CONFERENCE LESSONS.

CLASS II. (20 CHILDREN).

BY E. C. ALLEN.

The first lesson was a Picture Talk, the picture being Raphael's "St. Cecilia."[1] It began with questions on Raphael, his life, the age he lived in, other great men who were his contemporaries, etc., and a contrast was drawn between him and Henry VIII., both about the same age, but so different in appearance and character. Then the story of the order for the picture was told—the chapel at Bologna—the gifted lady who heard voices, all the talent of Italy gathered to beautify her offering, and Raphael chosen to put the crowning point to the lovely building in the shape of a painted altar-piece. How he worked at it in Rome, while busy with his colossal work in the Vatican, and how after three years it was finished and sent to his friend Francia at Bologna, with injunctions to correct and improve all that did not please him. How the old man shed tears of joy on beholding the exquisite masterpiece, and with great rejoicing it was solemnly placed in the church.

Then the children were given the picture, each a copy, and studied it in silence for three minutes.

Then they laid it face downwards, and it was described by them in detail, each child contributing something till all had had a turn, and the picture was almost complete in words. In nearly every case the musical instruments came first—none recognized the four saints by their symbols, nor knew the story of St. Cecilia. One child thought it was a man. A few could reproduce the pose of St. Paul. St. Gregory's pastoral staff was called a crook and no one arrived at the fact that the vase of ointment was held by St. Mary Magdalen—they all thought it was held by St. Gregory. All said the angels were singing and that the saint was beautifully clothed. Then the picture was looked at again, and the children eagerly corrected their own mistakes. There was a head by Donatello of St. Cecilia hanging in the room and that was alluded to as the work of a former artist—his idea of the saint in sculpture. Then the children heard the story of the Saint, the dainty Roman lady who won her husband for Christ, who could play all manner of musical instruments, and one day had her ears opened to the sounds of heavenly music, and after that discarded all her former studies, and gave herself up to singing the praises of God. And how when at last she won a martyr's crown,

she lay for three days uttering most beautiful melodies until her spirit returned to Christ.

Then the children each drew something from the picture on plain drawing paper, in some cases making quite charming and tender studies. As recapitulation, a plan of the whole picture was drawn, from the children's directions, on the blackboard. Normally, each would have made his own, or would have sketched some detail from memory, but the method chosen was taken to save time and also to relieve any feeling of monotony that might creep in, some being much less proficient with their pencils than others. The lesson took 40 minutes.

Then followed some breathing exercises and free standing movements.

The next lesson was Natural History, taken from a chapter in "Life and Her Children." Every child had her book and the lesson began with question and answer upon the beginning of

chapter—Insects and their organs: eyes, antennæ, breathing holes, etc. Then the contrast was sharply drawn between the mouth of a caterpillar and that of a butterfly—the hard, horny jaws of one and the delicate sipping apparatus of the other. Passages to illustrate this were read by the children, but it was not easy to hear, owing to the noise from the street. The structure of the proboscis was carefully explained, with diagram, the two parts being illustrated by a feather, and the three channels by the children shutting their teeth and puffing out their cheeks. It was explained that the middle channel is for the passage of food and the two side ones for air.

Then the children came up in sets of five to the Teacher's desk to look at the proboscis of a live butterfly, which was pulled out for them. It was shown first in a dried specimen, that they might know exactly what to look for, and afterwards in the live insect. Further passages were read from the book, and specimens of other butterflies shown that would be common in the summer holidays, which brought the lesson to a close.

Special attention was given to the life history of the Orange-tip butterfly, its eggs were shown, its larvae, and the perfect insect—its under side, that so perfectly matched the food-plant, as it poised itself for rest—and the chrysalis was drawn on the black board.

The lesson was long, as there were many specimens for the children to see, but their interest never flagged or wavered. It lasted 40 minutes.

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[1] Chosen because the girls might have already studied the pictures set.