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PROGRESSIVE TENDENCIES IN EUROPEAN EDUCATION

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PROGRESSIVE TENDENCIES IN EUROPEAN EDUCATION.

INTRODUCTION.

I spent November and December, 1922, and January, 1923, in a tour of European experimental schools. I was accompanied and assisted by my wife and two experienced and well-trained teachers from my own schools.

Our general method was as follows:

Before leaving America we got as much information as possible as to European experiments. I procured Ferrière's new book, "L'École Active," in which he discusses in detail a number of experimental schools. We obtained the addresses of several leading European educators.

On entering a country we interviewed some educators and found out from them the schools which they considered the best expressions of progressive educational thinking. Each school we visited, each man we interviewed, suggested other schools and other men. We went to every country that gave promise of yielding examples of experimental schools. We did not attempt to visit every experimental school, but to visit every type in each country. In Germany, because of the Christmas holidays, we failed to visit two types which were probably valuable and different from those of other countries—the Versuchschule and the Begabte Schule. The former is a school set aside by a city (such as Dresden) for trying out new ideas for the benefit of other schools. The latter is simply a secondary school for unusually gifted children, differing from others in that admission is by competitive intelligence test, but probably not very different in methods or administration.

We were unable to get passport visés into Russia, in spite of every possible effort. Otherwise we did not consciously miss any important experiments.

We visited five experimental schools in England, four in Belgium, three in Holland, two in France, three in Switzerland, one in Austria, two in Czechoslovakia, and one in Germany. We talked with teachers, principals, school inspectors, superintendents, normal-

school instructors, members of university faculties, editors of school journals, and parents.

In visiting a school we usually separated, the four of us going into four different rooms. We watched classes, talked to the children and teachers, and had long interviews with the person responsible for the experiment.

We did not attempt any statistical study or survey of any of the schools. Our purpose was simply to find out what educational ideas were back of the experiment, how, in general, these ideas were being carried out; and what was the personal opinion of the people most closely concerned as to the results of the experiment. Not one experimental school in all Europe was experimental in the strictly scientific sense of the word. Miss Mackinder's, in London, was the only one that tried to measure its results objectively. Nevertheless, the ideas back of the schools were frequently based on careful psychological study, and the qualitative results were often obviously good.

We were not attempting a thorough and scholarly study of any individual school. Our whole effort was to discover the progressive educational tendencies in Europe and to find typical examples of these tendencies.

The following is a report of what we found:

PROGRESSIVE EDUCATIONAL TENDENCIES IN EUROPE.

Europe is educationally alive. It is true that in the countries where there is high centralization of control the number of educational experiments is limited; it is true that the rank and file of teachers, while better trained than the majority of American teachers, are much less cognizant of the existence or desirability of intelligence or achievement tests; it is true that few universities in Europe have anything corresponding to our departments of education; it is true that with one or two exceptions in England one finds no bureaus of educational research in the cities of Europe. Yet, in spite of these lacks, there are a number of lines of educational endeavor of importance and interest to any serious student of education. We in America know far too little of what our colleagues in Europe are doing. They profit by some of our experience, and we could profit richly by theirs.

It is possible to group the progressive tendencies of European education under seven heads, as follows, each of which will be discussed separately: 1, Landerziehungsheime, or "new schools"; 2, Handwork; 3, Self-government; 4, Individual instruction; 5, Group instruction; 6, Freedom; 7, Research schools and classes.

1. LANDERZIEHUNGSHEIME, OR "NEW SCHOOLS."

These country boarding schools, scattered through England, France, Switzerland, and Germany, have perhaps less to give America than any of the other European educational experiments. We are so completely dedicated to the free day school that there is no likelihood of an extensive development of the Landerziehungsheime idea. Edward Rumely, some years ago, inspired by Cecil Reddie's "Abbotsholm" and the school at Glarisegg, Switzerland, founded Interlaken at La Porte, Ind., in an effort to carry out the same ideal, but the idea has not spread.

Yet in our tendency to increase the length of the school day, to include shopwork, gardening, and play activities in our public schools in America, we are giving expression to the same desire as that which actuated Reddie and Badley and Lietz in their pioneering efforts some 30 years ago.

These "new schools" strive to bring about the complete development of the individual. They are not primarily concerned with scholarship; they are interested in sports far more than most continental European schools, but less than the English "public schools." They invariably include manual activities.

The school at Glarisegg, Switzerland, is typical. It is the direct result of the influence of Cecil Reddie in England and Lietz in Germany. It has long been established. It is small enough to be under the direct supervision of its director.

The boys live in small rooms—the older ones two in a room, the younger ones four. They decorate the rooms to suit themselves and make them homelike—nothing of the bare dormitories here. They start each morning with a cold shower and some vigorous exercise, then after breakfast have regular lessons.

After luncheon the boys have shopwork and gardening and games. A wide variety of activities is open to them—some 15 or 20 kinds of manual activity. There are reasonably well-equipped shops for the work, not with expensive equipment, but providing the essential tools and places to work. The purpose is not prevocational training, but self-expression. The shops are an outlet for the energy and activity of the boys, an opportunity to use their creative powers. The boys make things for themselves, for their rooms, for their parents, with complete freedom. They also make most of their scientific apparatus. There is no set course of handwork, no required sequence of activities.

The situation of Glarisegg fosters outdoor sports. Every now and then the program of the school is suspended and all go out for winter sports or for an excursion.

The academic work is not unusual, it being in other activities that the new schools show educational progress.

The internal organization of Glarisegg consists of a number of ungraded groups of boys under the direction of different faculty members. The academic work, however, is graded and departmentalized quite independently of these "family groups." Each boy chooses for himself into which group he shall go. The faculty member whom he selects becomes his guide and adviser; the other members of his group become his special companions. The groups vary in size according to the popularity of the faculty members, usually ranging between 8 and 20 boys to a group.

Glarisegg, like the other "new schools," is trying to achieve completely rounded development of the individual. Its academic work is as well done as that of ordinary schools, and in addition this school tries to develop the body and character and personality of the boys to the utmost.

The influence of the faculty member in charge of each group is one of the most important factors in character development. The prevailing tone and atmosphere of the school is equally important. The wide choice of activities helps to bring out special native abilities and interests.

The healthy outdoor life, the regularity of hours, the balanced day, with mental work, physical work, and play, all tend to make the boys healthy and strong. One can not fail to be impressed by the sturdiness, courtesy, and general all-round development of the boys in this school.

And the other Landerziehungsheime are of the same sort. We made no effort to visit all of them. In Germany there are three founded by Lietz and there are Odenwald, Wickersdorf, and others; in Switzerland, besides Glarisegg, there is Hof-Oberkirch. In France the best known and oldest is l'École des Roches, and there are half a dozen others. In England Abbotsholme is still in active existence, and Bedales and the theosophical "new school" at Letchworth and several others. All differ in details but are at the bottom similar.

L'École des Roches, for example, is much larger than Glarisegg. It has less hominess and freedom; the boys can not choose their groups, and they sleep in dormitories. But there is active boy-scout work, and there is more opportunity for athletic games, owing to the larger enrollment.

