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## Editorial

### The Mockery of System.

Last week a gentleman said to me, when talking about his two-year-old boy: "He studies more subjects than you find on the programme of studies. It is all nonsense to talk about the programme being overloaded. It doesn't contain half enough. That is the trouble with it."

This surely is a new point of view, but there is something in it. A little fellow in the course of a day studies pretty nearly everything — nature, people, language, music, drawing, construction, art. He learns to observe and to listen and to express himself in words, deeds, gestures, actions, songs and in other ways. Why, then, should we say that the school overloads him?

The word "overloaded" is a little unfortunate—that is all. Those who use it mean something else. They have a real grievance which it is right to recognize.

The little fellow of two may spend a whole forenoon at one occupation such as playing in the sand, but in that one occupation he follows all the studies just mentioned. When he goes to school his day is arbitrarily divided for him into segments of ten minutes or fifteen minutes each. There is no bond connecting the various activities. He is a reader, an arithmetician, a speller, a writer by turns. He jumps as the string is pulled. At home he was a boy. The one occupation of his boyhood subsumed many activities all interrelated.

At school it is even worse than stated. In an arithmetic lesson the pupil is not usually following one connected study,

but often in the course of five minutes is called upon to answer forty or fifty distinct and separate questions. This the pedagogue justifies under the plea that drill is necessary.

Suppose now the school were to follow in some measure the natural plan of the home, would there be any real loss? Would there not be a great gain? Is our present plan of working by subjects—as named on the programme—too artificial, too mechanical? Wouldn't a pupil gain more by following one big study which included all minor studies, than by dividing up his time after the manner of the time-table? True there are times when drill is necessary, but the drill will be suggested as the main study proceeds.

In the suggested lesson on the movement of the grain on another page it is shown how one absorbing study may include all minor studies, and it is clear that during this study there will arise opportunities for needed drill in many lines. This will provide motive in at least a portion of school drill. There is a possibility that in our attempts to organize instruction we have disorganized it. It is scarcely fair to consider a pupil as a being to be quizzed into shape through the efforts of an animated interrogation mark—known as teacher. He should the rather be conceived of as one capable of realizing himself through purposed self-activity. A pupil should come into school to learn how to solve what are to him real problems—problems connected with experience. We have not always done well to cut a day into lesson-periods and to substitute mock-activities for the real thing under