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A NEW ASPECT OF CHILD STUDY.

HARRIET A. MARSH, Detroit.

It is often said that the constantly increasing complexity of civilization necessarily gives rise to a corresponding complexity in its demands upon education, but it may be gravely doubted whether these needs have not always existed, in certain measure, but are now being rendered more apparent by the gradual decadence of certain institutions and the slowly growing intelligence of the masses. However this may be, the average parent has begun to show, within the last decade, a very distinct consciousness of two great needs — first, the necessity of a more rounded development for the child, a development which shall recognize to the full the requirements of his spiritual and physical natures and the almost total dependence of one upon the other, and, second, the parent's utter inability to cope, alone, with this great problem, and his consequent demand for assistance.

It is perhaps unnecessary to trace this first great need through the many causes which have entered into and aided in its growth, or to inquire the extent of its power at a time when simpler modes of living and the comparative absence of emigration rendered home life more homogeneous and less distracting; it is sufficient for our purpose that we recognize its existence, from the time when the Puritan conscience, the American climate, and the ever increasing exactions of civilization entered into combination against the human race — its subsequent history is ours; it has grown with our growth, unnoticed and unsuspected, until its hydra-headed form now blocks every road to progress, and fills the more thoughtful with uneasiness and alarm.

The second need is but an inevitable attendant upon the first. Intelligent and conscientious parents are beginning to feel the necessity of more co-operative assistance in this the primary work of the human family; and to acknowledge that early marriages, insufficient education, multiplicity of cares, and lack of time for self improvement render them incompetent to fulfill this trust unaided and to demand assistance outside the home circle. That this demand should fall, with all its weight of responsibility, upon the teacher is also inevitable, not because she is always so well fitted for the task, but because she is generally better fitted than the average parent, and also because her peculiar relation to and knowledge of the child give her a truer insight into character and requirement than can be gained under any other circumstances.

Granted that these statements are true, and the economics of education may demand a close co-operation between parent and teacher, as the next and most progressive step to be taken in the near future; community of interest has always woven the strongest bonds known to the human race, and outside of the immediate family relations, what closer tie can be found than that which exists or should exist between mother and teacher? Both are engaged in one common task — the training of an immortal soul for eternity; how can either work most intelligently without a knowledge of the other's aims and plans?

Think of the mistakes, the misunderstandings, the anxieties, the tears which might be avoided under this suggested co-operation, and

then tell me whether the public school can reach its highest degree of usefulness until mother and teacher meet on common ground, as members of the same family, to consult together concerning their common charge; until the mother is a frequent and welcome visitor in every school-room and understands, as well as circumstances permit, the aim and object of the teacher's work. Such a relationship would do more to improve and elevate the home, more to shape the rising generation, and more to fix the teacher's true position in society than can well be imagined; and all might be brought about so simply and naturally, the benefit would be mutual and the teacher's sphere of helpfulness bounded only by the limitations of her own heart and brain.

Under a strong belief in these principles, the following experiment has been made:

The Hancock School, Detroit, Michigan, numbers about six hundred pupils, four-fifths of whom are of American ancestry, the remaining fraction claiming parentage almost equally from the English, Scotch, German, Irish, and Canadian; few are very poor, and few, if any, very rich; the majority being honest, industrious, hard working people who are buying their own homes and making every sacrifice to secure educational advantages for their children. People of good average intelligence, with a keen interest in the religious and political questions of the day; a fair representation of America's most useful and influential citizens—the middle class.

At the time our story opens, it had been necessary to make some change in the corps of teachers at the Hancock School, and, in spite of all effort on the part of the Board, advantage was taken of the then-prevailing political issues, and a very bitter party spirit was infused into the questions at stake. The principal was new to the school and the locality; so were two-thirds of the teachers; what could bring harmony, and quell the spirit which threatened so much mischief?

This question received no definite solution until Dr. Hall's Syllabi suggested the feasibility of a Mothers' Meeting. Preparations were soon made, a circular announcing the date and object of the gathering was sent out, and twenty-four mothers met me on the second Thursday in October, 1894, to inaugurate what has since proven one of the most helpful and inspiring movements ever undertaken in connection with our school work.

The address was in substance as follows:

My dear Friends,—We have come here to teach your school, the primary object of which is to make, or to help make, honest, healthy, useful men and women; we cannot do this without your assistance, and, in our work, shall doubtless make many mistakes. If you will tell us of these frankly, we will gladly correct them whenever it is possible to do so; when it is not, we will give our reasons for refusing. Will you not join with us as sisters of one family, working for one common good—the welfare of your children and ours?