Breitensee, in Vienna, varies from the typical Landerziehungsheime in three important respects: It is in the city instead of in the country; it is State-supported; admission is by competitive examination. As a State-supported boarding school for gifted chil-

dren it is unusual and well in advance of the typical Austrian schools.

Bedales, although one of the pioneers, differs in some ways most widely from the typical "new school." It has developed new methods of instruction and is coeducational. This latter is unusual in a boarding school, even in America. It works out admirably. One could not ask a finer, more wholesome attitude between boys and girls than one finds at Bedales. It is one of the oldest and perhaps the most progressive and alive of all of the "new schools." Indeed, except for an orphanage in Czechoslovakia, Bedales was the finest school we found in all Europe.

There is in Geneva an International Institute of New Schools, headed by Dr. Adolph Ferrière. This organization keeps itself informed as to all Landerziehungsheime, and furnishes information concerning them to anyone applying. Ferrière is also editor of "L'Ére Nouvelle," an international educational journal, and contributes items concerning the "new schools" of Europe to this periodical.

The Landerziehungsheime are a pioneer movement toward progressive, active education in Europe. They exert a stimulating influence which turns schools away from too much emphasis on the academic work and toward a greater emphasis on the character and body building functions of education. While we in America are putting shopwork and supervised play into our schools, we still overemphasize the academic work. The "new schools" of Europe have achieved a better balance.

2. HANDWORK.

The "new schools," the sloyd movement in Sweden, and the Montessori method have all played their parts in the extensive development of handwork in the experimental schools of Europe. As a matter of fact handwork is often the only claim to originality that many experimental schools possess. When an outsider visits schools said to be experimental and says he wishes to see the new things they are doing, he is immediately shown quantities of handwork made by the children—raffia, paper cutting, drawing, light woodwork, sewing, and sloyd. In many cases this handwork is only a side issue, a concession, while the directors really consider formal discipline and the classics as the basis of all true education. Virtually every progressive school we visited, except those in Hamburg, included handwork in its course. In some of these schools the manual activities of the children play a real part in their education.

The reasons for handwork in the schools are as various as they are vague. One can untangle half a dozen somewhat confused and overlapping functions of manual activities in the various schools, and can select examples of schools in which one or another function is prominent. These functions or purposes of handwork may be summed up roughly as follows:

1. As adjunct to the regular school work—a sort of busy work for the children and proof of progressiveness for the school.
2. As manual training—an effort to develop sensory-motor reactions on a supposedly psychological basis.
3. As a help toward making academic instruction concrete, and as an aid to memory.
4. As a means for vocational guidance.
5. As an outlet for children's creative energy, a means of self-expression and all-round development.
6. As a basis of all education.

The first purpose—that of providing busy work for the children and of attempting to balance a pound of brain work with an ounce of handwork—is as common in Europe as it is in America. It manifests itself as a half hour a week of systematic instruction in some kind of handwork, much like the drawing lessons in many American schools, but dealing with raffia, or clay, or lightwood, or some other not too difficult medium. In Holland, for example, one finds the children following a manual that shows just what length to cut little sticks and just how to put them together to make a toy windmill.

Higher in the grades this same tendency manifests itself in sloyd or formal manual training. This course is fixed. Each child must go through a certain series of exercise, must make a simple joint, then a more difficult one, and later a hat-tree or shoe box just like those made by every boy before him. This type of manual training is supposed to have a somewhat practical purpose, but seems to assume that most boys will become cabinetmakers or that cabinet-making is the open sesame of general handicraft.

Yet to give the impression that handwork in such schools as the Schoolvereeniging in Amsterdam or in Laren, Holland, is merely an adjunct to academic work is not quite fair. Handwork here occupies a rather large place in the program of these schools and after its formal beginnings becomes fairly free. It approaches, in some of its later stages, handwork as self-expression. This is even more true in the Humanitarian School at Laren.

The second common purpose of handwork is sensory-motor training. Montessori is the chief exponent of this function in modern experimental schools, and her influence is widespread. In England particularly her work is well known, and in France an American woman, May Cromwell, has donated Montessori material to hundreds

of schools in the devastated regions and has worked hard to spread Montessori's ideas throughout the country. In Switzerland, too, Montessori's influence is felt.

A similar influence is that of Decroly, of Brussels. In his school for subnormal children we found a wealth of interesting devices for stimulating children to handle objects, to note their size and shape and color. Decroly's work is not confined to subnormal children nor to sensory-motor training any more than is that of Montessori. He has worked out a fairly complete method of education for normal children, and all through it the handwork plays an important part.

This leads to the third purpose of handwork—that of assisting academic instruction. In this field, as in that of sensory-motor training, Montessori and Decroly parallel each other. There is a wide difference between the two, but there are also points of harmony.

Decroly, like Montessori, teaches arithmetic through objects. But all through his training he strives to stimulate the children's imagination. Where Montessori uses a geometric inset, Decroly uses a cow or a piece of fruit. Where Montessori uses a series of graduated cylinders for teaching relative sizes, Decroly uses such things as trees cut out of paper, or something else close to the child's life. And then there are many differences in method as the work advances—differences, however, that have nothing to do with handwork. Both Decroly and Montessori have influenced, among others, the École des Petits and Ferrière's School, in Geneva.

An excellent example of the use of handwork to further academic instruction was found in a girl's secondary school in London—the first English school in which the Dalton plan was inaugurated. There a teacher of the children of 10 and 11 years made their history and geography live for them through handwork. She has a whole book of things children can make to illustrate their work in these subjects—things like viking boats and mediæval castles.

With older children one finds manual work used for vocational guidance. We found, for instance, in Brussels, a school for boys from 12 to 14—a school that we should probably call a technical junior high school. We were led from room to room to see what the boys were doing. Immediately on entering a room the principal would blow a little whistle. Every boy dropped his work and stood at attention. The principal then explained at leisure what they were working on, the boys standing like statues the while. Then he again would blow the whistle and every boy would go back to work. This school, formal and rigid, had a remarkably complete course in handicrafts. Every boy learned to make designs and to model them in

clay, to draft patterns and to execute them in wood; to make castings and to work the iron in the machine shop.

The school was well equipped with ornamental ironwork made by the boys. They were given a course in tools, wherein they learned something about the use of every type of tool used by any trade, and through this they got a glimpse of various trades to help them in a later choice.

A better school, but one in which the handwork does not play quite so large a part, is Oundle, near Northampton, England. Here we find remarkably fine shops, with the most up-to-date equipment. Every boy, even though he is specializing in the classical courses of Latin and Greek, must spend 1 week in 10 in these shops. The shops do all the repair work for the school and make all the apparatus needed by the laboratories and by the shops themselves. The school has even taken over the village smithy and shoes all the horses. Yet Oundle, while giving an excellent view of many trades, is for boys of the wealthier class, and prepares them rather for later work in engineering, chemistry, or metallurgy. In those fields, too, it uses the practical work of the boys as a means of vocational guidance.

