

The Presumption of Brains.

In these days most children are thought to be too feeble to go to school in a storm. Instead of the little red schoolhouse, they have palaces of pressed brick, with furnaces, double windows, and polished desks; and when it rains the storm signal stops the school. We do not recognize the probability of physical hardihood; and we do too little to develop it.

No more do we recognize intellectual vigor—brains—in the child; and many of the recent methods of teaching do not stimulate the growth of mental fibre. To begin with, the kindergarten is an attempt to systematize play, and by a species of legerdemain to get from play the discipline of work. But play, useful and necessary as it is, is spontaneous activity; and it ceases to be play when reduced to a system.

Next object comes in and entertains the child through the senses; as if the senses were all-important, and the brain non-existent or not to be disturbed. But the sense perceptions predominate in the child; his whole life before coming to school is made up of them. It is not these that need stimulating, so much as the mental activity to which they ought to lead. The objective method is good, even indispensable, in due proportion; but the tendency is to so emphasize it as to neglect the brain which most needs and has less of the training.

When we come to reading, the methods are simplified to the last homeopathic dilution. The simplest word is illustrated by a picture of the most familiar object—a cat; and from this we advance by imperceptible gradations, interminably. This elementary process is good for a start; but it should be dropped very early—as soon as the child catches the notion of what reading is. There is a presumption that the child has brains, and that he can soon see through so simple a process.

And spelling is tabooed by many progressive educators, especially the spelling book; as if it were too great a tax upon the "gray matter" for the child to learn to spell a word which he has not used!

In number, objects and pictures are used, in many of the highly elaborated text-books, to such an extent that any one of the higher orders of domesticated animals ought to learn the elementary processes of arithmetic in less time than is assigned for the average child. I am not objecting to these ingenious methods, at the beginning; but they ought to be dropped at the earliest possible moment, so that the child may be compelled to employ his own activity—to use his brain; for, let it not be forgotten, the child is presumed to have brains.

In the study of language—for grammar is a term not to be tolerated till the age of adolescence—the simplifying process has eliminated everything above mere childish twaddle. Nothing beyond the child's limited apprehension is to be placed before him. The geography is made as familiar as the school-yard. The supplementary reading is, much of it, written down to the child's low level. Finally the text-book is abandoned; and the teacher, laced in

corsets of snug-fitting programmes and definite directions, is set up to talk, talk, talk. School must be made interesting. The children must not be over-worked.

There is a presumption at the start that the child has brains. It is safe, also, to assume that he has used that organ to some extent, and in more directions than one, before coming to school; and he must be compelled to use it again, and to use it constantly. This presumption will enable the teacher to skip many of the methods and to lighten and shorten the work.—*Pennsylvania School Journal*.

Canada's New Ocean Ports.

It is admitted on every hand that the terminal seaports of the Trans-Canada leave nothing to be desired. The harbor of Port Simpson is said to be the finest on the Pacific coast north of San Francisco. It has the additional advantage of being much nearer to Yokomama than either Vancouver or San Francisco. Nottaway, on James Bay, which is to be reached by a branch of the main line, is the only deep-water harbor on the bay, and with some dredging might be used by vessels drawing thirty feet of water. The coast line of James and Hudson's bays, tributary to this railway, will be about four thousand miles. Chicoutimi, on the Saguenay, can be reached by vessels of any draught, and Quebec has magnificent docks which have cost the government millions of dollars, with deep-water berth and elevator facilities for steamers of any draught. The new bridge now building over the St. Lawrence at Quebec will enable the Trans-Canada road to make use of St. John and Halifax for winter ports if ever those of Quebec and Chicoutimi should be blocked by ice.

Too many a parent is satisfied if his child is trained to make a living. We teachers must have a higher aim; we must feel that we are training our pupils to make not, in the first place, a living, but a life. There is a wide difference. The beasts of the field make a living. They rise in the morning, eat the food that God provides, and the day is over. They die and the world is no better for their living. Some men are like this; they eat and sleep and die and the world never knows that they are gone. This is not life, such men make a living. This rather will be our ideal for ourselves and our pupils; we will so live that wherever we may be our presence shall be felt. Our associates will be better because we have known them. The civic life in our communities will be purer because we have lived in them, and we ourselves will win the blessings that comes to those who bring out the heaven that lies hidden upon this earth.

The Canadian Pacific Railway was built in five years, though the contracts allowed ten years for its completion. It was finished in 1885.