

CONFERENCE LESSONS.

CLASS 1A.

BY M. W. KITCHING.

The class consisted of thirteen small people of about six, looking supremely happy and not a little important. The opening hymn was sung lustily right through by most of them, and I think *all* took some part. After prayer and a few words from Miss Parish, we all filed out and upstairs to our various class-rooms. When I saw the rather big desks in the Art Studio—the room allotted to Class 1a—I felt rather doubtful as to whether the little people would be able to sit still for long together with their feet right off the floor; however, we soon settled down to our first lesson, which was “Number.”

Each child had ten letters (we could not use the beans I had brought, as the desks were sloping and I feared disaster!) These letters were arranged as two fives



thus—

and then by putting a pencil across in various ways we made up our ten as $7 + 3$; $8 + 2$; $6 + 4$; etc.

After each division we made little problems,—*e.g.*, “If I had ten pennies and spent seven, how many should I have left?” etc., etc.

At first most of the children were backward in doing this, but before we finished I think nearly every child had at least made an attempt, and some did it very well; one dear little boy of six volunteered several.

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Our next lesson was “Natural History.” This was chiefly to show narration, so we took lesson iv. out of “By Pond and River.” Here again the efforts of the children were very varied. Some were quite ready to tell a short paragraph; others could only do it in a very scrappy way, and some not at all without help. All, however, seemed to enjoy the lesson, and I heard of one mother who had the whole story told to her the next day.

We now had a break, and Miss Macfarlane gave the children five minutes breathing and arm exercises. The space was very limited, so not much could be done, but the change of position was, I am sure, a relief to little legs that could only dangle while lessons were going on.

“Reading” came next. Each child had about twenty letters. We started with ING, and then, by adding some other one letter we made Ring, Sing, Wing, Wings, etc. After each word one or more of the children made *sentences*, using the new words. We then put two letters together at the beginning—br-ing, cl-ing, th-ing, etc. We made also think, and brink, and the final effort was to change “brink” into “brisk,”—this most of the children found very difficult.

In this lesson the efforts of the children were very unequal. Some seemed to have a fair idea of sound, one or two could do hardly anything, while a few were very good. Surely if children had more of this fascinating “phonetic drill” we should not find in later years such careless pronunciation as we often do, nor come across children of 8 and 9 who can write ‘thing’ for ‘think,’ ‘enjoys’ for ‘enjoyed,’ ‘through’ for ‘though,’ etc., and hardly hear the difference.

Geography.—We now took the chapter from *The World at Home* called “Where does cocoa come from.” Most of the children understood a little about a map, so we were able to find Mexico on a large map of the world hanging up in front of the class. We read from the book, and looked at the various specimens as we came to them in the reading. The Educational Supply had kindly lent us a real cocoa pod, and two students had fastened cocoa nibs, cocoa butter, etc., on a large sheet of cardboard so that all could see them easily. These, with various pictures in a book sent us by Cadbury’s of Bournville, helped the children to understand the chapter. One small boy came to show Mexico on the map at the end of the lesson, and the youngest pupil—a girl of 5½—volunteered to show our own country, which she did without hesitation.

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We now had a few more minutes for breathing exercises, and then settled down for our last lesson, “Tales.” We had not got very far, however, in reading and narrating chapter vi. in “Our Island Story,” when Miss Parish came to summon us back to the big Hall again.

Although these thirteen children were nearly all strange to each other, and were having their lesson under rather trying circumstances, with people coming and going between each lesson, they did not seem in the least perturbed, but *all* in more or less degree showed signs of being able to attend and concentrate.