Handwork is nearly always considered partly as a means of self-expression. But where it is formalized, or where it is primarily a kind of training, or where it is subordinated to the teaching of other subjects, its self-expressive function is secondary or nil.

There are schools, however, where handwork is almost exclusively an outlet for creative energy. This is often true in the Landerziehungsheime, as I have already suggested. In Bedales it is true to an unusual extent. There the 11 and 12 year old children do manual work in the morning and study in the evening. "Their creative powers are at their best in the morning," the director of the lower school of Bedales explained to us. "Therefore, we want to leave them free at this time of the day to make things. They can go to any shoproom they like and make anything they like. It is their right to express themselves and create things freely. In the evening, when they are physically tired, but when their brains are still fresh, they are content to sit quietly and study."

Most schools, however, reverse this order. O'Neill, for instance, in his experiment at Kearsly, Lancashire, has handwork in the evening. This school is programless, however, and the children may be found in the shop or domestic-science room at almost any time of the day. As at Bedales, the children use the shops when and how they will. They are strictly places for the children to express their own ideas, to make things they themselves want to make.

The same is true in the school for orphans at Stranov-Krnsko, in Czechoslovakia. There the instructor will not even criticize the

children's work or suggest the best technique. His children do the best art work I have ever seen done by an unselected group of children in Europe or America. His method consists of surrounding the children with beautiful things, giving them pencils, crayons, paints, and paper, and letting them try to make other beautiful things for themselves. "They never copy," he told us, "either the pictures or objects about them or each other's work."

"But how do they learn the color harmony, the artistic spacing, the perspective, the symmetry, that so many of their drawings show?" we asked.

"By their inherent sense of beauty," he replied. "When the children have all drawn pictures representing a story, or an original design for a scarf, or whatever it may be, they put the pictures up on the wall and discuss their relative merits. They select the one or two they like best, and argue about why they are best. Then they all try again—never copying, but applying their own criticism to the new effort."

"Is their judgment always right as to the best pictures?" we inquired.

"You mean, does it agree with my judgment? Usually. But when it doesn't the children's judgment stands. I am not trying to make artists of them. I want to free their own personalities; I want to encourage them to express what is within. If I criticize, I may check a natural expression. If I suggest, they are expressing my ideas, not theirs."

From drawing and painting these children pass naturally into modeling, pottery, and woodworking. In each field their work is free and spontaneous. In each field they have produced more original and artistic products than I have seen in many schools where the making of such products was the goal. In Stranov-Krnsko it is not the goal but a by-product. The goal is free expression of the children's own ideas.

There is also a school in Czechoslovakia where handwork is the basis of all the education. It is not merely a means for teaching certain subjects; academic subjects are only taught as they grow naturally out of the handwork, which is the chief and basic work of the school.

The school is Bakule's school for crippled children in Prague. These children earn their own living, besides getting all their schooling, through making things—all sorts of artistic woodwork, carved boxes, toys, inlaid work, and small articles of furniture. They have a cooperative organization for the making and selling of these articles.

Their days are spent largely at their workbenches, which were made by themselves. These benches are transformed into beds at night. Here we saw a hunchback doing wood inlay work. Another boy was making a beautifully finished small chest, supporting himself on a pair of crutches as he worked. "He came to us on all fours, given up as an imbecile," Bakule told us. "Now he is our chief cabinetmaker. The boy with him he is training as his assistant. He made all these cases around the room for lumber and partly finished work." Over in one corner a little girl, with one arm gone, and only three fingers on the remaining hand, was carving beautiful little boxes, creating her own design. Sitting on a high stool, his bare feet on the table before him, sat an armless boy painting a design on a sofa cushion with his toes. He worked free hand (or rather free foot) and created his own pattern as he worked.

When we asked about the academic instruction of these children, one of their teachers said: "We only teach them what they themselves feel a need for. Sooner or later every child wants to read and write. When that desire comes strongly we help him, and he learns in a few weeks what takes many children years. Our arithmetic grows directly out of the children's work. They want to calculate the selling price of an article, and they find they must know how to multiply. We suggest that they learn not only to multiply that particular sum, but how to multiply any sum. They see the need for multiplication and are more than ready to practice their tables. Geography in the same way grows out of their study of the best woods to use. We are not trying primarily to teach these things, but from the children's work they come to want knowledge, and then they absorb it quickly and retain it. I think you will find that these children, when they are 12 or 13, know about as much as other children."

"But don't any of them go on to higher schools," I asked.

"Yes; and then they must do a little special preparatory work during the last year here. But by that time they see clearly why they must do this preparatory work, and they have no trouble getting ready for their examinations.

"Most of their study, however, grows directly out of what they are doing in the shop. The shopwork is the central activity, the basic work of the school."

3. SELF-GOVERNMENT.

Self-government, as we are accustomed to think of it in America, is very rare even in the most progressive European schools. Again and again the head of a school would assure us that the school had self-government, but closer inquiry usually showed that this simply

meant that the masters appointed senior boys as proctors and left certain types of discipline (including caning in England) to these boys. As far as any self-governing assembly was concerned, most schools seemed never to have heard of it.

There are, to be sure, instances of the opposite extreme—absolute freedom—of which I shall speak later; but that is not pupil self-government in the usual sense—it is absence of government.

We did find three schools in which pupils had assemblies and made their own rules. One was Glarisegg, in Switzerland; the others were the orphans' school and the school for cripples in Czechoslovakia.

In Glarisegg there is a complete constitution drawn up by the boys themselves, the teachers participating on a basis of equality.

The following summary of the constitution gives a clear idea of the organization of self-government at Glarisegg:

"All pupils, teachers, teachers' wives, and the gardener, the shopman, and the business manager form the general community. The general community handles all affairs not specifically reserved to the committees, officers, or faculty in this constitution. All members have a voice in the community, but pupils do not have a vote until their third quarter at the school.

"There is an executive committee, consisting of one teacher, one pupil from the three lower classes, and three pupils from the upper classes. This committee is elected by the general community, the classes nominating the pupil candidates. The committee may convene on its own initiative or may be called together by the faculty or by a majority of the pupils. The chairman of the executive committee is president of the general community and is elected by the community.

"The faculty handles all matters of instruction, daily program, teaching, vacations, excursions, questions of food and health requirements. It is called together and presided over by the head of the school, or may convene itself by request of the majority of the members. Wives of the faculty are invited to the discussions where their participation is desired. The faculty may call pupils into consultation. For the expulsion of any pupil the faculty must elect five of the older pupils to consult with them concerning the case, with a right to speak freely.

"Communication with parents concerning the pupils and the school devolves on the head, or on faculty members in consultation with the head. The head of the school also is solely responsible for the business management of the school, accepting new pupils, appointing and dismissing teachers, granting leave of absence for pupils

and teachers. He and the faculty are jointly responsible for the supervision of the general management of house and school, the pupil officers and associations, the patron advisors, and the sports.

