

THE PARENTS' UNION SCHOOL.

The Parents' Union School has had a year of progress and of problems. Of progress, in the extension of the work and

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the increase in understanding of those who take it up; of problems, in the endeavor to keep within the bounds of true growth and to meet the criticisms which follow any too rapid expansion.

Miss Pennethorne, Miss Wiseman and Miss Gladding have worked untiringly in the Dominions and at home to secure a knowledge of principles before the programmes are attacked at all, for, as Miss Pennethorne says in one of her letters, "Our methods and our syllabus must go together; one without the other does *not* act." We are still supposed by many teachers to issue just an optional list of books, or, as one teacher expressed it to Miss Gladding, "You call it the P.N.E.U. Method, but surely there is no method about it; it is just a study course."

It is found that even where teachers have read only *Home Education* and *School Education* this idea still persists, and therefore it has been urged that *Parents and Children* should be read as well, as offering a more detailed study of the principles behind the practice than the other two volumes, and so making the theory in these two more evident. The last volume, *An Essay Towards a Philosophy of Education*, is a final summary of theory and practice.

It is only in this preliminary knowledge of principles that balance will be secured in carrying out Miss Mason's Method, for home and school teaching and training must go hand in hand. A school or class that does excellent work on paper sometimes sacrifices other important aspects of education to secure this. It is not always those schools that gain the highest remarks that are giving a "liberal education" in Miss Mason's sense of the term. For this reason we welcome the formation of study circles amongst parents, and of Parents' Associations in connection with Public Elementary Schools. For this reason, too, the P.N.E.U. arranges visits to schools, so that general conditions and outlook may be considered as well as the examination papers.

We are fortunate in having the help of Examiners (University men appointed by Miss Mason herself), who endeavour to consider the children's work from the point of view of the whole Method, as will be evident from the extracts published from their reports. Some of the Examiners' remarks on the Christmas Examinations are as follows:—

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*General Report.*—(a) "I am impressed with the improvement which follows Examiners' comments. . . . There is too great inequality in private schools, particularly as those who follow the programmes and principles intelligently and carefully are so very satisfactory. The bad ones should not be allowed to rest content. The success of the main principle of the Mason teaching is most evident in the way narrations show that the child has made the subject his own. Some Public Elementary Schools show excellent efforts to grapple with the programmes under the handicap of their shortage of books."

(b) "In reporting on other Public Elementary Schools (not suffering in this way), occasionally my enthusiasm rose when I found a school sending papers from three Forms, many subjects taken in each paper, and nearly all questions answered with liveliness and understanding. The general standard of the schools was certainly high, and one suspects that

the admirable quality of the work of the larger classes cannot have been attained without loyal team-work on the part of the teachers. There were a few papers of definitely poor quality throughout, and some children had been asked to attempt subjects in which no adequate instruction had been given and the prescribed books had not been read. On the other hand, I frequently found myself surprised at reading well-informed and intelligent accounts of topics which I had not previously supposed to come within the curriculum of Elementary Schools. The impression which I retain most clearly is that very few answers were given which were hopelessly incorrect. Some were brief, many, of course, contained inaccuracies and minor errors, but I did not meet with the patently absurd answer which reveals complete misunderstanding of the subject. . . . Again, this week's *Times Educational Supplement* draws attention to the value of Parents' Reports. Truly, in the P.U.S. examinations, a careful and systematic report from parents does much to provide the clue for which the examiner is searching. Honesty compels me to admit that a few of the Reports caused a certain bewilderment, but this is scant gratitude when the others were so helpful."

"The general standard of the work shows the usual improvement due to increased understanding of the principles."