A set of simple questions from the syllabus on "Dolls" was distributed for study during the month, this subject being chosen as one with which all parents are moderately familiar and also because its strangeness might attract the attention of others who had not attended.

In November, forty mothers came, all of whom seemed interested, but afraid to talk; and many little devices, such as calling upon certain members for their experiences, asking the opinions of others, and showing the gratitude I felt for the answers given, were resorted to. The fusillade of questions was kept up in spite of the most discouraging, monosyllabic answers. Every one was drawn into the discussion, and, after a time, we were rewarded by a few spontaneous remarks from the more courageous and daring. Several old ladies gave their hus-

bands' experiences, and a small delegation of the timid remained behind to express opinions it could not voice in the general assembly. The results were most interesting. From what could be gathered, it seemed that several fathers had taken an active part in formulating some of the many ideas expressed, a careful study of which gave three distinct lines of thought, as follows:

1st. The absolute need of all children (especially boys) for pets.

2nd. That boys would make better fathers and husbands if encouraged to play with dolls.

3rd. The absolute barrenness of imagination in children of purely American ancestry, as compared with those of English, Irish, Scotch or Canadian parentage.

"Children's Cries," "Fears of Childhood and Youth," "Childish Superstitions," and other topics of similar character—all taken from the syllabi—were studied at our meetings which were now becoming useful in other ways than those originally considered. Little points of discipline, such as tardiness, coming too early, mutilating neighbors' trees, loitering on corners, with many kindred topics were brought up at the close of each discussion, the mothers giving most hearty and intelligent co-operation as our own reasons for such discipline were learned; in fact, this mode of procedure has grown so helpful that a note book is now kept on my desk during the month, in which each teacher is at liberty to jot down any point she wishes brought before the next meeting.

These are carefully compiled and occupy their own place in the programme, under the head of "Other topics of interest." As a single illustration of the advantages which may arise from this mode of procedure the following is given: During the year 1894-5 an epidemic of diphtheria raged in the city and the Hancock, in company with every other school in the city, was closed several times on account of this disease; at every meeting of the present year, attention has been called to the prevailing tendency of children to stand in the damp, and pupils have been constantly cautioned against exposure to early morning air unless protected by proper clothing and sufficient breakfast. There may be a possible connection between these precautions and the fact that the Hancock is the only school in the city in which scarlet fever or diphtheria has not occurred during the current year.

By the end of June, '95, our society had begun to realize some of its possibilities. One of the members had written an excellent paper on, "Do Boys Require as Careful Moral Training as Girls?" which resulted in more strenuous efforts to suppress the cigarette habit and other evils to which boys are exposed, and, at the last meeting of the year, an unusually large number came to elect a secretary from their own number and to present a list of topics for the next year's discussion.

(Copy of Letter sent out in September.)

HANCOCK SCHOOL, Sept. 9, 1895.

To the Parents of Pupils attending the Hancock School:

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—

Our school is now commencing its fourth year, and we are very anxious to do for the children all in our power. This cannot be accomplished without an individual knowledge of each child, and this cannot be gained until parents and teachers work together, as members of one family toward one common end; will you not, therefore, try to become well acquainted with your child's teacher during the coming year, so that you can talk freely to her concerning your child's needs?

Our next Mothers' Meeting will occur Tuesday, Sept. 24, at a quarter to four; the following subjects will be discussed:

1. What should the public school do for the child?
2. The duty of each parent to the truant law.
3. The amount of money each child should spend for supplies.
4. Other topics of interest.

Hoping you will kindly make an effort to be present, I am, with sincere wishes for a happy, prosperous year,

Very truly your friend,

HARRIET A. MARSH.

HANCOCK SCHOOL.

HARRIET A. MARSH, President.

MARY A. C. PATTERSON, Secretary.

LIST OF SUBJECTS FOR MOTHERS' MEETINGS.

September, 1895, to January, 1896, inclusive.

SEPT. 23. (1) What ought the public school to do for the child? (a) Should the government in school and that of the parent conform? (b) Three requisites of good government. (c) Necessity of teaching self-control. (2) Duty of parent to truant law. (3) Economy in school supplies.

OCT. 24. Good health is necessary to good mentality and morality. Three things conducive to good morals: (a) Healthy constitution at birth. (b) Proper food. (c) Proper care of the body. Care of the teeth.

