he conceives in his mind and figures in his thoughts. I labour this point because our faith in a child's spiritual, i.e., intellectual, educability is one of our chief assets.

Contempt for Knowledge

Having brought ourselves face to face with the wonder of mind in children, we begin to see that knowledge is the aliment of mind as food is that of the body. In the days before the war, a life-time ago it seems, our insular contempt for knowledge was a by-word; except for a schoolmaster or other thinker here and there nobody took knowledge seriously; we announced boldly that it did not matter what a child learned, but only how he

learned it. As for mere "book-learning," for that we had a fine contempt. But we have changed all that. As Germany and the Northern States learned during the Napoleonic wars that not Napoleon but Ignorance was the true enemy of the peoples, we, too, are beginning to suspect that ignorance is our national stumbling block, a chief cause of those difficulties at home which hinder our efforts abroad. For ignorance there is only one cure, and that is knowledge; his school is the seat of knowledge for a child, and whatever else his teachers do for him, first of all they must sustain him with knowledge, not in homœopathic doses, but in regular generous servings. If we ask what is knowledge?—there is no neat and ready answer at hand. Matthew Arnold classifies all knowledge under three heads,—the knowledge of God, Divinity, the knowledge of man, the 'Humanities' and the knowledge of the physical world—Science, and that is enough to go on with. But I should like to question this division and to class all three parts of knowledge under the head of humanism, which should include all knowledge that makes a direct appeal to the mind through the channel of literary form; now, the substance of Divinity is contained in one of the three great literatures of the world, and science, in France, if not usually in England, is embodied in a beautiful and poetic literature of great clarity, precision and grace. Is it not allowable then to include all knowledge of which literature is the proper medium under the heading "Humanism?"

One thing at any rate we know with certainty, that no teaching, no information becomes *knowledge* to any of us until the individual mind has acted upon it, translated, transformed, absorbed it, to reappear like our bodily food in forms of vitality. Teaching and tale, however lucid, or fascinating, effect nothing until self-activity be set up, that is, *self-education* is the only possible education; the rest is the mere veneer laid on the surface of a child's nature.

I have endeavoured to call your attention to a certain undervaluing of children and under-valuing of knowledge which seem to me to mar our twentieth century ideal of education, fine as that is. If we realise that the mind and knowledge are like the two members of a ball and socket joint, the two limbs of a pair of scissors, fitted to each other, necessary to each other and acting only in concert, we shall understand that our function as teachers is to supply children with the rations of knowledge which they require; for the rest—character and conduct, efficiency and

ability, and that finest quality of the citizen, magnanimity, take care of themselves. "But how?" cries the teacher, whose life is spent in rolling a boulder up a slope and seeing it plunge to the bottom again. I think we have chanced on a way that, at any rate, works to admiration, the principles and practice of which I am anxious to bring before you. Certainly, we have found that GOLDEN RULE of which Comenius was in search "WHEREBY TEACHERS SHALL TEACH LESS AND SCHOLARS SHALL LEARN MORE."

Some Results of a Better Method

Let me first state a few of the results that have been made good by thousands of children, and, as I have said, within the last two years by at least one Council School in the West Riding:—

The children, not the teachers, are the responsible persons, they do the work by *self-effort*.

The teachers give the uplift of their sympathy in the work, and where necessary elucidate, sum up or enlarge, but the actual work is done by the scholars.

These read in a term from one thousand to between two and three thousand pages according to age and class in a large number of set books; the quantity set for each lesson allows of only a single reading.

The reading is tested by narration, or by writing on a test passage. No revision is attempted when the terminal examination is at hand because too much ground has been covered to allow of any "looking-up." What the children have read they know and write on any part of it with ease and fluency in vigorous English. They usually spell well.

During the examinations, which last a week, the children cover say from 20 to 60 sheets of Cambridge paper according to age and class; but if ten times as many questions were set on the work studied most likely they would cover ten times as many pages.

It rarely happens that all the children in a class are not able to answer all the questions set in such subjects as history, literature, citizenship, geography, science. But here, differences manifest themselves; some children do better in science, some in history, some in mathematics or literature; some, again, write copious answers, and a few write sparsely, but practically all know the answers to the set questions.

