

II

THE INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOLOGY
ON THE ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL

THE MAISTER

He gied us Scripture names tae spell,
But what they meant we couldn't tell,
He maybe didna' ken his sel'—
The Maister.

What funny dogs we used tae draw
Upon our sklates, an' ships an' a
Till keekin' roond wi' fright we saw
The Maister.

He gied oor lugs a fearfu' pu',
Said he wud skelp us blac kan' blue;
I doot he wudna' try that noo—
The Maister.

We mind them weel, his lang black taws,
They nipit sair like parten's claws,
A crabbit little man he was—
The Maister.

He birlid me roond like Nanny's wheel,
Said he was tell't to lick me weel;
He seemed tae like tae hear me squeal—
The Maister.

He opened aye the school wi' prayer,
An' psalms an' questions gied us mair
Than that we thought was proper there—
The Maister.

An' after time, an' siller spent,
We left as wise as when we went;
It wasna' muckle that he kent—
The Maister.—Teenan.

Mr. Teenan gives us a typical description of the old school. It is hard to conceive of the idea that our grandmothers and grandfathers actually went through these experiences, but nevertheless they did. This master is not an exaggeration, but just one among the general run of school teachers of olden times; times that were not so many years back, as our present-day school has developed rapidly within the last few years. But this type of school is a thing of the past. Even in the rural districts we have progressed far beyond the master, although these sections have not reached the standard we would wish.

To give an idea of how great the change has been, I will picture a morning in a typical first grade of this day. As the bells ring the children hurry from their stunts

on the play ground, happy, healthy, full of life, vigor, and vitality, anxious and eager to start the day's work, which is not drudgery, as in days past, but a chance to develop naturally the aptitudes and capacities with which they have been endowed. To exercise their capabilities with full force, good health is essential; therefore the reason for the small milk pails which they all deposit on a special shelf just outside the window. The children take their seats in little chairs placed at tables, about large enough to seat six comfortably, giving plenty of space to each. They start the day with good morning greetings and handshakes, just as one would naturally do anywhere. The pupils are deeply interested in the doll project which they are working out; so in this conversational period they discuss the work they have done so far, pointing out the strong and weak points, and make plans for the future. The special topic this morning is suitable clothing for winter. At the close the teacher gets each group to move their tables to the back of the room, in order to have a larger space for the rhythm. She plays records and lets the children interpret them. There are different kinds, as the skip, gallop, march, run, and dance. The class takes great delight in this form of exercise. Now is the time to carry out the plans of the conversational period. Tables are replaced and the heads of the families bring out the rag dolls and materials with which to make clothes. They are soon at work, and it is an interesting sight to see. When one child cannot thread a needle some member of the group comes to the rescue. This is a splendid example of the co-operation which exists throughout all of their work. The grade has been divided, by the aid of intelligence tests, into two sections, the fast and slow children. The former now come to the front of the room to have their reading lesson. The method used is the Aldine, which introduces new words by a rhyme. By telling a story, letting some person or animal say it, the rhyme is brought in incidentally and the children learn it easily, even without effort. It is amazing to see how many new words they learn in such a short time by their association. When they finish, they take up the project work and the slow class goes through the same performance. With this group the teacher goes slowly and gives more individual attention. To relieve the tension and strain of the morn-

ing, recess comes right after this reading class, which is about ten thirty. The play ground supervisor directs their games and sees that they get plenty of good exercise during this intermission.

After this activity the milk pails are greeted gladly. This not only satisfies their hunger and enables them to do better work during the remaining time, but it gets the children in the habit of drinking milk and encourages them to ask for it at home.

As most of the work in the first grade, phonics is given in story form also. It is after the order of reading, the sounds being uttered by one of the characters in the story. After the children become familiar with the sound of the letter, they are taught to write it on the board.

The phonics is followed by another reading lesson, just as before. By this time the children are beginning to get restless at the close of the morning; so they play several games of their own choosing. They leave as happy as when they came, and I think one little girl expressed the sentiments of all by suggesting that they stay at school all day.

