

1. The disappearance of difficulties originally felt with regard to Absence of Revision and the Quantity of Work set.” [sic]

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I will deal first with the quantity of work set. Some may be inclined to think that the P.N.E.U. curriculum is too wide, and that there is too much work set in each subject. That may be, if we labour at it in our own way, expecting every child to remember everything that she has read. This, I understand, is not Miss Mason’s idea. In fact, at the conclusion of her book, “School Education,” she sets forth the children’s Magna Carta, which I will quote. “My plea is—and I think I have justified it by experience—that many doors shall be opened to boys and girls until they are at least 12 or 14—and always the doors of good houses—that they shall be introduced to no subject whatever through compendiums, abstracts or selections—that the young people shall learn what history is, what literature is, what life is, from the living books of those who know.”

This I believed when I went to Whitby, and after Whitby week there was no doubt left in my mind. From the lessons that we saw given by Ambleside students, we noticed that they modified the methods to suit the conditions of the moment. At the meeting, too, on the Wednesday evening, one of the audience felt that, because of one or two particular difficulties, the scheme could not be successfully worked in an elementary school. I felt bound to answer from my own experience. When a scheme such as this—originally intended for home schoolrooms—is introduced into the large classes of elementary schools, there must of necessity be modifications. I take it that so long as we depart not from the principles set forth by Miss Mason, we shall not go far wrong. I said this because I had found it necessary to adapt and to modify, and as soon as I had finished, Miss Parish, the P.N.E.U. secretary, came forward to support my statements.

We are not meant to spoil the scheme by adhering literally to everything. As Miss Mason herself, in a letter written to me only last week, said: “It is a great happiness that so many teachers have

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so clear an understanding, not only of our methods, but of the principles that underlie them. This is very important, as you know, for the methods without the principles might easily become routine work.”

ABSENCE OF REVISION.

There is one important rule which *must* be followed. Miss Mason insists on one reading only of the subject matter—a careful and attentive reading to be followed by narration. I am convinced that this is not too much to expect from the child. It is a habit to be formed when the child is young.¹ That is why I feel confident that the girls who are now in the lower part of the school will, when they reach the upper classes, fully justify the working of the scheme in an elementary school.

Not only do the girls narrate after a single reading, but what, perhaps, to the uninitiated, is more wonderful still—they must and *can, without any revision*, reproduce at an examination

knowledge which once and for all they have made their own.

There is a tendency to depreciate the powers of a child. We could not do these things, perhaps, ourselves. Can we expect the girls to do them? Yes. If we fail, it is because we have not formed this habit of concentration. We have always trusted to a second reading. We have not developed this particular attitude of mind. We grown-up people have, as Tagore says, "already built our shells of habit around us." In the child the process of building is still going on.

We have just had a particularly interesting experience. Last term being such a short one, it was arranged that the Easter examination papers should be worked after the Easter holiday. When we saw the notice in the "Parents' Review" to this effect, great was the fear that the term's work would be forgotten. The fears were groundless. The children were ready when the call came. It was really an education to take the examination in Form I. B. When the girls now in this form came up from the Infants' School last September—at the average age of six—there were only three at the most who would offer to tell back what had been read to them.

At the end of their first term—that was at Christmas—it was difficult. They needed a great deal of persuasion and encourage-

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ment. Only a few were able themselves to put the question: "What next?" to their own minds. But at the examination just passed—which was begun the day after the re-opening of school—there was a marked difference. They were eager to tell what they knew. Many wanted to tell *all* they knew, and even the diffident ones could not bear to be left out of it. A question was read to them, and had you been there you could literally have watched the girls bring to you from their storehouse one grain after another, until the whole had been brought—and this after one reading!—in the case of some questions, a reading given three months before! And a holiday between!

Then, when they could no longer find an answer to the self-put question: "What else?" with a confiding smile they looked at you and said: "I don't know any more." It was the same with the written work of the older scholars. Each teacher admitted that the examination papers were neater, and contained less spelling and grammatical errors than any previous set had done, and there were no howlers among the whole lot of papers.

It has been proved—in our school at any rate—that there need be no revision, and how much fresher the work is, the examination answers testify. Each child in her own way tells what she knows.

MR. HARES, of Avening: "Does not Ruskin say

"A good book to be fully understood should be read and re-read."

and does not the Mason Method say

"Put the book on one side, not to be touched again"?

The Secretary replied in the negative.

MR. SMITH, of Stroud, Uplands School: "I should like to say that I can support Miss

Golding's claim in regard to the result of the work in the last term's examination. We had a worse adventure than she had because not only had we a short term—in common with her—but we also had a closure for three weeks—the children developed measles. I never like to go on with a 'hum drum' existence. I like to get all I can out of life. One of my ways this time was to challenge Miss Mason, or whoever marked the papers, with a comparison of a set of papers that I sent on this occasion, which was not the work of the very best scholar. She certainly said that they were, in places, 'a little thin,' and she was right, but considering the knowledge that I [p 561]

and my staff had of the abilities of the children whose work was represented there the criticism left us exceedingly happy. Particularly, too, can I bear out Miss Golding's remarks with regard to the Forms Ia. and Ib. The amount of accurate knowledge which they possess and the variety of their expression simply leave one wondering. I have no question to ask, but I just wish to bear out Miss Golding's claim from my own experience."

¹ We think we may reassure the writer on this score. There are in the little "Preaching School" at Ambleside half a dozen girls between 16½ and 17½ who narrate very stiff matter surprisingly well. Two of these have been *years* and four of them *months* in the school, and it is not possible to distinguish between them.—ED.