In the course of an examination they deal freely with a great number of substantives, including many proper names; (I once had the names used by a child of ten in an examination paper counted; there were well over a hundred, of which these are the "a's":—Africa, Alsace-Lorraine, Antigonous, Abdomen, Antennae, Aphis, Antwerp, Alder, America, Amsterdam, Austria-Hungary, Ann Boleyn, Antarctic, Atlantic; and these are the "m's":—Megalopolis, Maximilian, Milan, Martin Luther, Mary of the Netherlands, Messina, Macedonia, Magna Charta, Magnet, Malta, Metz, Mediterranean, Mary Queen of Scots, Treaty of Madrid: upon all these subjects the children wrote as freely and fully as if they were writing to an absent sister about a new family of kittens! They write with perfect understanding as far as they go, and there is rarely a 'howler' in hundreds of sets of papers.

They have an enviable power of getting at the gist of a book or a subject. Sometimes they are asked to write verses about a personage or an event; the result is not much in the way of poetry, but sums up a good deal of thoughtful reading in a delightful way.

Much use according to this method is made of the years from 6 to 8, during which children must learn to read and write, but they get at the same time a good deal of consecutive knowledge of history and geography, tale and fable, some of which at the end of the term they dictate in answer to questions, and their answers form well-expressed little essays on the subjects they deal with. The time appropriated (in the time table) to the teaching of some half-dozen more or less literary subjects, such as Scripture, and the subjects I have indicated, is largely spent by the teachers in reading, say, two or three paragraphs at a time from some one of the set books, which children, here and there, in the class narrate. The teacher reads with the intention that the children shall know, and therefore, with distinctness, force, and careful enunciation; it is a mere matter of sympathy, though of course it is the author, and not himself, whom the teacher is careful to produce. As a result of this kind of reading the children in Drighlington school are said to narrate long passages in remarkably good English with correct pronunciation and good enunciation. They rather revel in long words! This practice, of the teacher reading aloud and the class narrating, is necessarily continued through all the classes of an elementary school, because some of the books used are rather costly and only

one copy is furnished. I wonder does this habit of listening with close attention to what is read aloud tend to equalise the children of the "uneducated" with those of the educated classes? Certainly, the work of the two is surprisingly equal.

By the way, there is no selection of subjects or passages, or episodes, on the ground of interest. The best available book is chosen and read through in the course, it may be, of two or three years. Working in this way, the pupils find that, in Bacon's phrase, "Studies are for Delight," this delight being in their "lovely books," "glorious books"; the books are literary in style.

No marks, prizes, places, rewards, punishments, praise, blame nor other inducements are necessary to secure attention, which is usually voluntary, immediate and surprisingly perfect.

The success of the scholars in what may be called disciplinary subjects, such as Mathematics, Grammar and experimental Science, must always depend on the power of the teacher, but the pupils' habits of attention count in these too.

Let me add, the appeal of these principles and this method is not to the clever child only, but to the average and even to the backward child; indeed, we have had several successes with backward children. Just as we all partake of that banquet which is "Shakespeare" according to our needs and desires, so do children behave at the ample board set before them; there is enough to satisfy the keenest intelligence, while the dullest child is sustained by his own willing efforts.

This scheme of pretty wide and successful intellectual work is carried out in the same, or less, time, than is occupied in the usual efforts in the same directions; there are no revisions, no evening preparations or reports, because far more work is done by the children in school than under ordinary school methods, when the child is too often a mere listener; as no cramming or working-up of subjects is necessary, there is much time to spare for vocational and other work of the kind.

An Educational Discovery

It is not that "we" (including the co-adjutors who labour with me in what we believe to be a great cause, hundreds of teachers, parents and more immediate helpers), it is not that we are persons of peculiar genius and insight, it is that we have chanced on a good thing and,—

"No gain

That I experience must remain unshared";

we feel that every one should have the benefit of educational discoveries which act powerfully as a moral lever, for we are experiencing a new life with the joy of the Renaissance, without its pagan lawlessness. Such an education as I am urging should act as a social lever also; everyone is occupied with problems concerning the amelioration of life for our "poorer classes," but do we sufficiently consider that, given a better education, the problems of decent living will for the most part be solved by the people themselves.