"There are pupil officers and associations for the following:

"(*a*) Lost and found, school store, shoes and packages, reading room, floor inspection, shower baths, orderliness of the school, boathouse, and school journals; (*b*) tennis, football, boat racing, photography; (*c*) patron advisors.

"The officers under (*a*) are elected by the community, those under (*b*) by the clubs, while the patron advisors are appointed by the faculty.

"The regulation of the offices and clubs is established by the prefect and confirmed by the head of the school.

"A pupil court is elected by the general community and confirmed by the faculty. It consists of three members. This court has the right of arbitration and discipline. An appeal may be had from its decision to the faculty. No members of the executive committee may serve on this court."

The orphans' school at Stranov-Krnsko has no formal self-government. There is no constitution and no executive committee or courts. The children come together when anything is to be decided, and decide it.

There are no regular officers, no special parliamentary proceedings—simply free group discussion, followed by decision by common consent. In these discussions the teachers do not lead but may take part.

They are on the same footing as the pupils. The school is a miniature commune, democratic, untrammeled with rules and red tape, yet orderly and governed by the group in many matters. The teachers, however, do not leave all government to the children and do not hesitate to use authority if they deem it advisable. Stranov-Krnsko is an informal mingling of teacher authority, self-government, and freedom.

Bakule's group of crippled children is perhaps the best example of self-government, because it is the most real. The children come to the school voluntarily, a dozen of them having left the better-equipped school in which Bakule formerly taught to follow him and work with him. They are organized not merely for government but for earning their own bread and butter. The teachers, including Bakule himself, are the children's equals in the cooperative organization which they have organized for the making and selling of their handiwork. The business management of the school and its policies as well as its discipline are handled by the children themselves. Of course, their respect and love for Bakule and his

assistants gives these a real influence far beyond their mere vote. But the teachers are very scrupulous about the use of that influence. They try in every way to place responsibility on the children and to make each child feel that he is a necessary and important part of the school.

They encourage the children to get outside advice, to consult books and experts rather than only their teachers. They are striving through this complete self-government to prepare the children, handicapped though they are by crippling and deformities, to meet the responsibilities of life.

The organization is a definite business organization. It is not a side issue or a playing at self-government but it is the corner stone of the school's management and of the development of the children's characters.

4. INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTION.

The most widespread and definite educational trend in England is toward individual instruction. There is something of the same movement in Decroly's work and in Montessori's work with little children, in the individual work of the almost ungraded school at Stranov-Krnsko and in Bakule's entirely ungraded school for cripples in Prague. Yet it is in England that one finds the most complete technique of individual instruction.

There are three degrees of individualization of school work in England. The best known, most widespread method is that of the Dalton plan. More fully individual and further developed is the method used at the Bedales school. The most completely individual instruction, and the most definite technique is that of Jessie Mackinder in the Marlborough school, Chelsea, London.

THE DALTON PLAN.

The Dalton plan was introduced into England by Rosa Basset, headmistress of the girls' secondary school in Streatham Hill, London.

It has been copied by a number of other schools, which have often modified its details. Here I shall describe briefly the school of its English origin.[1]

On entering the school we found a large central room, used as study hall, lunch room, dancing room, and gymnasium. It was about a third full of girls in their early teens, studying or very qui-

[1] There are two recent books on the Dalton plan—one by Evelyn Dewey, the other by Miss Parkhurst, who originated the plan in America. For a careful study of the plan the reader should consult one of these books.

etly talking. No teacher was present. Around the sides of this hall were classrooms. Some were having classes and others "individual periods."

The classes were not unlike classes in most good schools, with explanations by the teacher, recitations by the pupils on work they had been studying, some discussions.

The "individual periods" were different. Here the teacher was at the children's disposal. One room, for example, was that of the arithmetic teacher. Girls wanting to study arithmetic came from the study hall into her class, sat down, and worked. When they had questions to ask or needed help they stepped up to the teacher's desk. When they finished their work, or got tired of arithmetic, they went back to the study hall, or into the history room, or the English room, or some other room. They were quite free during their "individual periods" to go and come and to study any subject.

Stopping at the desk of a girl in the study hall we saw one of her "assignments." It was a mimeographed sheet outlining a month's work in history. It was divided into four weekly sections. Each section outlined the reading for that week, the reference work, and the written work to be handed in to the history teacher. The girl had a similar assignment sheet for each subject. In her individual periods she worked on any subject she chose, spending perhaps all such free time of one day on English, all that of another on arithmetic, or dividing her own time among several subjects each day.

The number of free periods varied according to individual programs. Some girls had one or two individual periods in an eight-period day. Others had as many as six. The average, and the number approved by the teachers as most desirable, was four—about half of each school day. The other periods were definitely programmed—Latin class, arithmetic class, sewing class, etc.

This really is the essence of the Dalton plan: About half of the school day left free to the children to arrange as they wish, knowing what they have to accomplish; "laboratory rooms," i. e., subject rooms in which the teacher is present at certain periods ready to consult; assignments by the week or month instead of by the day and in more detail than ordinary assignments; regular class periods for discussion, explanations, reciting, and testing in each subject.

I asked a girl who had been whispering and laughing with her neighbor in the study hall whether the children did not often waste time in their long, unprogrammed periods. "Of course," she replied, "lots of it. But if we waste too much time, we don't get our assignments finished, and then we get in trouble."

"What happens to you?" I asked. "Oh, we get poor marks, or maybe we fail our subject."

Later I asked the teachers what happened if a girl failed in one or two important subjects—that is, if by the end of the year she had not completed her assignments satisfactorily.

"She must repeat the year's work in all subjects," I was told, "just as in other schools."

I asked if this did not seem a waste of the child's time when possibly two or three months' additional work in the weak subjects would complete them and when there were other subjects which had been satisfactorily completed the first time.

"I suppose so," was the answer, "but we can't arrange our program so that a girl is working in two or three forms at once or in a different month's assignment from the other girls. The Dalton plan doesn't pretend to cure all evils."

The teachers, for the most part, are in favor of the system. Their chief complaint against it is that they can not regulate the way the children's work comes in, and that consequently they usually have a dearth of written work during the first part of the month and are swamped toward the end of the month, when all the girls rush to finish their assignments. They feel, however, that this inconvenience to themselves is greatly overbalanced by the advantages of the Dalton plan to the children. The children are more self-reliant and responsible in their attitude toward their work. The assignments give them a clearer idea of what they are working for. The freedom of the individual periods allows them to concentrate for long periods on a subject when they get interested in it, thereby avoiding the waste of time and energy in changing work at the ringing of a bell. And there is readier adaptation of time to individual differences, since a girl may spend most of her time on the subject hardest for her and less on those she finds easy.

The ease with which the Dalton plan can be introduced in any school and its unquestionable advantages over the rigidity of the ordinary program give promise of a continuation of its rapid spread. It obviously is not complete individual instruction, but it does allow some adaptability to individual differences and is a decided step toward really individual work.

THE BEDALES PLAN.

Bedales school, about two hours' railway journey south of London, has adopted the Dalton plan, but has gone further.