NOV. 21. Effect of different foods upon the body, as bone, muscle, and flesh-producing foods. Some ways in which food may lose its nutritive qualities by poor cooking.

DEC. 19. Intemperance. (a) In how many ways may parents be responsible for their children's intemperance? (b) Intemperance in food; in drink; in pleasure. (c) Use of tobacco. (d) Necessity of teaching self-control in all things. (e) Relation of poor food and poor cooking to drunkenness.

JAN. 21. Diseases. (a) How dangerous diseases such as small-pox, diphtheria, scarlet fever, etc., are spread. (b) Best means of prevention. (c) The germ theory.

Please *preserve* this outline for future use.

Fifty-four women met in September to consider the above lists of subjects which represented, in the main, the topics chosen by themselves at the preceding meetings.

The key stone of interest was reached, however, when we commenced the study of physical needs in October. Sixty-two members were present, and from the ill concealed anxiety shown in many of the questions asked at this and subsequent gatherings, the vital need of instruction in this direction was plainly shown.

To illustrate, somewhat, the line of thought followed by these mothers, extracts of their discussions are given as nearly as possible in the language in which they occurred.

The first question brought under discussion was the relationship of good morals to good physical health. See outline for October.

About seventy-five per cent. of the members seemed to consider this proposition unsound, but when questioned: 1st. "Do certain kinds of food ever make you uncomfortable, ever give you the headache, ever cause dyspepsia, etc.?" 2nd. Do these physical conditions ever affect your temper, influence your speech, your treatment of

others, or cause you to punish the children for actions not, in themselves, wrong?" a general assent was given, and, by carefully leading up to the subjects, an intelligent recognition of the principles put forth in 1 and 2 was gained.

3rd. What kinds of food should be given very young children if we wish them to have good teeth? The Scotch and English seemed to think that mothers should make oatmeal an article of diet for themselves and children, beginning this regimen by giving the child milk to which a very little oatmeal had been added, and gradually increasing the quantity as the child's stomach became stronger. The question whether unpalatable food is beneficial or nutritive in any marked degree now arose and was answered by a prompt and decided negative.

It was generally agreed that oatmeal should be made a much more general article of food than at present, and that "Rolled Oats" is the best preparation for family use. One mother, aged 79, of New England birth and ancestry advocated the superior qualities of boiled wheat meal as an article of children's diet, advancing, in support of her theory, the statement that she had raised a family of eleven children to hearty, healthy maturity, on this as a staple article of food; she also stated that her family had always been vegetarians. No one supported the old lady's opinions, and, in the interest of science, I wondered if diet had anything to do with the fact that one of the eleven children is insane, one other so nervous as to appear mentally unbalanced, while two others died under thirty of consumption. In justice I must add that another daughter living in the East is considered an artist of some ability, and the rest, living out of the city, are unknown to us. How to make oatmeal more generally palatable was then discussed and resulted (in the few weeks following) in various experiments in the making of oatmeal porridge, gruel, cookies, bread, snaps, etc., samples of which, with the recipes for making them, were sent me.

The mothers concluded that too much sweet food injures the teeth in two ways, first by its direct action upon the teeth; secondly, and more powerfully, by the acids its use engendered by causing a disordered stomach.

It was generally concluded that a judicious quantity of pure sugar candy is good for the child, that the craving for this sort of food arises from the fact that sugar supplies heat to the system much more rapidly than other foods, as butter, corn meal, etc.¹ A number, about 10%, considered the adulteration of candy with white earth, the undesirability of coloring candy green, etc., and decided that ordinary lump sugar and the old-fashioned sticks of barley sugar and lemon candy are the best preparations of this kind of food.

It was generally conceded by all who spoke that Germans and Scotch have the best teeth—Irish the poorest. Germany's general diet of rye bread and pumpernickel was given the credit for this, and much stress was laid upon the fact that these articles of food are always found upon the tables of rich and poor alike. Pumpernickel was considered to possess a two-fold value, inasmuch as its hardness gave the jaws and teeth much needed exercise.

The Irish were supposed to have soft teeth because of their potato diet, and in support of this theory was stated the opinion of a Detroit dentist, a very intelligent scholar, who tells us that the Dental Associations all over the country, have tried for years to find some suitable

¹ Editor Bok, of the *Home Journal*, is responsible for the statement in regard to sugar. If he be correct, why does not the child show a similar craving for butter, which stands first in the list of heat-producing foods? What of the Esquimaux child?

filling for the teeth of American people of Irish descent, as the gold and other substances used are too hard for their softer teeth; he made the same complaint in reference to the teeth of people not Irish who live in Ireland until they are sixteen or older.

