

AN EDUCATIONAL COMPROMISE WITH EXISTING CONDITIONS.

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At the present day a parent, on visiting a school, finds much in the methods of the school that is different from the methods used in his day. One frequently hears the opinion expressed that "What was good enough for me in my day should be good enough for my son." To these critics I would like to say: What was good enough for John Brown, senior, in his day, is certainly not good enough for John Brown, junior, in his day. The interval between the school days of John Brown, senior, and those of John Brown, junior, has afforded many opportunities for a better educational procedure to be discovered. We can be only too thankful that this is so; for there is no mythical John Brown who does not wish that his son should grow up to be a better man than himself. In our school system we try to adopt the ideals and suggestions of those we feel to be the best.

Our schools, however, have a long way to go before they can carry out many of these ideals. Our large classes will have to be reduced, and a very much smaller number of children given to each teacher to educate. Even our buildings will have to be changed, and suitable open-air schools erected in their place. Instead of spending money on needlessly costly structures, our attention will be directed to better and more profitable playgrounds. This war has taught us the importance of educative playgrounds—places where we may hope to develop a race healthy in mind and body, and brought up, not only to know how to play games, but "how to play the game." In existing circumstances, everything must of necessity be a compromise; and each school is nobly trying to do its best amidst numberless difficulties.

In the Kelburn School, in Wellington, with large numbers, and in a limited space, we are attempting to break down the class system of instruction—a system that takes it for granted that every child in a class of 40 or 50 pupils is at the same mental level as the rest. Rigid military discipline is more or less an essential in considering work on these lines, simply because the work is either too easy or too difficult in the majority of cases. The quick child finishes his work and gets into mischief, and the

slow one is bored because he does not understand, and consequently seeks interests elsewhere. The teacher is at her wits' end to "keep discipline."

In our school we are attempting to give each child the opportunity for his own individual progress. In a class of 50, number 1 does not have to wait till number 40 has grasped a particular rule in arithmetic, but is allowed to proceed at his own pace. The result of such a method is bound to benefit the child in every direction. The quick ones go ahead, while the slow ones are able to receive more attention from the teacher. With more time at their disposal, the quick ones may follow their own bent in other directions, such as reading, writing, drawing, or any form of handicraft. Some of the little ones are allowed to keep at school a "plag-bag" full of materials and tools to carry out their own special inventions. The children have thus an opportunity of working on their own responsibility, and we find that this makes them more independent and reliable in their general work. I would point out that all this individual progressive learning means very much more work and organisation for the class teacher. It is a more or less simple thing to think out one lesson for one class, but it becomes a very complex matter to keep account of the individual progress of a child who is probably graded differently in each subject.

In our educational compromise, while we do not overlook the requirements of the syllabus, and the acknowledged standard of ability of the children in connection with the three R's, we are able to give a large portion of the time (though not so large as we know to be right) to the things that really matter with little children; I mean, to handwork, to games, and to the contact of the child with his natural surroundings.

Those people who are continually advocating the teaching of the three R's at too early an age, because the child must be hurried on to another stage, remind one of the people who are so busy preparing for the next world that they have no time to consider whether they are living the right kind of life for this world. We are continually overlooking the fact that it is not so much our place to prepare children for the life they are going to lead (though, of course, we cannot help keeping this in view) as it is to help them to live most thoroughly and effectively through each phase of their existence.

The little children of three and four years of age who come to the Kindergarten have to learn how to live and behave in their small community, just as effectively as the older ones live in theirs; and they learn this best by being surrounded by suitable child-like interests. Through their play, and through contact with Nature, they come into touch with all that is vital to them at that age.

Most assuredly the three R's have their place in school, but, unfortunately, we try to begin teaching them too early. Could we but leave all this type of teaching till the child reaches seven years of age, when he is ready for such work, we should find him with a mind prepared to master the technical difficulties in a few months, and muscles better under control to carry out the finer operations of writing and other exercises. On the other hand, it has so often happened that a child who has shown ability at an early stage has suffered for it later on. The whole question, it seems to me, rests with the parents of this country—whether the A B C of the alphabet is more important for a little child to learn than the real A B C of citizenship.

THE RED CROSS SHIRT.

She made the shirt with careful, trembling hands,
The edges hemmed, and stitched the soft gray bands;
Then folded all with loving gentle care,
And with the shirt she sent a little prayer:

"Cover him warm, good shirt;
Help him to bear the pain;
Soothe him to sleep, unfevered, deep,
That brings to health again.

"Is it some fair-haired boy
Afar from his mother's hand
Let him find in this her love and kiss,
With the love of his mother's land!

"Is it some lonely man
For wife and child forlorn?
Fight the good fight—win through the night,
They wait for you in the morn!

"Home—and love—and peace—
And the knowledge of duty done—
These are for you, our heroes true,
When victory is won!

"So cover him warm, good shirt,
Help him to bear the pain;
Win him to sleep, unfevered, deep;
And send him safe home again!"

—Nina Moore Jamieson.
R.R., Millgrove, Ont.