Here is a clear recognition of the fact that a month's work for one child may be only two weeks' work for another, or six weeks' work for a third. In Miss Bassett's school, and probably in others under the Dalton plan, this fact is partly recognized, and an effort is made

to take care of it by "plus assignments," in which the brighter pupils do extra work to fill up their spare time. This extra work, however, means special assignments, and the teachers more often than not fail to make them; furthermore, there is a natural tendency on the part of the bright child to loaf rather than to do hard work when the only reward is extra work, especially if it is in a subject in which the child is not interested. Special assignments at the best do not take care of the slow children, who can not keep up with the average.

Bedales recognizes individual differences by allowing the children to "accumulate credits." The assignments are simply units of work. If a child finishes a unit in less than a month, he may immediately begin the next unit. If he requires more than a month, he may take more time instead of going on with the next assignment before he is ready for it. In this way Bedales avoids several evils:

In the first place, failure becomes impossible—a child never repeats a grade. A child takes as long as necessary on each unit, then goes on to the next. He may take a year and a third to do a year's work, but he will not have to repeat, he will not have failed.

In the second place, one subject does not hold the child back in another. He may need a year and a third for a year's work in mathematics, but he may finish a year's work in English in six months. His advancement is by subjects, not by classes. He may, however, use more time on his "slow" subject and less on his "fast" one, thereby equalizing his advancement to some extent. This is generally encouraged.

A third advantage of the Bedales plan is that it encourages the children to work to capacity. The children know they have a certain amount to accomplish. The sooner they accomplish it the more rapidly they will be able to advance.

Still another good result of the very simple step taken by Bedales beyond the Dalton plan is that everything that is done is done thoroughly. When a class is kept together, the slower children necessarily do less thorough work than the average. But when, as at Bedales, the children are not required to keep pace, the slower children simply advance more slowly, but not less thoroughly, than the brighter ones.

Finally, the children's tendency complained of by Miss Basset's teachers, to put off written work till the latter part of the month, and then to swamp the teachers with it, is entirely avoided by the Bedales plan. The abolition of the month as the basis of work and the substitution for it of work units, to be done at the children's own rate, prevents bunching of work at any one time.

The faculty at Bedales seemed to have no difficulty in arranging their work and program to take care of this individual advance-

ment. This may be due to the fact that the classes are much smaller than in such schools as Miss Basset's. Bedales is a private school; Miss Basset's is one of the regular city schools of London.

Class discussions at Bedales were a problem. In mathematics they were almost abandoned, the teacher discussing problems with just two or three children at a time. In languages the oral work was kept distinct from the written work and the study assignments. Only the oral work was done in class periods, the study assignments being done in "individual periods"; that is, during the [illegible] part of the children's school day.

History and geography presented the most serious problem. "We have been allowing the children to accumulate credits in these as well as the other subjects," the teacher explained, "but we feel that they are losing one of the most important parts of their social studies. The discussions and dramatizations should go along with the reading and studying, which would mean that the children would have to stay together in the social studies. These really are different from other subjects, and it is possible to assign enough special investigations and reports to the brighter children to keep them busy while the slower ones are catching up. There are so many interesting phases of the social studies that a child can not spend too much time on them. We are, therefore, trying to work out a plan to keep the children together in history and geography. But we are finding it difficult because they have already spread so far apart."

Teachers in other subjects seemed to agree with this teacher—that individual advancement is generally much better than class advancement, but that the social studies are probably an exception.

Whether the Bedales plan would be practicable in a school with classes of 30 to 40 children, instead of 20, is a serious question. There is a school, however, that has gone a step further even than Bedales, and has thereby made individual instruction in its full sense possible in large classes of a regular city school. This school is Miss Jessie Mackinder's Marlborough School, in Chelsea.

MACKINDER METHODS.

The additional step Miss Mackinder has taken is the devising of self-instructive materials, which are also frequently self-corrective. By this one means she has made it possible for a teacher to handle 40 to 50 children between the ages of 5 and 7, on a strictly individual basis.

Her school is one of the London County Council schools, a free city school in a poor district of London. She is director of the infant department only, which corresponds roughly to our kindergarten

and primary grades. After leaving her, the children go through the regular course of a conservative English school.

The very little children, 3 and 4 years old, have Montessori work in a room that is fitted up as a modern nursery. At the age of 5 they begin individual work in reading and writing. A little later they begin arithmetic.

Going into any of the rooms a visitor is immediately impressd by the atmosphere of happy, free work. Almost every child is doing something, quite independently. All around the walls and on the tables and even on the floor are interesting devices, things the children can do unaided and through which they can teach themselves.

For example:

In a clear space on the floor of one room we find a ring about 4 feet in diameter. Inside this ring are a number of letters of the alphabet, each cut out from a tin can. Standing around the ring are two or three children. Each has a fishing rod made of a pointer, from the end of which a magnet hangs on a string. The child fishes out a letter with his magnet—let us suppose it is a *t*. He then walks to the back wall with it. Along the back wall are hung 26 cards. Each card has a picture, and under the picture is a word, the name of the object depicted. The child holds his tin *t* up by the initial letter of one word after another until he finds a word which begins with a *t*. (He has been taught always to place his left thumb on a little pad at the lower left-hand corner of the letter he holds so that it will be right side up.)

Having found the *t* on a card, he says the name of the object pictured above the word; in this case, *top*. He says it over and over to himself, stressing the initial sound, and then says the initial sound separately, thus, "t—top," giving the sound of *t*, not the name of the letter. When sure he knows it, he looks through a box at his desk for a cardboard *t*, replacing the tin one in the "pond." With his cardboard *t* he goes through a whole box full of words at his desk, looking for those which begin with *t*, and pronouncing the words from the picture on each—tack, ten, teeth, tin, top, tub, etc., each time saying the *t* sound first.

This is one of several devices for letting the children teach themselves the sounds of vowels and consonants. The teacher is among them all the time, correcting any errors, or explaining the method of work. She is busy every second, and so are the children, most of them quite independently. Sometimes the children's errors are funny. One little girl had an *h* and was pronouncing it with the short sound of *a*. The teacher asked her why she called it *a*. The child marched proudly to the wall, showed a picture of a hat, with the word *hat* beneath clearly beginning with *h*, and being a Cockney, she said "a—'at."

There is a complete series of these devices, carrying the children right through from the beginning to a good grasp of reading, writing (or rather printing, which is now much in vogue in England in lieu of ordinary script), and the elements of arithmetic.

The teachers can handle large numbers of children because the children teach themselves through these devices and correct most of their own work—even little 5-year-olds. I have never seen little children do academic work with such persistent concentration and interest. It was evidently the result of the method, not of the personality of any one teacher, for it was the same in each room.

The children were allowed almost entire freedom, yet they were very well behaved. They talked and moved about, of course, and they were expected to. They helped one another. There was not a typical schoolroom atmosphere. But there was something much better—the atmosphere of active, interesting work.