Just this example of the first grade will give us an idea of what a tremendous improvement there has been in the school system in every way. The basis of all learning is the situation, bond, and response combination. "In teaching a child a poem the teacher makes the situation by arousing the child's curiosity and interest, and he responds by giving his attention and learning the poem. The bond is that connection in the nervous system which makes it possible for the child to learn the poem, and if he learns it well enough this bond will make it possible for him to say it whenever he wants to." The teacher to get the desired response must be careful that her situation is of the right character to produce the proper result.

There are two types of bonds, learned and unlearned. The learned has just been discussed above. We call the unlearned reflexes and instincts. Reflex acts are such as winking, sneezing, and jerking the hand away from a hot stove. Instinct is very similar, but in this there is a more complex situation, followed by a more complex response, as, fear and flight from an animal, a mother's interest in her baby. To make a long story short, reflex acts and instincts are those that

are already formed at birth and not those we acquire.

All individuals when presented with the same situation do not form the bond to the same degree of strength, or in exactly the same manner. As an illustration, take a teacher who reads a poem and calls on different members to give her the story. One pupil will remember all the details, in the order they came, but another will recall only one or two points and is not able to give those very efficiently. The difference between these two individuals may be due to one or all three of these factors, heredity, environment, and training. The first little girl may have had superior parents and inherited their good qualities, giving her a start in life with superior natural endowments. Then she may have been reared in a home where she received personal attention from parents who took notice of her interests and gave her opportunity of hearing good music, the best stories, and living in contact with people who speak the best English. This environment naturally helped develop her tendencies which she inherited from her parents. By hearing stories and telling them, the little girl received training which was an aid to her in the school-room. On the other hand the child who could not remember all the story but told it disconnectedly may have come from a settlement district, with parents of no education and very little intelligence, and who had no previous home training at all. It is not always the case that all of these factors cause individuals to differ. It may be only one. As Jennings says, "Superior parents have no guarantee that their children will be superior; you cannot tell what combinations will arise." As a rule, though, the children of the best intellect usually inherit their capabilities from superior parents. It is more of an exception than the rule to find backward children who have bright, intelligent parents.

The fact that psychologists have obtained all of this data places the emphasis in education on the child. "The new training is based on self-activity of the child. It believes in the child. It respects his rights. It helps him to become free and self-directing. It relates him to humanity, to the universe, and to God. It reveals his special power to him and leads him to understand that the purpose of his life should be to use

this power in transforming present conditions into better conditions."

Children love to do things. They are brimming over with life and must have some outlet for all of their energy. They love to do things planned by themselves, and in co-operation with others. These tendencies are used to advantage now but in former times the slogan of the school was "don't" to every move or action of the pupil. How could the children become "doers of the word and not hearers only," when their training always took the negative form? The doers, or boys with any energy and enthusiasm, were classed as bad, while the dull, lifeless children were ranked as the best. When a child is dull and lifeless now-a-days, you know something is radically wrong; so our opinions have changed. By doing, the child broadens his experiences, his outlook on life; he becomes original, independent, and self-reliant, all of which aid in the development of character.

Children need more freedom. Their feelings should be considered and they should be consulted more than they are about their personal problems. Children think a great deal more than we give them credit for. When getting a little girl a dress you will please her much more by allowing her to choose one she likes. She may not be capable of making the entire selection, but give her three or four dresses from which to make her choice. Not only in the question of dress but many little everyday matters would add to the child's happiness, taste, and independence if consulted. We would not like it if some one decided all of our affairs; so why think the child has no feelings at all just because he is young, which is all the more reason for being shown some consideration? He will have to make decisions in later life; so why not give him training that will stand him in good stead in time of need.

Now that we have waked up to the fact that the child is all-important, we have changed our views regarding all the phases of education. It has broadened our outlook and made us realize we had misplaced our emphasis.

The big aim of education at the present time is citizenship. This may sound far above the elementary grades, but it is not. Little children have many ways in which to show their citizenship. They have their

problems, rights, and duties as well as the older people. Even in kindergarten, children learn self-control, co-operation, the value of health and the means of maintaining it, unselfishness, and independence, all of which are essential to a good citizen. The more training they have, the better prepared they will be to take their places in the community later.

This aim gives the chance for a much broader curriculum. The aim of the curriculum is to bring into the experiences of children the materials and the methods found by the race most effective in adapting conduct to the most wholesome purposes of wordly living. To enrich the child's experiences the school must reflect the interests and purposes of social life, which it desires to promote. The curriculum should emphasize that which is important in the child's social life, and subordinate the phases of no importance. When the social ideals change, and the methods of life, through inventions and discoveries, the curriculum should change to correspond. Life is made up of desires and their satisfaction. The course should be such that it will better our wants and teach us the best way to satisfy them.

