
INDUSTRIAL WORK AND CHARACTER BUILDING.

By CARRIE ANDERSON, Industrial Inspector.

BETWEEN the most crude and awkward turn or twist of a soft straw made by the tender, untrained fingers of a little 6-year-old, who is just learning his first lessons in weaving, and the most deftly made Polangui basket, or the finest hat or mat produced by a skillful weaver, there is quite a gap. Yet this gap must be traversed by the little tyro in some way in the course of time.

Because a first grade pupil is not able to turn out elaborately finished articles of some commercial value, or articles that approach our standard of beauty, is no reason why he should be considered too young and incapable of doing any kind of industrial work. As soon as he is old enough to toddle to school and to distinguish one word from another, and even sooner, does he desire to construct objects and to imitate the occupations of others. The muscles of his little restless body crave exercise and his mind is alert for new experiences. Every impression received demands expression. The larger things in life, which occupy the attention of grown people, do not enter his life at this age. Receiving his food and clothing and other necessities from others, he is not concerned about the manner of their acquisition. His mind is occupied with his immediate surroundings, which he looks upon from a viewpoint differing greatly from that of older and more experienced people. He will put life into a stick, a stone, a shell, a leaf, a string, or any simple little object that for the time attracts him. He will manipulate the materials that he finds at his disposal according to the skill he possesses, in expressing that which appeals to his vivid imagination. In this way he becomes a creator himself.

The teacher should avail herself of the opportunity to direct his activities into right channels, and so aid him in his development. She must see that the child's work has an application to something definite, even if it is but a temporary plaything for the day. If it satisfies his desires, his imagination, and if it is the expression of his very best efforts, it has fulfilled its mission. To the child such a plaything is of as great a value,

and means as much, as any article that is used for pleasure or is otherwise employed by grown people. The making of his little toy occupied him for the time being very profitably, and who knows but that in those happy moments are engendered the germs of a thought that will some day be felt as a power in the world. Many worthy thoughts and deeds have received their inception from such pleasant occupations.

The obstacles the child encounters in his daily industrial work, and the manner in which he masters them, help him to become self-reliant and to overcome the problems he meets later in life. He should not be babied and made helpless, expecting others to do for him the things he can do for himself with a little perseverance. He has had many lessons of self-help before entering school, and he must now learn to adapt himself to new conditions and demands. Every assistance given to the pupil when he should work independently weakens him, lessens his powers, and robs him of further interest. One of the strongest lessons the teacher needs to learn, is "hands off" as long as the pupil is on the right track. He does not wish to be interrupted while he enjoys his work. Still, he should never be without the proper guidance of a more mature hand, willing to direct him when he needs assistance.

The teacher must at all times be patient in teaching the child his work and show him how to correct the little errors he is likely to make. Each new step must be thoroughly mastered, and the child should not be permitted to hasten to the end with the work but half learned. He must learn patience. At the same time the child should not be employed at a task that is beyond his powers to accomplish, nor should he attempt to make articles that, on account of his lack of skill, take him an unreasonably long time in finishing. He must get them off his hands before his interest lags. A partly finished object that is being carried back and forth to school for a month or two, often thrown about carelessly, while the materials are deteriorating, loses its freshness. The work becomes monotonous to the child. This monotony does not appeal to him and is not conducive to fostering his love for industrial work. He actually becomes careless and would probably throw it away in disgust were he not prevented from doing so. If he does finish it, it is under compulsion, for he would rather begin anew or cast industrial work aside as distasteful.

The child should learn that his time is not to be wasted, and that he is expected to accomplish something every day. He

should learn the value of industry and should not spend his industrial periods idly or in worthless play. The materials used represent an outlay of money or, at least, of labor on the part of some one and, no matter how small their value, they should never be ruthlessly wasted. Wastefulness entails poverty. A habit of economy brings prosperity.

Often wrong habits are formed for the reason that much of the work comes unnaturally, and proper development is not obtained. Whatever is not learned step by step—by easy stages—will engender faults which need to be unlearned at some future time to the sorrow of the child and with much waste of labor. If the foundations are not well laid, habits of indolence, thriftlessness, and shiftlessness will be the results.

It is the mission of the teacher to develop good traits in the child and to weed out undesirable ones as soon as detected while she is leading him through the mazes of his industrial activities. The teacher must know the difficulties the child has to cope with. She will never know them nor the child's struggles unless she becomes familiar with all the details of the work. She must also enter with spirit into the play instinct of the child.

"Our present schools have not yet fully grasped the meaning of this *threefold task*: first, education to skill in work and joy in work; secondly, education to readiness of service, consideration for others, and loyalty to schoolfellows and to the school; and, thirdly, education to insight into the aims of the state community. Well-organized schools fulfil the first task, the development of personal capacity. It still remains to enlarge them to schools for social service, and our most important task is to provide such schools for the mass of the population, based on training for a trade." (Dr. Georg Kerschensteiner.)

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"The only path to real state-community is to accustom the children from their earliest years to do their work not only for their own personal advantage but also for the advantage of their youthful companions. Only thus can we hope to develop the two great fundamental virtues of devotion to aims outside ourselves and of consideration for the interests of others. And only, thus will it in all probability be possible to preserve our great modern constitutional states from the dangers that threaten them through their own industrial, economic, social, and political development." (Dr. Georg Kerschensteiner.)