The children advance on a purely individual basis. Each child works through one set of devices after another, entirely regardless of the rate of other children. These little children have as much freedom to choose which subject they will work on, and for how long, as do the older girls of Miss Basset's school; there is as much opportunity to progress at their own natural rate in each subject as at Bedales. But there is a completeness of materials and definiteness of technique in Miss Mackinder's school that was lacking in both of the others.

Only an hour and a half of each school day is spent on their individual work, the rest of the time being given to games, stories, singing, and other group activities. Yet, according to the results of tests, Miss Mackinder's children are nearly a year ahead of the average children in the infant schools of London. Her results confirm the conclusions of Burk, Horn, Sutherland, and Washburne in the United States, that individual instruction allows more time for group activities and simultaneously produces more efficient results.

It is through the technique of self-instruction and self-correction that individual instruction becomes possible with large classes. Miss Mackinder has advanced farther along this line with little children than any other school in Europe.[2]

5. GROUP INSTRUCTION.

Instruction through cooperative enterprises or group activities is well illustrated by the work of Dr. O. Decroly, in Belgium, and that of Cousinet in France.

[2] She has also advanced in this line beyond the work in any school in America, with two possible exceptions. The exceptions are Burk's work in the San Francisco State Teachers' College and Ethel Waring's work in the Los Angeles State Teachers' College. The Winnetka, Ill., schools have gone farther with older children, but not so far in the early primary grades.

Decroly's method in the middle and upper grades is a form of group instruction. The group, it is true, involves the whole class. But it is a class working together cooperatively.

This particular aspect of Decroly's method is based on special reports by the children. These reports form a nucleus for a considerable part of each day's work.

Each child selects a certain phase of the subject under consideration—usually some aspect of history or geography. He looks up this topic in reference books, gathers pictures concerning it, and writes a full report of it in his notebook, illustrating the report with drawings and cut-out pictures.

This notebook report constitutes the work in French composition and penmanship, and any errors in it are made the basis of instruction in grammar and spelling.

When the report is fully prepared, the pupil is assigned a period during which he may present it to the rest of the class. He then delivers a "lecture," illustrating it by drawings which he puts on the board and by pictures and materials which he passes out among the other children. At the end of the "lecture" he answers the questions which his classmates ask. When all who have questions have asked them, the group criticizes the report, as well as the answers to questions. In the light of this criticism the pupil revises his report.

If his classmates feel that he has omitted an important part of his subject, he may be called upon later to give a supplementary lecture. Or he may even be required to prepare a better report.

The other members of the class take notes on his "lecture" and his answers to questions and write them up in their own notebooks.

The fact that each child through his report contributes to the knowledge of the group and is responsible to the group for the satisfactoriness of that knowledge makes this system of Decroly's a real example of group instruction. It has the disadvantage of any lecture system—the children who are listening do not get as much from some other person's talk as from their own work, and they are listening to other children's reports a large part of the lecture periods. But it has the advantages of group activity in its development of a habit of cooperative endeavor and of the ability to speak freely and effectively to an audience.

Cousinet, of Arcis-sur-Aube, in France, often uses some of Decroly's technique, but he has a well-defined technique of his own as well. He is a school inspector, with some 150 schools under his supervision, but he has only established his special method of group instruction in three or four of these.

Cousinet is an ardent follower of John Dewey, alert to educational movements everywhere, alive and keen. He bases his whole system of education on the activities of self-formed groups. He believes that group activity has the great advantage of training children to cooperate; that it brings out special abilities of individuals as they make their own particular contributions to the group; that it is the most natural way of educating; and that it enables one to allow considerable freedom to the following out of the children's interests, because the interests of the various children in the group cover a much wider range of activities than those of single individuals.

His method is briefly as follows:

The children form themselves into voluntary groups in each classroom. These groups accept or reject members freely. Each group follows out certain interests or undertakes activities suggested by the teacher.

Once a group has begun to work, the teacher keeps hands off until the work is finished. The children correct each other and try to make a finished product by their joint efforts. It may be a composition or a buying, selling, bookkeeping transaction, or a scientific classification and study of a bat one of them has brought in, or the construction of a sand table village of a country they are studying, or a dramatization of history. It is quite definitely a "project" in the American sense, but one in which the teacher leaves the work entirely to the voluntary groups of children. When the project is completed, the teacher criticizes its formal aspects, language, spelling, accuracy, etc. She limits her criticism to this formal side. It is conducted as a discussion with the group and frequently becomes a lesson in the phase of the work criticized, such as grammar or bookkeeping. Children may leave one group and work with another. Each group usually is doing something different from the others. The number and size of a group depend entirely on the children—a class might divide into two groups or it might divide into five or six.

Practically all the children's work is done in these groups rather than individually or in classes. They issue a little school paper, written and illustrated by themselves. They have enlisted the interest of the parents, who sometimes come to school at night to make things the children need in their work.

One of Cousinet's teachers, an enthusiastic advocate of his group method, sums up his philosophy by quoting the way he introduced it to her: "We must create an environment for our children where they will find everything necessary for their education, so that they will be able to educate themselves without our help. And you may rest quite easy, for you will have nothing to do but watch them live."

6. FREEDOM.

The tendency to give children more freedom in school is widespread among experimental schools, although not universal. Decroly's influence is always toward greater freedom; so is Montessori's. Cousinet, inspector of schools in the Aube district of France, incorporates much freedom with his method of group instruction. The École des Petits in Geneva, founded by the Jean Jacques Rousseau Institute, and the little school in Ferrière's home in Geneva, show the Decroly and Montessori influence, as well as Ferrière's earnest belief in a freer education.

The orphanage in Stranov-Krnsko, discussed under "handwork for self-expression" and "self-government," is a remarkably free school. The children are almost completely free the entire afternoon and have much liberty during classes and meals. It is their freedom that makes the orphanage so homelike and the children so natural.

The younger children at Bedales are very free. The only limitation is that during certain hours of the day they must do academic work and during others shopwork. What kind of academic or shopwork and how much is left entirely to the children. The children move about and talk with entire liberty.

The Dalton plan carries with it freedom at least to the extent of the organization of a considerable part of their own time by the children, and sometimes includes freedom of intercourse among them.

Individual instruction conduces to freedom everywhere. Miss Mackinder's children, in the Marlborough School, London, talk and move about freely and work on the subject that interests them. Yet the definiteness of her materials brings about a natural orderliness.

Freedom in school has gone further in two schools in Europe than in any of our American schools. I once thought Marietta Johnson had gone to the extreme in this regard, but she is a conservative beside O'Neill, of Kearsley, Lancashire, and even he does not go as far as the schools of Hamburg.

Both O'Neill's school and those of Hamburg are free public schools, part of the national or State educational system. That such radical experiments can exist in the public education of England and Germany is the direct result of their freedom from such centralized control as exists in Holland, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, and Czechoslovakia.

O'NEILL IN ENGLAND.

O'Neill used to be a strict, old-fashioned schoolmaster, who used the rod plentifully. And when he reformed he reacted all the way.

