

NOTES AND QUERIES.

I.

THE FIRST TERM IN THE P.U.S.

A TEACHER writes that the first term in the P.U.S. has been a difficult one. One problem is how to keep children of differing ages and forms happily at work, another is the Time Table for Form I., where the periods are so short and where time is lost in changing and settling down to the lessons.

It is a very frequent experience that the first term is a hard one. The teacher and the children have to become accustomed to new methods and to form different habits of work. The children are sometimes puzzled and the teacher feels distracted. No one can know beforehand that a surprise is awaiting them in the second term: that many problems will solve themselves and that the children's delight in their work will make the previous efforts fade out of sight.

Suppose that John is six years old, Mary is seven-and-a-half, and Jane is nine-and-a-half years. When the P.U.S. work is started it is very tempting to let John and Mary work entirely together and to let all three children do the same work in history. The best results are reached by teachers who do not temporize, who take the plunge and who from the first try to let the children work in the Forms which are right for their ages. John will be in Form Ib., Mary in Ia., and Jane in IIb. The teacher will have an extremely uncomfortable six or seven weeks experimenting with the lesson hours and discovering how best she can attain an ideal arrangement and succeed in being always where she is most needed. The children will have an uncomfortable time forming the essential habits of doing their best when the teacher is busy elsewhere, of using their own resources and of working for ten minutes quite alone, without wasting time. For these weeks the work is not comfortable, and if the teacher is wise she turns to Miss Mason's books and fortifies herself by thinking over the principles and ideas which underlie the details of her daily struggles. Twenty minutes a day spent in the company of Miss Mason's thought and love for the children is a very healing experience and dispels fuss. By the end of the first term the teacher and the children know each other and their needs and the teacher is able to make a fairly accurate list of subjects where each of the children needs her special devoted attention. The Time Table can be worked out accordingly.

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"The chief difficulty with Form I. is that I try to keep to the P.U.S. Time Table and give short lessons. I find fifteen minutes too short for 'Tales' and ten minutes almost useless for French" (from a teacher's letter). Yes, the teacher is right, those times do seem too short for the first term, but they will seem perfectly adequate for all the other terms spent in Form I. Here again, it is best to start carrying out the P.U.S. Time Table boldly and to form habits in the teacher and in the children which will enable the work to fit into the times given. The children must be alert and willing, the teacher must be alive and clear-headed. A look at the Time Table shows that there are four periods of twenty minutes duration, each morning, one of which is given to number or handicrafts. The other three are given to books which supply those living ideas upon which the mind works and feeds. The ten minutes lessons are taken up with subjects which use the memory more than the mind and for such work ten minutes is ample—granted good habits of work prevail.

It is very noticeable to an impartial observer how infallibly the attention of a child of Form I. age (six to eight years), flags after twenty minutes of complete concentration upon one

subject. The time spent on the same subject after this sign of wavering appears, is time wasted. Things we learn with our second-best, unilluminated, plodding attention, are soon forgotten and do not become a part of our minds. An ardent teacher keen on delivering a lesson she has carefully prepared sometimes fails to see the signs that the tide has turned, and that the stream of attention is flowing away from her carefully built sand castle and not towards it, be the waves never so energetic and promising. She must build where the tide comes in or her castle is useless.

People who think of the term's work lesson by lesson without scanning imaginatively the whole work of the term, in and out of school, are tempted to give complete half-hour lessons rather than to be satisfied with the less complete ones of twenty minutes. A little tiredness over a history lesson does not seem to matter so very much at the time. A little tiredness to-day, however, added to a little tiredness to-morrow saps the energy from a term's work and inevitably destroys keen interest. It is in order to avoid the evils of half-hearted work and listless attention in children of ten or twelve years old that teachers

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in the P.U.S. are urged to use the short varied lessons in the first years of school life.—ESSEX CHOLMONDELEY.

II.

OCCUPATIONS FOR CHILDREN UNDER SCHOOL AGE.

“Thank you for sending me the leaflet on this subject.

Only very occasionally do I find that parents want to send their children to school here before they are six. I think perhaps this is because parents of town children realise that such children want all the fresh air and nursery life they can get. Sometimes I agree to take boys before they are six, because they do not stay so long in the P.U.S. I always tell the parents that there is nothing to be gained by sending their child “just to listen but not to be made to work,” because I find that when these children reach school age it is twice as hard for them to learn to concentrate and to take a full share in the work of the class if they are at all of the lazy type. Even those who are keen to learn gain nothing in the long run, because though at first they may get ahead of those older than themselves sooner or later Nature asserts herself and there comes a slackening off.

The longer I teach the more am I convinced of the rightness of Miss Mason's ideas and methods, and that only by following these honestly without tinkering and tampering with them can we hope for the results that she aimed at.”—(*From the Headmistress of a P.N.E.U. School.*)

III.

“Would it be possible to issue with the programmes a slip of paper suggesting the usually accepted pronunciation of classical and foreign names? Such hints would be of assistance to teachers to whom the names in *Plutarch's Lives* and elsewhere in the programmes were unfamiliar.”

Dr. Rouse has given us, by request, useful lists at the end of two volumes of the Blackie Plaintext edition of *Plutarch's Lives* (North's translation). He indicates the pronunciation thus:—“The vowels are usually pronounced as in English. ... Long vowels are marked—. Diphthongs are naturally long.” A very useful little book published some years ago is *The Pronouncing*

Dictionary of Mythology and Antiquities (John Walker, London). This gives the English phonetic equivalents of classical names. Smith's *Smaller Classical Dictionary* (Murray), and Dent's *Classical Dictionary* (Everyman edition) are helpful. These indicate the long and short vowels.—
E.C.