

A Gipsy Tea ☉ Girl Guides Enjoy Life in the Open



"Typical Press"

The Educative Value of Holidays for Children

There was a time when holidays were considered merely as necessary periods of cessation from work periods when over-driven teachers, fatigued to the point of exhaustion, were forced to give their tiresome pupils a rest that they themselves might recuperate from the strain of the term's work. But it is realised to-day that holidays are of much more importance than this from the educational point of view. They have a positive part to play in the education of the child. They are to be considered, not as a necessary evil, but as times of great opportunity. In the holidays children have a chance to develop as individuals and to follow up their own particular interests in their own way.

The interests of the modern child are many. They include subjects taught in school as well as hobbies and recreations. In the old days, when children were taught parrot-fashion from a book, the healthy child would have scorned to work in his own time on any subject

taught at school. Arithmetic, geography, science held merely an academic interest for the clever child and no interest at all for the dull one. But now arithmetic is taught on practical lines—one actually measures out the number of tiles required to pave the playground and perhaps even actually helps in the paving before being expected to work sums involving the problem; geography is taught on practical lines as also is science. Naturally enough the child enjoys subjects which he sees have to do with real life. Naturally enough when he has taken an active part in the learning process at school, he often continues with it in the holidays. He follows up the school physics by studying clouds and weather, school zoology by adding to his collection of butterflies, school geometry by getting out plans and models of his ideal house or garden. For the clever child educated on constructive modern lines holidays are generally both busy and happy.

Some children, however, appear to do nothing connected with school work at all. They dream their time away or fill it up with games and picnics. But for all that their actual school education may be progressing very satisfactorily. With the advance in knowledge of the new psychology we have learned what an important part the unconscious mind plays in all mental processes. Most subjects of study need an incubation-time—a time during which facts learned at school may be thoroughly absorbed by the unconscious mind. The summer holidays, coming as they do after the end-of-term examinations, are particularly valuable in providing leisure for this period of incubation. Very often the child goes back to school after the holidays far brighter and keener on a certain subject than he was before, simply because during all the weeks of rest certain facts have been grouping and synthesising themselves in his mind, although he has made no conscious effort and done no conscious work.

Holidays, too, give the child a chance to follow up his own individual interests. Any knowledge acquired by the child *spontaneously* is usually acquired at the cost of great effort. This is true of children of all ages. Babies teaching themselves to walk practice walking far more persistently than we should have the heart to make them practice; toddlers playing voluntarily with the Montessori apparatus repeat their exercises more often than grown-ups would ask them to do. Spontaneous work like this is the work that makes for character. During the hours of wholesome effort the child's power of concentration, his will-power, his purpose, grows. There are ever so many interests that children will choose to follow up in the holidays. There are special opportunities for Nature study in park or garden, in the fields, or by the seashore. There are hobbies to be strenuously pursued—collecting stamps or shells, birds' eggs, or butterflies, pebbles, keeping pets, gardening, and so on.