On taking the principalship of the Kearsley school he removed all control from the children. He let them run wild in the school. He would not make rules; he would not have a course of study; he would not punish; he would not urge the children to learn anything. Parents began to complain that their children were forgetting how to read and write. O'Neill held meetings of such parents as would come, and he tried to explain his philosophy. It was somewhat as follows:

"These children are going from school into the cotton mills of Kearsley. They are going to lead dull, monotonous lives from the time they are 12 or 14 on. Let's give them a taste of life before they have to become machines. Let's stimulate their imaginations, their interests, now while they are young, instead of suppressing them and cramming facts down unwilling throats. They will sooner or later want to read and write. Their reaction from it now is natural—reading and writing have been forced on them. Give me time—give them time. It is natural for them to want knowledge. If we give them freedom, they will come to us for ability to gain what they want.

"If we can make their lives happy and imaginative in school, they can carry something of this into their later working lives. If they leave us loving to read, loving to know, they will carry that love into their otherwise barren future. You can't force children to love reading and knowledge. This must come from freedom."

His fire and enthusiasm convinced enough parents to prevent for a time any serious interference with his work. After a while, however, some parents demanded an investigation of the school.

The investigation was made and it was found that the children were shockingly ignorant of the things people expect children to learn in school. O'Neill was given a hearing by his board.

"I admit their ignorance of many school knowledges," he said. "Those are not the things we have been working for. When we came here the children were tattletales; now there is none of that. When we came the children lied and stole. They do neither now. The school doors used to be locked from 4 in the afternoon until 8.30 in the morning. Now they are never locked. Every evening my wife and I are in the school and dozens of children are there with us voluntarily, to learn and to make things in the shop. The school was devoid of pictures. Now it is filled with the beautiful paintings bought by Colonel Holmes. We do want the children to be literate, and if you give us time they will be. But we want them to want literacy. And it takes time to overcome their reaction against forced study. But we do not care what knowledge the children have

beyond literacy and the ability to do such arithmetic as is involved in buying things they need in everyday life. For other knowledge and further ability let each child follow his own natural interests. We are much more concerned with the children themselves. We want them to be responsible. We want them to learn to respect each other's rights, not because some authority is enforcing this respect but because they see the need for it. We want them to learn to cooperate freely and intelligently with each other. We want them to see the beauty in nature and the beauty in literature. These things can not be achieved by forced study and forced discipline. They are the natural outgrowth of free association with each other and with their teachers. We teachers can be the children's companions only by ceasing to be dictators. As their companions we can give them the best that is in us. It takes patience and will power to allow freedom. Do you think that it is as easy for us teachers to live in the bedlam which often prevails as to live in a well-ordered school? Do you think it is easier to spend all our waking hours in school than to spend the conventional six hours a day? Don't you suppose we go home at night discouraged and utterly worn out again and again? Yet we are convinced that the ultimate results are worth this sacrifice. Don't let the misunderstanding of a few parents make all our sacrifice come to nothing.

"We are just beginning to come out of chaos and into the light. To restrict the children's freedom now, when after two years of abusing it they are just learning to use it, will make those two years waste years."

The board felt the force of his plea. They asked him, however, to make out some sort of study plan, some rough division of time, so that they could convince the parents that the children were learning something.

So O'Neill and his coworkers prepared a general plan. According to this plan about one-fifth of the children's school hours are spent on arithmetic; two-fifths on "English," including history, geography, literature, writing, and spelling; and two-fifths on manual and physical activities.

There is no attempt to make a program for each day, but in a general way, during the week, the teachers try to keep something of this balance. The children keep a record book of the number of minutes they spend each day on any subject and the number of minutes in which they receive class instruction from the teacher. If a child is found to be doing very poor work in some subject, the teacher checks up the record book to see if the child is spending

enough time on this subject. Otherwise the record books are merely a defense against possible objecting parents.

The teachers average two and a half hours a week of "class instruction." This may come all in one morning, or be spread out through the week, as they desire. The class instruction is intended as a stimulus supplied by the teacher, to interest the children in some topic. Usually this class period is followed by a study time in which all the children work along the line suggested. But as they lose interest or tire, they shift freely to any other subject or activity. When practically all the children have lost the impetus given by that class period the teacher has another, perhaps on a different subject.

But one can not generalize on any of these things. The teachers differ among themselves and what a teacher does this week he does not do next. The school is amazingly free.

There are still marks of the chaos through which it has come. The teachers are human and occasionally forsake their lofty principles and descend to an old-fashioned scolding of the children or even to some discipline. But this is exceptional. For the most part the children go and come as they please, work on what interests them, and follow their own impulses. Yet they are learning. Some of the older ones are writing verse. Others are doing good work in art. All of them can read and write well. All of them know the most important elements of arithmetic. They concentrate admirably on the work they choose to do. To an ordinary teacher the school would seem seriously undisciplined; yet there was almost no "rough house" and there was much serious work.

The children themselves are natural, affectionate, and self-possessed. They are clearly in school because there are things there that they want to learn and do. They are self-reliant and cooperative.

As to the imaginative side, let me complete the account of this school with two verses, by children in Mrs. O'Neill's class, entirely unaided by the teacher. The whole class was writing verse, some better, some worse, than that reproduced herewith. The spelling and punctuation are exactly as the children themselves made them:

WILL O' THE WISP.

I'm Will o' the Wisp the airy sprite,
The airy sprite that haunts the night,
Floating about in the silvery light
That comes from the gentle queen of night,
I dance with the fairies in the shade
Of the old oak tree,
I chase the moonbeams through the glade
They love to play with me,
I laugh to see the traveller's fright
As my airy form he sees
Flitting and darting through the trees,
I laugh and shout in my delight,
On my bright and fairy flute
I make music, oh! so cute
For I'm Will o' the Wisp the airy sprite
That haunts the regions of the night,
In the night hours I dance and play
But when the day comes I dance away.

DAWN.

A faint grey flush,
A rosy blush,
Announces birth of day.
A sun-tipped cloud,
A fleecy shroud,
And Day is on her way.

THE HAMBURG SCHOOLS.

Even more daring than O'Neill's experiment in freedom and on a larger scale is the experiment in Hamburg, originated by Paulsen, who is now superintendent of schools in Berlin. The Hamburg schools have not even the rough division of time that O'Neill's school has; they would scorn a record of the minutes spent on each subject—they object to any attempt to teach subjects at all. They would not even have the teacher try to interest the children in something they ought to know.

"We don't know what the children ought to know," they say. "We don't know in what kind of society they are going to live. The world is in a state of flux, and no one knows the future of these children. The only thing we know is that they are human beings, with a right to live their own lives. We shall give them freedom to live as they want to live. We are not interested in what they learn; we are interested in the development and free expression of their souls."

Four large public schools in Hamburg are dedicated to this ideal, and Paulsen hopes to open 12 more in Berlin. No children are forced to attend them—if parents do not like their way of educating, they may send the children to one of the more conventional schools of the city. But most parents whose children are actually in these schools are whole-heartedly in favor of the experiment.

The schools are the direct outcome of the socialistic and idealistic reaction to the war.

Paulsen and the school principals and teachers who inaugurated the régime of complete freedom in Hamburg did it in the hope that they might prepare children to live in the new and completely democratic State which they thought was about to come into existence.

