

**Kindergartens and "Near" Kindergartens.**

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When Dr. Thomas M. Balliet, of New York University, was asked to say a word about Kindergarten education he made this statement:

All the more recent studies in child psychology emphasize the great plasticity of the early years of childhood. The habits which the child then forms and the attitude, both intellectual and emotional, which is then given him, are more lasting and more determining for his adult life than was even suspected some years ago. This gives added importance to Kindergarten training of a genuine sort.

These last words call up a familiar phrase, a phrase so often used that we are apt to hold it in contempt—"There are Kindergartens and Kindergartens." We are willing, however, to repeat the well-worn expression because of its implications. It conveys in epigram form the idea of contrast between spurious and genuine, between so-called and actual, between a name and what the name stands for.

One of the accepted facts of life is that a thing which is essentially good is bound to be imitated in its outer details, while its real essence is often entirely disregarded. Our language is full of metaphors based upon these facts. We say of a person's speech as we say of a false coin, that it does not ring true; and of a doubtful transaction as of a package, that it does not bear the right stamp.

Dr. Balliet speaks advisedly when he says Kindergarten training of a genuine sort. For the Kindergarten has not escaped the fate of all other institutions of excellence; indeed it seems to offer especial facilities to the counterfeiting spirit of mankind.

There are several reasons why this is so. First, in any community it is quite easy to assemble a number of little boys and girls and put them in the charge of a grown person who is fond of children. Second, any educational supply house can furnish the attractive little chairs and low tables, and the balls, blocks, clay, papers, scissors, paste, paints and so on which are mediums for the mental and manual activities of the children. Third, from the same supply house issues forth a plenteous flowing stream of instruction-books, plan-books, song-books, story-books, and books of games and plays, and the

grown person can dip up what she needs for daily use. Fourth, this combination of children and grown persons and furniture and supplies and music and games may make a favorable impression upon the community, and the community may record its approbation of the Kindergarten, never suspecting that what exists in its midst is not one of the genuine sort, but only a near Kindergarten.

It will be asked how one may distinguish the genuine sort from the near sort, since both sorts make use of the same furniture and play materials and games and music. One point of distinction is that in the real Kindergarten these details of equipment are treated as adjuncts, or as instruments through which the living spirit of the thing liberates itself, while in the near Kindergarten the equipment is leaned upon and regarded as the mainstay of the institution. Again, in the real Kindergarten there is an air, a certain feel which exhales from a right relationship between the teachers and children, quite independent of any external circumstance of room and apparatus. Our American proverb says: "Boston is not a place but an attitude of mind." The same thing is true of a genuine Kindergarten. The genuineness of it is produced by the right attitude of the teacher towards every kind of relationship human and divine. In the imitation Kindergarten there is an artificiality or a strained air, produced by the teacher's effort to make goody-goody talk serve as a substitute for right inner attitudes. In the genuine Kindergarten the teacher is continually growing in the sense of the little child and in power to discriminate between the essential and non-essential things in the child-life. In the near Kindergarten there is no shading; all things are treated as if of equal value; devices are multiplied and crowded into the foreground while principles are not even in the back-ground.

To be genuine means "to be true to its own claims." The Kindergarten makes tremendously big claims because it is a force, a dynamic philosophy, and is therefore bigger than any of its instrumentalities.

When this truth comes to be generally recognized then shall arrive the happy day when "Near" Kindergartens shall be no more, and only those of the genuine sort will remain.

M. M. W.

I cannot teach without the REVIEW. H. L. P.