Like all the great ventures of life, this that I propose to you is a venture of faith, faith in the saving power of knowledge and in the assimilative power of children. Its efficacy depends upon the fact that it is in the nature of things, in the nature of knowledge and in the nature of children. Bring the two together in ways that are sanctioned by the laws of mind and, to use a figure, a chemical change takes place and a new product appears, a person of character and intelligence, an admirable citizen whose own life is too full and rich for him to be an uneasy member of society. We all feel the debt we owe to psychology, but probably most of us are aware that we come across problems which psychology does not touch, we are conscious of the action of mind, spirit, within us, a force which, could we turn it on in education as a regular thing and not by occasional spurts, would, we believe, have the power of a Niagara to raise the world.

Such a force, as we all know, is religion; but education is part and parcel of religion, and every enthusiastic teacher knows that he is obeying the precept "feed my lambs,"—feed with all those things which are good and wholesome for the spirit of a man, and before all and including all, the knowledge of God.

I have ventured to speak of the laws of mind, or spirit, but indeed we can only make guesses here and there and follow with diffidence such light as we get from the teachings of the wise and from general experience; *general* experience because peculiar experience is apt to be misleading; therefore, when I learned that long tried principles and methods were capable of application to the whole of a class of forty children in the school of a mining village, I felt assured that we were following laws whose observance results in education of a satisfying kind. The mind requires sustenance, as does the body, that it may increase and be strong; so much everybody knows. A long time ago we found out that the

pabulum given in schools was of the wrong sort: grammar rules, lists of names and dates and places, the whole stock in trade of the earlier schoolmaster, were seen to be matter which the minds of children rejected; and, because we were wise enough to see that the mind functions for its own nourishment whether rejecting or receiving, we changed our tactics, following, so we thought, the lead of the children. We did well, and therefore are prepared, if necessary, to do better. What, then, if our whole educational equipment, our illustrations, elucidations, questionings, our illimitable patience in getting a point into the children, were all based on the false assumption of the immature, which we take to connote the imperfect, incomplete minds of children? "I think I could understand, Mummy, if you did not explain *quite* so much," is it the inarticulate cry of the school child to-day? He really is capable of much more than he gets credit for, but we go the wrong way about getting his capable mind into action.

Because the mind is not to be measured or weighed, but is spiritual, so its sustenance must be spiritual too; must, in fact, be ideas in the Platonic sense of images. Children are well-equipped to deal with ideas, while explanations, questionings, amplifications, are unnecessary and wearisome. They have a natural appetite for knowledge which is informed with thought and they bring imagination, reason, the various so-called "faculties" to bear upon new knowledge much as the gastric juices act upon a food ration. We therefore err when we allow our admirable teaching to intervene between children and the knowledge their minds demand. The desire for knowledge (curiosity), is the chief agent in education; but this desire may be made powerless like an unused limb by encouraging other desires to intervene, such as the desire for place (emulation), for prizes (avarice), for power (ambition), for praise (vanity). But I am told that marks, places and prizes (except for attendance) do not figure largely in Elementary Schools; therefore the love of knowledge for its own sake is likely to have a freer course in these schools than in any others.

"All Knowledge for all Men"

Is it possible that teachers have unwittingly elaborated a system which secures the discipline of the schools and the eagerness of the scholars by means of marks, places, prizes, and yet eliminates that knowledge-hunger, itself the quite sufficient

incentive to education? Children's aptitude for knowledge and their eagerness for it indicate that the field of a child's knowledge may not be artificially restricted, that he has a right to and a necessity for as much and as varied knowledge as he is able to receive and that the limitations of his curriculum should depend only upon the age at which he must leave school; that is, a common curriculum appears to be due to all children up to the age of, say, 14 or 15, framed upon that saying of Comenius: "All knowledge for all men." Education is of the spirit and is not to be taken in by the eye or effected by the hand. Mind appeals to mind and thought begets thought, and that is how we become educated. For this reason we owe it to every child to put him into direct communication with great minds, that he may get at great thoughts; with the minds, that is, of those who have left us great works; and here let me emphasise the importance of using *first-hand* books; all compendiums, digests, compilations, selections, all books at *second-hand* should be eschewed. The method of vital education appears to be that children should read worthy books, many books, should read and hear and see. (We give much attention, by the way, to cultivating the power to appreciate pictures, music, etc. Miss Drury, in a paper which is to follow, will indicate our methods.)

