

The Creative Impulse in the Child

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value in childhood, but they might be multiplied indefinitely. When one examines the possibilities of creative work and the part it may be made to play in the child's life one wonders why it should not be given a more honourable and prominent part in the school and home. The failure seems to be in the fact that a misunderstanding still exists as to what is meant by education.

Anything of a practical nature is too often regarded as a little or no variety in the school life of the child, only book work is supposed to be included under the term education.

Why not a children's cookery book, which would encourage direction throughout life! The writer could so easily show that in the early stages of carrying out recipes mathematical ideas may be acquired through cookery, and in later years the development of a scientific interest through the study of food values. A cookery book on these lines would win a grateful welcome from those educationalists who are trying to unite the two sides, allowing the practical to take precedence over the theoretical in the early years, than leading on to the theoretical while maintaining an even balance between these two aspects:

*"As it was better youth should strive
Through acts uncouth towards
making
Than rest on aught found made."*

Education which ignores the child's cravings to create, crowding out all opportunities for personal experimentation, and choosing rather to prevent ready-made doctrines and theories to the children, denies the child its right to mental freedom.

Though the advocates of the old school system would have us believe that the problems of the arithmetic and grammar book are all that the child requires, modern scientists cannot accept such views, because they are neither in the line with

childish interests nor do they free the inner powers so that the reasoning faculty is kept alert as in the case in the solution of constructive problems.

Through handwork the child is enabled to be independent to others from his earliest days and to preserve the characteristics of his own individuality.

As a great living educator reminds us: "Only with children who have specialised intellectual abilities is it possible to secure mental activity without participation of the organs of sense and of the muscles."

In initiating his own problems, working with an end in view, choosing material and means by which the end may be attained, then experimenting and working with an element of uncertainty and often lighting with happy surprise upon new discoveries, judgment has to be exercised and retrogression of reasoning powers is prevented.

Parents may reassure themselves that there is no fear that the children will be backward through spending too much time on constructive work, for, as we have seen, it contains within itself the beginnings of all the school "subjects," and the very exigencies of the work call for reading, writing, history geography, mathematics, science, and composition, provided always that there is guidance to help the child feel the need for such subjects.

Constructive work proves a strenuous form of moral discipline, for the child has to face difficulties and shoulder responsibility, both of which demand effort and continuity of purpose to fight through to the end in view. This develops character and grit far better than any so-called disciplinary task imposed from without.

This work, too, keeps alive that glorious spirit of joy which is the heritage of normal healthy childhood and ensures that our children "remain sensitive to the intimation of adventure."

The field of choice is very wide for material wherewith to satisfy the constructive impulse, for we see children left to their own resources experiment with things at hand. Paper, scissors, pencils, chalk, paints, clay, string, cardboard, textiles, sewing materials, a carpenter's bench, with a few good tools and waste material such as empty match and shoe boxes, tins, and so forth, give ample scope.

In the wide use of these materials the home, school, and lay life is lined up, and in this way we can follow the child's interests and realise his need for work proceeding from the concrete to the abstract on the natural lines of development so that he becomes a useful member of society, able to adapt himself to his environment, and capable of meeting the hardships and difficulties of life in a spirit of happiness resulting from wide and enduring interests.

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