

The street influence, unbridled, is about the worst possible school of instruction the child can enter. Curiosity is a predominant trait of childhood, and only let a policeman's whistle blow, or a drunken man pass along the street, and the children come trooping to the scene in swarms. As soon as the child is large enough to open the gate and rush into the street, he enters into a school in which all the vicious traits of a depraved character are fostered. A species of demoralization and terror is practised by larger boys on the smaller that can find its counterpart only in the misrule which the dominant class in some nations practise, as extortion on the dependent and helpless class whom they govern. Street gangs are formed—veritable Ishmaelites—whose hands are against everyone and everyone's hands against them. They tease, torment and annoy the citizens; they steal from other children, snatch fruit and vegetables from the grocery stores, defy the police and insult girls—doing many of these things because they think it is funny. Under such tuition they develop a low, quick species of cunning, but it is acquired at the expense of arrested development along higher and better lines of growth. It is only a step from the street and alley associations to crime and wretchedness in their more pronounced forms. Out of this class is recruited that element which stands as a constant menace to good citizenship in the city. I believe that the chief cause—if not the very root of this demoralization—is traceable to inadequate playing facilities for the children. It is owing to misdirected energy, and this brings along in its train a long list of evils which dwarf and blight the child's moral, physical and spiritual growth, unless such a one as *Oliver Twist* be found now and then, able to withstand all adverse conditions of environment and rise triumphant over all.

A good playground is as necessary to a child's growth, health, happiness, culture and general intelligence as any other necessary condition of its existence. By furnishing such conditions the child is given an opportunity to strengthen his character in every direction by giving him cheerfulness, freedom, and contentment, repressing the evil tendencies, choking them out, as it were, and giving the better side of his nature a chance to expand and grow into that firmness of habit known as good character. That such playgrounds are needed in almost every city, no one will have the hardihood to deny. There should not be little spots of ground here and there where the children must be good and quiet and not make a noise. They ought to be large enough for the children to play on, a hundred or a thousand at once. They should not be baseball grounds and nothing more, but real playgrounds on which the games are regulated to suit the time of the year and the hours of the day.

For several years the feeling has spread among a large class of the people of this country that the schools should give much more attention to what are called "common things," and it is well known that the expression "common things" may be made to do drudgery for all conceivable occupations in which persons are engaged. It is evidently true, too, that what may be regarded as very common things in one line of work may be entirely unknown in other fields of activity. But the restrictive use in which "common things" is employed in an educational sense, limits the meaning to within a narrow compass—embracing some knowledge of natural objects of an organic and inorganic nature; but more particularly of plants, animals, soils, the atmosphere and its conditions—in short, nature studies.

Each trade brings one into relationship with certain conditions which