It will be said on the one hand that many schools have their own libraries, or, the scholars have the free use of a public library, and that the children do read; and, on the other, that the literary language of first-rate books offers an impassable barrier to working-men's children. In the first place we all know that desultory reading is delightful; but it is not education, whose concern is knowledge. That is, the mind of the desultory reader only rarely makes the act of appropriation which is necessary before the matter we read becomes personal knowledge. We must read in order to know or we do not know by reading. As for the question of literary form, many circumstances and considerations which it would take too long to describe here brought me to perceive that delight in literary form is native to us all until we are "educated" out of it.

Children are born, persons,—is the first article of the educational *credo* which I am concerned to advance; this implies that they come to us with power of attention, avidity for knowledge, clearness of thought, nice discrimination in books even before they can read, and the power of dealing with many subjects. It is easy to apply a test. Read to a child of any age from 6 to 15

an account of an incident graphically and tersely told, and the child will relate what he has heard point by point if not word for word and will add delightful original touches. What is more, he will relate the passage months later, because he has visualised the scene and appropriated that bit of knowledge. An older boy or girl will read one of Bacon's Essays, say, or a passage from De Quincey, and will write or tell what he has read very forcibly and with some style, either at the moment or months later. We know how Coleridge recited a whole pamphlet of Burke's at a college supper, though probably he had read it only once. Here, on the surface, is the key to that attention, interest, literary style, wide vocabulary, love of books and readiness in speaking, which we feel should be the outcome of an education that is only begun at school and is to be continued throughout life.

Practical teachers will say, guarantee to us the attention of our scholars and we will guarantee their progress in what Colet calls "good literature." May I explain how I came to a solution of this puzzling problem,—how to secure attention? Much observation of children, various incidents from one's general reading, the recollection of my own childhood and the consideration of my present habit of mind brought me to the recognition of certain laws of the mind, by working in accordance with which the steady attention of children of any age and in any class of society is insured, week in, week out; attention not affected by distracting circumstances. It is not a matter of "personal magnetism," for hundreds of teachers of very varying quality, working in home and other schoolrooms,* secure it without effort; neither does it rest upon the "doctrine of interest"; no doubt the scholars are interested, sometimes delighted, but they are interested in a great variety of matters and their attention does not flag in the "dull parts."

Children are Persons

It is not easy to sum up in a few short sentences those principles upon which we may assume for practical purposes that the mind naturally acts, and which I have tried to bring to bear upon a school curriculum. The fundamental idea is, that children are persons and are therefore moved by the same springs of conduct as their elders. Among these is the desire of knowledge, knowledge-hunger being natural to everybody. History,

* In connection with the Parents' Union School.

geography, the thoughts of other people, roughly, the humanities, are proper for us all and are the objects of the natural desire of knowledge. So too, are science, for we all live in the world, and must "live by admiration," and art, for we all require beauty and are eager to know how to discriminate; social science, ethics, for we are aware of the need to learn about the conduct of life; and religion, for, like our men at the front, we all "want God."

In the nature of things, then, the unspoken demand of children is for a wide and very varied curriculum; it is necessary that they should have some knowledge of the wide range of interests proper to them as human beings, and for no reason of convenience or of time limitations may we curtail their proper curriculum. Perceiving the range of knowledge to which children as persons are entitled, the questions occur, how shall they be induced to take that knowledge, and, what can the children of the people learn in the short time they are at school? I venture to think that I have discovered a working answer to these two conundrums. I say discovered, and not invented, for there is only one way of learning; and the intelligent persons who can talk well on many subjects, and the expert in one, learn in the one way, that is, *they read to know*. What I think I have found out is,—that this method is available for every child, whether in the dilatory and desultory home schoolroom or in the large classes of elementary schools.

Children no more come into the world without provision for dealing with knowledge than with food. They bring with them not only the intellectual appetite, the desire of knowledge, but also an enormous, an unlimited, power of attention which the power of retention seems to follow in the same way as one digestive process succeeds another. "Yes," it will be said, "they are capable of much curiosity and consequent attention, but they can only occasionally be beguiled into attending to their lessons." Is not that the fault of the lessons, and must not these be regulated as carefully with regard to the behaviour of mind as they already are with regard to physical considerations?

