

Through the Magic Door

Children Live in World of Make-Believe



AS natural as it is for birds to fly, or multi-coloured butterflies to plane across our gardens in soft summer breezes, is it for children to live in the world of make-believe. To a child a doll is a baby, a real baby, with all the baby's needs, sufferings, and joys. The doll is happy or sad, is good or cross, sleeps well or is wakeful, needs tucking in and warm bedclothes; these are real conditions in the child's mind towards the doll. The boy is a real Red Indian when he has on a pair of hessian trousers, a strip of the same material round his head with some feathers in it, and a piece of boxwood for a scalping knife; or an engine-driver taking real passengers and passing through real tunnels and meeting with a real disaster when the little model leaves the line. Watching the fire at night, in the glow of the living coal, and the vanishing sparks, stories are woven in the child's mind, and for the time being they are actually seeing these things. It is the natural development of a normal, healthy child, preparing the brain and heart for those heavier responsibilities which the years will bring. This cultivation of the imagination is but working in modelling clay by youth and maiden, who to-morrow will be working on stone and marble with chisel and hammer. It is the natural development of the capacities from the imaginative to the real.

Journeys into Fairyland.

IN the guidance of these imaginations comes the high responsibility of parenthood, or educationists of all degrees. Among educationists there are to-day none whose influence is more widespread than the wireless Aunt or Uncle. To the modern child these kind people are very wonderful. For one short hour each day thousands of little folk give themselves to us, and in a happy abandonment they let us take them whither we will. One of the most favourite journeys is into Fairyland. One of the most delightful examples of the real gladness which Fairyland brings to the child is J. M. Barrie's "Peter Pan and Wendy." The statue in Kensington Gardens is known the wide world over, and stands as a monument to a genius who understood more than he knew he understood, the mind of the child. Think of the thousands and tens of thousands of bright and happy thoughts which that one story has liberated till little people have found their imaginations, which might have been crawling about the gravel paths and the muddy farm yards like ants, taking wings, gossamer wings, multi-coloured, skipping from tree to tree, from flower to flower, now riding a fleecy cloud, now planing on the wings of the wind, coming from nowhere into everywhere, bringing perfume, sweetness, charm, colour, smiles, happiness, laughter. Why should not these sweet and beautiful little things with gossamer-winged loveliness clothe and guide the imaginations of our children as well as the common and more sordid things of the

THE REV. E. R. WEEKS, who, as Uncle Ernest, of 2YA, is the senior broadcasting uncle in New Zealand, in the following statement concerning the aim and purpose of the Children's Session speaks very interestingly concerning the child mind, how natural it is that children should live in a world of make-believe, and how desirable it is that the natural development of a child's imagination should be encouraged. Some special reference is made to the sending of presents and this practice is ably justified.

material world? They will have to shift the clay and hew the stone and fell the tree all too soon, and they will do it better and with gladder hearts if in the days of their childhood their imaginations are led out into fairy fields and fairy flowers and fairy queens. The "practical" comes all too soon into life; let the child clothe the world of make-believe with the sweetest and most beautiful imaginations.

"Growing Pains" of Childhood.

We are told of the hurtful disappointment when the child awakes to the consciousness of the world of hard realities. Yes, there comes the pang,



"Uncle Ernest" of 2YA.

—Andrew, Photo.

something akin to disappointment, but it is simply a growing pain. It has to be, and no child having passed that growing pain period but appreciates the wonder and the joy and the gladness which has been his or hers during the years of make-believe. The real child thus born into a new experience finds delight now in transmitting to the younger ones the gladness which he or she so recently and so innocently enjoyed. It is the one way in which the heart can be kept young, by seniors, viz., by making the world of fairies real to children. Try it, good friend, you to whom life has become very materially hard and painfully real. Tell your children or your grandchildren fairy tales, and if you are not brighter and happier for it you will be the first of a new species.

Tragedy of Unimaginative Parents.

THE disappointed child! Yes, we have heard of pathetic cases where children have written in saying that while the fairies had given presents to

other children they had forgotten them. I have only one comment on this type of case. My heart is full of pity for the poor child who has such parents. Fancy watching your child write to a Radio Uncle to ask the fairies to send a present, and picture yourself so bereft of imagination as not to sympathise with your child's desire, and not alert enough to enter into the innocent plan of satisfying that desire. The unimaginative parent who unwittingly wounds the heart of his own child is the greatest possible argument for our working away harder than ever to quicken and direct the imagination of the growing generation. That there are unimaginative parents we know. Kindly folk, many of them, who realise that their own childhood was bereft of a great deal because they had not that which they now see their children so enjoy. One dear parent writes: "Would you be kind enough to enlighten me re the presents for children on their birthdays? I haven't the faintest idea how to go about these dear radio fairies. I'd be so glad if you'd let me

know what to do." Isn't there a pathos there? Yes, now and then some child must be disappointed; but that is not the fairies' fault, or the fault of the uncles and aunts—the responsibility is with the parents. But surely it would be exceedingly unfair were we to penalise the thousands of children to whose lives we are making a very real contribution because of the exceptional case. "I wish you could have seen the faces of the children and their delight," is the oft-repeated expression in letters by parents whose little families have had unspeakable joy through the fairy idea and the presents.

Radio Fairies and Presents.

THOSE of us who are trying to live back with the child for a few hours each week in the realm of the make-believe in the realm of childish imaginations, clothing them with beauty, colour, and charm, know something of the fragrance which such an endeavour leaves around our hearts, and from our piles of correspondence we know something of that which it gives to the child and the parent. I plead for the retention of our fairies and the presents. Of course, it must be realised that it all depends how it is done. But none other than real lovers of children would ever tackle the job—it takes too much doing—so that there is very little risk of unsuitable people handling this most potent factor in the education of the child of to-day.

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