Now that they see that the ideal State is far removed they continue their way of educating in the hope that the coming generation, with freed souls, with the habit of personal responsibility, with unforced cooperativeness, will be able to build a State in which freedom and cooperation replace the sordid conditions of to-day.

They do not know what that new world should be, but they believe that a generation brought up in freedom, with the desires and aspirations of the soul fully expressed, will be able to see what the teachers and politicians of to-day can not see and to do what each nation has failed so far to do.

The sole effort of the teachers is bent toward the permitting of free growth of the children's individualities.

In a typical one of these schools the building shows the present poverty of Germany and her former stability. It is strongly con-

structed, but bare and ugly inside; the furniture consists almost exclusively of the old double benches so common in all Europe. These have been moved around, leaving the middle of the floor clear in most rooms. There are no shops, and there is nothing artistic or beautiful anywhere. Some futurist "friend" of the school has decorated the music room in an impressionistic style that suggests a very noisy jazz band more than any harmony. But there is light and air—and there are the children.

The children are delightful. They are the most natural and affectionate of all the children we found in European schools, except the little orphans of Stranov-Krnsko. The children at Kearsley were almost as natural, but these in Hamburg were even more freely affectionate and happy.

The teachers are not all in agreement in details and are allowed as much freedom as are the children.

Children come to the school at the age of 6. The beginners start with a specified teacher, but as they grow older they choose their own teachers. There are no grades, no regular classes, no promotions. The children simply come to school and live for five or six hours a day with their teachers. They talk freely with each other; they move freely about the building. They ask questions and the teachers are there to answer them. They want to learn to read or write or to do something in arithmetic, and the teacher is there to help them. If they do not want to learn these things, no one forces them, no one even tries to urge them to learn. In time every child does want to read and write, the teachers say, and they wait until this desire appears.

I asked if there were not serious gaps in the children's education as a result of this haphazard method.

"I doubt it," said one of the teachers. "By the time a child has lived eight years with us, he is pretty likely to have got everything that is very important. Besides, even if he didn't, we are not working toward that end; we don't know what is important to know. We want the children to *live*."

These schools, like O'Neill's, went through a period of chaos, and there is still some chaos left. Yet the children generally are well behaved, although never in the conventional schoolroom way.

They are no less orderly without a teacher than with one. They will not tolerate too much interruption by their fellows if they are interested in doing something. They seem to read and write and do simple arithmetic reasonably well.

No exact comparison can be made between the ability of these children and that of others, because the teachers do not believe in tests. They do not believe in anything that tries to make children alike.

They want to bring out each child's individuality. To measure the success or failure of their experiment by the children's speed and accuracy in long division would be as absurd, from their point of view, as to measure the value of an apple tree in terms of the length of its twigs instead of the quality of its apples. The difficulty in appraising the schools is our utter inability to measure the product which is their goal—a free development of individuality.

One sees at a glance that the children are more spontaneous, more real, than in most schools, and that they express themselves much more freely. One also sees that they have learned, through hard experience, to get along with each other with very little friction and to lead self-reliant lives in the school without supervision. But one wonders whether the large amount of apparently waste time, the confusion, the inefficient, haphazard way of learning are necessary concomitants of these good things.

Whether one regards the teachers in Hamburg and O'Neill at Kearsley as deluded enthusiasts or as impetuous Utopians leaping from the frying pan of inefficient educational conservatism into the fire of still more inefficient educational radicalism or as the prophets and pioneers of a new educational era, this much is certain: They are people of high intelligence, high ideals, and remarkable courage, and their daring educational revolution will make all of us think more profoundly and freely.

7. RESEARCH SCHOOLS AND CLASSES.

The "Versuchschule" in Germany is a school set apart by a city to try out new methods of education. It has its counterpart in Czechoslovakia and analogues in Belgium and France. None of them is for research in the scientific sense, and there is no statistical checking of results, no careful control of conditions.

The schools are like all those described in this report—like most experimental schools in Europe and America—in that they are simply new ideas put into practice by teachers who believe in them and judged as to their results by these same teachers. The spread of the ideas, of course, depends on these teachers convincing others and especially those who visit the classes conducted along new lines. The idea spreads by conversion rather than by scientific proof of its validity.

But the Versuchschulen, or research schools and classes, differ from other experimental schools in that they are established by a city or other governmental division with the deliberate intention of stimulating experimentation and progress in the city. They are seriously considered by conservative teachers, since they have official sanction,

and therefore their influence is considerable. They give an opportunity to the head of a system of schools to try out ideas on a small enough scale to be closely watched and carefully revised before putting them into general practice.

In Prague there are four classrooms in three different schools set aside as experimental classes. The teachers of these classes are freed from the usual restrictions of the centralized, autocratic system which still remains from the days of Austria's domination.

They work out their own plans, submit them to the minister of education for approval, and then proceed to put them into practice.

Apparently they have not advanced very far in really progressive education, but they have put into practice some current educational ideas which are somewhat in advance of the traditional methods. They include handwork (that never failing panacea), they allow the children more freedom, and they teach number work objectively.

In France there are no true "Versuchschulen," but Cousinet, a district inspector with about 150 schools under his supervision, has introduced a method of group instruction in three or four schools which might be considered as analogous to the "Versuchschulen."

Similarly, Raymond Buyse's introduction of Decroly's methods in a number of schools in the St. Gilles district of Brussels serves much the same purpose as do the Versuchschulen of Germany. Buyse is a friend and follower of Decroly and is inspector for this large district in Brussels. Instead of one or two schools becoming complete Versuchschulen for experimenting with Decroly's materials and methods, he intrusts this work to one or two teachers in each of as many schools as possible. He feels that this is much more effective as a means of testing and spreading the method. He not only gets a wider variety of children and conditions for the experiment, but he also brings the experiment within close touch of a large number of schools. It is better to have one teacher in each school talking daily with her colleagues, hearing and meeting their criticisms, sharing the results with them, than to have teachers from all parts of the district visit a single school.

Perhaps if the method were less fully developed than Decroly's there would be a loss in scattering the experiment through a number of schools. In its first stages of development all workers on a given experiment should be in close and constant touch with each other, and should be free from the criticism of others. There is danger of prejudicing conservative teachers if one lets them see too many of the mistakes necessarily made in the beginning of an experiment. But Decroly's method has been worked out fully and carefully by him in his school for subnormal children in Uccles and his private school for normal children in Brussels. The experimentation which Buyse and

his teachers are doing is simply for the adapting of the method to public-school classes. Otherwise, the Decroly classes in Brussels are demonstration classes rather than experimental. For such classes there is no doubt as to the great gain in distributing them among as many schools as possible, as Buyse has done.

In whichever form the Versuchschule idea functions, whether as an experimental school or as experimental classes, it is a hopeful thing in the public educational system of countries whose progress is impeded by overcentralization, as in Czechoslovakia, France, and Belgium, and likewise in the locally centralized city school systems of educationally freer countries like Germany.

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