

CHILDREN AND THE WAR.

Just how shall we take up the discussion of the present great world war with the children of the lower grades? This is the problem that confronts the primary teacher to-day. Well we know that the subject must be discussed, for the little ones are just as interested in the war news as their elders. Like their elders, they have gathered miscellaneous items bearing on the subject from various sources, reliable and otherwise, and are burning with the desire to communicate said items to their school-mates, and particularly to the long-suffering teacher.

Our neighbors to the south, in some localities at least, have decided that the subject may well be ignored in school, as savoring of militarism. We cannot agree with them. On the contrary, every teacher must see that here is the opportunity of a life-time, no matter how deplorable the facts leading up to the event, to show children just how history is made and how the outcome of great wars influences the map of the world.

Even the smaller children are getting a better idea of the map of Europe to-day than they would ordinarily obtain in years of study. Apropos of this, a pupil in grade IV, not a brilliant one by any means, in fact quite the contrary, after poring over "Highroads of History" for some time, raised his hand and announced, "The Battle of Waterloo was fought in Belgium too." That one fact gleaned for himself meant more to him than dozens of parrot-learned sentences, and he had found it out because Belgium to-day is to him more than merely a name.

Such phrases as "neutral nation," "war zone," "contraband of war," "mobilizing," etc., are becoming more than empty phrases. They convey definite ideas, and can be used intelligently by these same children.

As to the relation of colonies to the Motherland, surely no generation of school children ever had a better opportunity to see a practical illustration of that relationship and its value, than the children of the British Empire to-day!

To go back then to the beginning: It will be wise to set aside a part of our "morning talk" period to the discussion of the war. (The wisdom of this course is seen after one has been electrified in the midst of a spelling lesson by some startling

item of news anent the Germans). At the very outset, the children should be given a clear and concise account of why The Empire is at war. The late Lord Roberts has put it very simply for them in his message, "Children of the Empire: Why are we fighting? Because the British Empire does not break its promise nor will it allow small nations to be bullied."

Let the children see that we are not blindly upholding the Empire in any course, bad or good, but that Britain took the only honorable course open to her, and it is for just this nice sense of national honor that her colonies love and respect her to-day.

As to the items of war news related by the children, let us pass as lightly as possible over the horrors of the war, and this is the part they will love to magnify and want to dwell upon, let us discourage the spirit of flippancy and braggadocio and anything savoring of hatred of the German nation as a whole.

Let the children understand that it is the spirit of militarism in the Germans which we deprecate and are endeavoring to combat, and not any personal hatred to the German soldiers themselves, many of whom are fighting with the same spirit of patriotism as that which actuates our own soldiers.

Valor and patriotism we expect in the British soldier and we cannot help emphasizing these as national characteristics, but let us by simple anecdotes of the war try to emphasize also some other qualities which our boys in khaki are displaying every day:—unfailing good nature under petty discomforts; the unselfishness which forgets personal danger in helping others, and which puts honor before expediency; chivalry to women and children and humane and brotherly treatment of a foe,—all these may well find ample illustration in stories of the war.

Help the children to become acquainted with the leaders in this great struggle:—the strong silent Kitchener, Admiral Jellicoe, General French, General Joffre and the heads of the warring nations. Bring to their notice the work of the Red Cross and Purple Cross Societies. Read to them the best of the poems on the war, Kipling's "Hymn Before Action," and his tribute to Lord Roberts. Show them why Lord Roberts was great and how this tribute sums up the man.