"The purpose of the elementary school is to provide experiences in meeting the common needs of all, regardless of sex, vocation, or social status." These grades deal with children during a period when their thoughts, acts, and tendencies are more alike than at any other time. There is a certain amount of knowledge that everyone should know, and this is gotten in the elementary grades.

The next question is how to teach this knowledge. This question is still debated today and we do not know whether the one we use is right, but it is the best we have at present and is far superior to the old methods.

The one in most prominent use is the project. By this plan all subjects are correlated. One main plan is chosen and the language, reading, number work, songs, games, etc., all bear on the same subject. Take, for example, Indian Life. The children read stories, make an Indian sandtable, posters, blackboard borders, booklets, learn songs, games, and everything in connection with Indian Life. This gives their work some organization, teaches them co-operation, originality; gives clear, definite images; and gives the chance for expression and interpre-

tation. It has been tested and found that the project is the best method we have at present.

Through psychology we have found that individuals differ, some of one ability, some of another. By intelligence tests we can find a child's mental age, whether it corresponds with his physical age or not. In this way the teacher can find the children's capabilities and divide them into two sections, the slow and fast groups, as illustrated in the first grade. The bright section should be allowed to set their own pace and be given as much material to use as they wish. The other group needs more of an inspiration to go on at all. They should receive much personal attention and will necessarily progress very slowly.

In order for the children to develop their capabilities to the best advantage, they must be healthy. The conditions necessary for them to be strong physically are to protect them from diseases; see they have the proper nutrition; look after the external conditions, as lights, clothing, ventilation, physical defects, bodily temperature, desks, and the like.

Of course, in a way, it is hard to protect children from diseases, but in the school we can help them have a high resistance against these blights, by always having clean hands, bathing frequently, drinking plenty of water, having good ventilation, taking exercise, using a handkerchief when coughing, brushing the teeth twice a day, and many other little sanitary rules. It is impossible to see that they have the proper nutrition but we can prove an aid by asking them to drink milk, eat plenty of fruit, have cereals and eggs for breakfast, and discourage too many sweets, coffee, and foods that do not build tissue. We can see to many of the external conditions as ventilation, desks, clothing, physical defects. Health is one of the important phases of education. It is stressed particularly during this period.

While considering health, be sure the strain of the work is not too hard upon the children. After sitting bent over a desk for a long period they soon get tired, their muscles become cramped, and they grow mentally inactive. To relieve the tension have a game, or change the positions and sing songs. Arrange your schedule in such a manner that the children will not sit in one position for a long period of time.

In order that the child shall have the best training, the teacher has to have a definite knowledge of the child, curriculum, methods, that she may be capable of teaching him. The teaching force has not only increased but is better prepared, as schools are requiring a certain amount of training. This requirement enables them to carry out the aims of education in the best manner. It is through the teachers that we have been able to carry out our ideas concerning education. They hold the reins to our destiny and they are one of the largest factors in determining the future of the present generation.

Therefore we have found that psychology has placed the emphasis of education on the child. The influence has changed our aim, which in turn caused a change in curriculum, method, and equipment.

Psychology is just beginning this change and will make rapid strides in the future. Only time can tell what will happen, but we are looking forward to a great improvement and progress, and we believe they all are bound to be the result of such a beginning.

MEADE FIELD

III

A WORKABLE PLAN FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN OUR SCHOOLS

When one comes into Beckford Parish and enters the grounds of the first church built within its bounds one is struck with a feeling almost of reverence for our pioneers in religion; and it is with a feeling of awe that one finds himself standing in the spot where the first rector, Reverend Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg, having preached his famous sermon on the text, "There is a time to every purpose under heaven—a time of war, and a time of peace," cast off his vestments and stood before his congregation in a full uniform of a colonel of the Continental Army, and sounded the call to arms.

I do not presume to compare myself to General Muhlenberg, yet I do want to use a portion of his text and declare that it is time to fight the lack of religious instruction in the schools of our state.

I fear no contradiction when I say that the religious instruction received by our chil-