Attention v. Memory

Let us consider this question of the behaviour of mind in a few aspects; the mind concerns itself only with thoughts, imaginations, reasoned arguments; it declines to assimilate facts unless in combination with its proper palatum; it, being active,

is as much bored in the case of a child by the discursive twaddle of the talking teacher as in that of the grown-up person by conversational twaddle; also, it must be allowed to go its own, not another's, pace; it has a natural preference for literary form; given a more or less literary presentation, and the curiosity of the mind is enormous and embraces a vast variety of subjects. I venture to predicate these things of "the mind" because they seem to be true of all persons' minds. Having observed these and some other points in the behaviour of mind, it remained to apply the conclusions to which I had come to a test curriculum for schools and families. Oral teaching was to a great extent ruled out; a large number of books on many subjects were set for reading in morning school-hours; so much work was set that there was only time for a single reading; all reading was tested by narration of the whole or of a given passage, whether orally or in writing. Children working on these lines know what they have read months after and are remarkable for their power of concentration (attention); they have little trouble with spelling or composition and become well-informed persons.

"But," it will be said, "reading or hearing various books read, chapter by chapter, and then narrating or writing what has been read or some part of it,—all this is mere memory work." The worth of this criticism may be readily tested; will the critic read before turning off his light a leading article from "The Times," say, or a chapter from Boswell or Jane Austen, or one of Lamb's Essays; then, will he put himself to sleep by narrating silently what he has read. He will not be satisfied with the result, but he will find that in the act of narrating every power of his mind comes into play, that points and bearings which he had not observed are brought out; that the whole is visualised and brought into relief in an extraordinary way; in fact, that particular scene or argument has become part of his personal experience; he knows, he has assimilated, what he has read. This is not *memory work*, for which the proper formula is, repeat over and over a passage or a series of points or names with the aid of such clues as we can invent in order to *memorise*; we do memorise a string of facts or words, and the new possession serves its purpose if only for a time, but it has not been assimilated; its purpose being served, we know it no more; this is *memory work*, by means of which examinations are passed with credit. I will not try to explain (or understand) this power to memorise; it has its subsidiary use in education, no doubt, but it

must not be put in place of the prime agent which is *attention*.

Long ago, I was in the habit of hearing this axiom quoted by a philosophical old friend: "The mind can know nothing save what it can produce in the form of an answer to a question put by the mind to itself." I have failed to trace the saying to its author, but a conviction of its importance has been growing upon me during the last forty years. It tacitly prohibits questioning from without (this does not, of course, affect the Socratic use of questioning for the purpose of convincing an opponent); and it is necessary to intellectual certainty, to the act of knowing. For example, if we wish to secure a conversation or an incident, we "go over it in our minds"; that is, the mind puts itself through the process of self-questioning which I have indicated; that is what happens in the narrating of a passage read; each consecutive incident or statement arrives because the mind asks itself, "What next?" It is important that only one reading should be allowed; efforts to memorise weaken the power of attention, the proper activity of the mind; and if it is desirable to ask questions in order to emphasise certain points, these should be asked after and not before or during the act of narration. The child who is narrating should not be interrupted; and, after a few sentences, the narration should be taken up by another child, as many as possible being allowed to take part.

Our psychologists come to our support here; they, too, predicate, "Instead of a congeries of faculties, a single subjective activity, attention," and again, there is, "one common factor in all psychical activity, that is, attention."*

My personal addition to this is that attention is unfailing, prompt, and steady, when matter is presented suitable to a child's intellectual requirements, if the presentation be made with the conciseness, directness and simplicity proper to literature.

Another point should be borne in mind; the intellect requires a moral impulse, and we all stir our minds into action the better if there is an implied "must" in the background; for children in class the "must" acts through the *certainly* that they will be required to narrate or write from what they have read, with no opportunity for "looking-up" or other device of the idle. Children find the act of narrating so pleasurable in itself that urgency on the part of the teacher is seldom necessary; "narrating" is to a child like the "reeling off" which an author enjoys.

* *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. "Psychology."

