

Hygienic Schooling.*

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Fresh air and perfect ventilation are universally accepted necessities of school life, but the out-door class, the regular out-door training of children, is only dawning.

Yet no one who has practically tried the experiment can doubt that the results obtained are in every way superior to those gained between the four walls of an ordinary classroom.

The objections that discipline and mental concentration suffer are unfounded. "You can learn anywhere if you want to learn." You can study standing or walking, or reclining on the grass or sand.

It depends on yourself whether you remain an "ignoramus" or not in a world of wonders, these are some of the reflections a teacher can (with tact and moderation) weave into his or her preliminaries—and so great is the children's preference for the open-air class, that separation from it means a very-much-felt disciplinary measure, even though the separation extend over a short period of time.

Summer schools for diseased or delicate children are quite well-known and have been doing excellent work—but the out-door school for the healthy normal child, in full enjoyment of normal faculties is not yet sufficiently considered, even though the fact that this very child often develops into a sickly adult is frequently traced to its scholastic education.

Having practically tested both the indoor and outdoor system, I cannot too strongly recommend the advantages of the latter, which, I feel sure, could (within reasonable limits) be made adaptable to almost any climate or condition of life. A moderate amount of exercise during the actual hours of instruction is quite a necessity, if irritation (or what some teachers call naughtiness) and restlessness are to be avoided.

It is the command "Sit still!" placed against Nature's command to the growing human being "Move!" that is the source of positive animosity between teacher and taught, and that causes the latter to imbibe with his growth a series of daily and hourly physically disagreeable impressions connected with his moral and mental training. Learning, studying become inseparably connected in the young mind with suffering.

(I must here remark that far from favouring

"fidgettiness," the free use of its limbs to the healthy child leads it to acquire naturally, and without teaching, that beautiful, powerful calm and reserve in its moments of rest that we see in Greek statuary of the best period, and that in art history has invariably been lost, whenever and wherever a false civilisation created unsanitary conditions of life.)

Small wonder if under an anti-natural system of scholastic oppression and suppression the accumulation of healthy and mentally invigorating information becomes odious to two-thirds of our young people, and this simply because such information is connected with the pillories and stocks of school. And as a consequence, as soon as they are free to choose their own mental food they turn from Nature, world and time studies, with a shudder to worthless fiction and dangerous pastimes, simply because these are quite foreign to the prison-house they have known as the "class-room."

It is a very old truism that tells us that "Man is a creative being." To create is joy, is life. To the child, a being instinctively artistic, this is doubly so.

And so before all other subjects calculated to broaden the child's range of mental vision, to give it sympathetic touch with Nature and Humanity, I place the one subject that allows him to create while he receives—"Drawing." Drawing must, of course, be taught in such a way that the physical exercise it gives to various delicate organs is strengthening, not the reverse.

Soft-toned canvas (without any of the hateful gloss of the black-board or the glare of white paper), is a suitable surface-material for the drawing-lessons of young children. The necessary canvas can be bought in rolls of from 20 to 24 yards, or, with a little ingenuity, can be home-made in appropriate tints such as soft greyish-green, dark-green, greyish-black, slate-colour, &c., vivid and light colours being excluded. The canvas, whenever the weather allows (in Copiapo this is continuously the case, rain seldom falling for more than a few days. Snow and ice are unknown), can be fastened to the walls of a garden or open courtyard, where there are plants and some living healthy animals for study.

The lesson proceeds in the following manner: The children form in file and march in order to the garden.

In the case of an animal, the creature must be observed in a state of freedom, followed as it moves, but not frightened. For this reason the model animals should be used to recognising the children as their friends. The natural

* The following pages are based on work actually carried out with good results.

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