Let me offer a complete chain of the links of that educational theory which I have endeavoured to work out, and which has, at any rate, the merit that it is successful in practice. It is not easy to distinguish how much of the thought of earlier educationalists I *may* have adopted and applied, but I venture to hope that I have succeeded in methodising the whole, so that education becomes what it should be, a system of applied philosophy; I have, however, abstained carefully from the use of philosophical terms.

Statement of Theory

This is, briefly, how the theory stands:

A child is a person, with the spiritual requirements and capabilities of a person.

Knowledge "nourishes" the mind as food nourishes the body. A child requires knowledge as much as he requires food.

He is furnished with the desire of Knowledge (i.e., curiosity), with the powers which enable him to apprehend knowledge with little aid from without—such as imagination, reflection, judgment; with innate interest in all knowledge that he needs as a human being, with power to retain and communicate such knowledge, and to assimilate all that is necessary to him.

He prefers that knowledge be communicated to him in literary form, and reproduces such knowledge touched by his own personality; thus, reproduction becomes to some extent original work.

The natural provision for the appropriation and assimilation of knowledge is adequate, and no stimulus is required; but some moral control is necessary to secure the act of attention; a child receives this in the *certainly* that he will be required to recount what he has read. This manner of education, it will be perceived, is entirely *self-education*; every step in their progress depends on the children's own efforts; they are delightfully conscious of progress and eager to go on; school-work, whether for teachers or children, has no longer the weariness of treadmill exercise. Again, a child requires to go *his own pace*; if this is prevented a serious obstacle is placed in the way of the natural desire of knowledge. This requirement is met by the act of narrating that which *he* knows, not that which another person demands in answer to questions.

Children have a right to the best we possess; therefore, their lesson books should be, as far as possible, our best books. They weary of talk and questions bore them, so they should be

allowed to use their own books for themselves; they will ask for such help as they wish for.

They require a great variety of knowledge—concerning religion, the humanities, science, art; therefore they should have a wide curriculum, with a definite amount of reading set for each short period.

The teacher assumes a higher status and a far more interesting rôle; he affords direction, sympathy in studies, a vivifying word here and there, guidance in the making of experiments, etc., as well as the usual teaching in languages, experimental science, and mathematics; he is enabled to deal with individuals instead of classes.

Pursued under these conditions, "Studies are for delight," and the consciousness of daily progress is exhilarating to both teacher and children. Let me add that the principles and methods I have indicated are especially suitable for large classes; what is called the "sympathy of numbers" stimulates the class, and the work goes with an added impetus; each child is eager to take part in narration or to do writing work well. By the way, only short test answers are required in writing, so that the labour of correction is minimised.

Books and Examinations.

To two further points I must invite your attention, the choice of books and the character of the terminal examinations. I do not know better how to describe the sort of books that children's minds will consent to deal with than by saying that they must be literary in character. A child of seven or eight will narrate a difficult passage from the "Pilgrim's Progress" with extraordinary zest and insight; but I doubt if he or his elders would retain anything from that excellent work, Dr. Smiles' "Self-Help." The completeness with which hundreds of children reject the wrong book is a curious and instructive experience, not less so than the avidity and joy with which they drain the right book to the dregs; the children's requirements in the books they read seem to be quantity, quality, and variety; but the question of books is one of much delicacy and difficulty. After the experience of a quarter of a century in selecting the lesson books proper for children of all ages, we still make mistakes, and the next examination paper set discovers the error; children cannot answer questions set on wrong books; and the difficulty of selection is increased by the fact that what they like

in books is no more a guide than is what they like in food; in both cases a taste for lollipops prevails.

The examination questions set also require serious consideration; children must appreciate the fact that they are liable to be examined upon any page in several hundred pages, on the whole or the part of any or every book out of a score of volumes. But they must be assured by past experience that the questions put to them will be so to speak worth while, neither too obvious nor too subtle; but embracing points an intelligent person would be likely to notice in the books he reads, as well as the reflections upon those that are likely to occur.

The reader will say with truth, "I knew all this before and have always acted more or less on these principles"; and I can only point to the unusual results we have obtained through adhering, not, "more or less," but strictly, to the principles and practices I have indicated. I suppose the difficulties are of the sort that Lister had to contend with; every surgeon knows that his instruments and appurtenances should be kept clean, but the saving of innumerable lives has resulted from the use of the great surgeon's antiseptic treatment; that is, from the substitution of exact principles scrupulously applied for the rather casual "more or less" of the general practitioner.

Whether the way I have sketched out is the right way remains to be tested more widely than in the thousands of cases in which it has been successful; but assuredly education is slack and uncertain for the lack of sound principles exactly applied. The moment has come for a decision; we have placed our faith in "civilisation," have been proud of our progress, and, of the pangs the war has brought us, perhaps none is keener than that caused by the utter breakdown of the Civilisation which we held to be synonymous with Education. We know better now and are thrown back on our healthy human instincts and the Divine sanctions.

There remains to try the great Cause of Education *v.* Civilisation, with the result, let us hope, that the latter will retire to her proper sphere of service in the amelioration of life and will not intrude on the higher functions of inspiration and direction which belong to Education. Both Civilisation and Education are the handmaids of Religion, but each in its place, and the one may not thrust herself into the office of the other.

It is a gain, anyway, that we are within sight of the possibility of giving to the working classes, notwithstanding their

limited opportunities, that stability of mind and magnanimity of character which are the proper outcome and the unfailing test of a liberal education; also, that "the grand elementary principle of pleasure" should be discovered in unexpected places, in what is too often the drudgery of the schoolroom.

Milton's ideal of a "complete and generous education" meets our occasions,—“that which fits a man to perform, justly, skilfully and magnanimously all the offices both private and public of peace and war.” Perhaps it remains for our generation to prove that this ideal is open for, and necessary to, persons of all sorts and conditions. It has been well said that,—

“As there is only one kind of truth common to us all, so there is only one education common to us all. In the case of the education of the people the only question is: How is this common education to be developed under the special circumstances of simple conditions of life and large masses of people? That this should be accomplished is to our mind the decisive mark of all real education.”

The writer quoted offers no solution of the problem and it remains with the reader to determine whether that solution which I here propose is or is not worth a trial, remembering that;—

“No sooner doth the truth . . . come into the soul's sight, but the soul knows her to be her first and old acquaintance,” and also that,—“The consequence of truth is great, therefore the judgment of it must not be negligent.”—(*Whichcote*).

N.B.—More exact details of the working of the Parents' Union School are offered in two other pamphlets,* one by Miss Drury and one by Miss Ambler. The cost of “numerous good books” for an elementary school has been worked out (and brought down) with the help of some West Riding teachers, so that £20 will cover the initial cost for a school of 160 children.

One other point I should like to emphasize; the scheme of education I propose removes certain disabilities which have hitherto attended children from elementary schools in their ascent of the educational “ladder”; teachers in Secondary Schools complain that these act as a dead weight in a class, because they have a very limited vocabulary and little general knowledge; under the conditions I have indicated, the elementary school child passes on with a remarkably good vocabulary and pretty wide general knowledge.

* The Secretary, Miss E. A. Parish, P.N.E.U. Office, 26, Victoria Street, London, S.W.

A LIBERAL EDUCATION

No. 2. PRACTICE*

BY AGNES C. DRURY.

If there is an excuse needed (as I feel there is) for reading a paper to the experienced and devoted teachers of the West Riding, it must be found in the motto of the Students' Association to which I belong. Ex-students trained by Miss Mason at the House of Education wear on their badge the motto: “For the children's sake.” As it is for the children's sake that you have come to this Vacation Course, so it is for the children's sake—because we are convinced that they need what the P.N.E.U. has to offer—that I welcome the opportunity of telling you quite simply how we teach in the *Parents' Union School*.

The school is now divided into six Forms grouped in pairs. Children are admitted to Form IB. at six years old, from seven to eight they are in IA., nine to twelve in IIB. and A., twelve to fifteen in III. and IV., and fifteen to eighteen in V. and VI.

There are more than 2,000 members, half of them working with mother or governess in home schoolrooms, and an equal number in girls' schools and in preparatory schools for boys. Many of their governesses have been trained at the House of Education, yet not the majority. For though an ex-student naturally understands Miss Mason's principles and methods best, they can be carried out by others, for the whole aim is that the work be done by the children themselves. The teacher may give an introductory lesson on a new subject, period, personage, in order to claim the children's interest, and kindle their enthusiasm as she usually does by her own enthusiasm.

* A paper written for the Bingley Vacation Course, August, 1916.