4. Do decaying teeth ever cause lung or throat trouble, disorders of the stomach, etc.?

Many of the mothers present gave a touching, personal testimony to this truth, and all agreed that these decaying substances, dropping or falling down the throat, were highly productive of these evils.

Soap, in very sparing quantities, was considered destructive to the animalculæ collecting upon the teeth and to the germs of diphtheria in their early development. Precipitated chalk was recommended as a dentifrice; first, because it neutralizes the action of the acids in the mouth, and secondly because its mode of preparation precludes the possibility of its scratching the enamel.

The cheap tooth brush was denounced because the hairs becoming loose are apt to pierce the gums or get between the teeth, thus giving rise to inflammation.

Gum chewing was found injurious, inasmuch as it kept the salivary glands in a state of constant action, causing undue and exhaustive secretion of saliva, and keeping the stomach in a state of expectancy.

In November the discussion of foods and beverages took a wider range, as follows:

1. *Question.* Are the children of the present day as fond of fruit as the preceding generations? If not, why? Is it a natural step in man's evolution, or is it caused by the child's growing fondness for, or habit of gum chewing, cigarette smoking, etc.?

This question arose from the fact, that, within the last ten years there has been a gradual diminution in the number of apples brought by the children for consumption, at recess. Various answers were suggested. 1. Apples have risen 50% in price during the years mentioned. 2. The little candy shops no longer have the pyramids of apples standing in the windows, as formerly, and the children, not seeing them, buy other things. Other facts brought out were: 1. That as demand generally regulates supply, the shop-keepers lessened their stock of apples because the children cared more for other things; or else, that the confectioners created a demand for goods yielding greater profit. 2. That although fruit is much dearer than formerly, children, having more spending money than immediate predecessors, could buy it if they desired. 3. That the amount of candy, gum, cinnamon and cigarettes consumed, had gradually increased. 4. That the consumption of more highly flavored candies destroyed the desire for apples. 5. That gum chewing, when excessive, probably produced a craving for something slightly stimulative; that cigarette-smoking did the same in much greater degree. 6. That gum-chewing led the way to tobacco-chewing, in many instances. 7. That both, by excessive excitement of the salivary glands, were conducive to the habit of spitting. 8. That spitting produced (under aggravated conditions) a necessity for stimulant, or might result in consumption. All of the above is an expression of very general assent to thoughts and questions, in many instances suggested by myself with the object of starting a discussion. The *assent* to these suggestions, however, was general and hearty, showing that although some of these thoughts had not occurred to them before, their experiences on these points concurred with mine. We now come to their original and unassisted expression.

Which is better for children, coffee or tea? 1. A girl of twelve, very nervous, also a boy of fourteen, both children born in this city, mother

American, father of German descent. Both seemed to need the stimulative effects of tea, although they were not allowed to drink it very strong. Suffered loss of appetite without it (especially the girl) and seemed to need it after long fasting or when fatigued. The younger children of the same family do not care for tea and do not seem to need it. The mother, herself, is not very strong and finds herself "unable to do anything before she has her coffee in the morning." An old English woman, who has lived in America since girlhood, also expressed the same need of coffee in the morning, and from 10 to 20% of the entire company (nearly all Americans) acknowledged the same habit.

One German woman (husband German also) has two girls, born here. One is of natural size and mental strength; the elder (aged 16) is a dwarf, looks like a plump child of 8, and is mentally developed about as much as the ordinary pupil of nine or ten; is also very slow of expression. The mother stated that this child seldom drinks, either at table or between meals, and would not taste tea, coffee or milk from earliest infancy; the younger girl follows the habits of ordinary children in these respects, and the poor mother seemed anxious to know if her elder daughter's peculiarity arose from or was the cause of her defective organization. I remembered reading that an excess of certain fluid matter in the system caused undue growth or size as that of giants, and the reverse was true of dwarfs, but my extreme ignorance on this point rendered me careful of expression, though I wish very much for more opportunity to study this subject and wonder if all dwarfs show this peculiarity; also, if the opposite is true of giants.

All the mothers (except two mentioned) strongly deprecated the use of tea by children, thought warm milk and water at meals much better, and said children would *never* need the stimulative effects of tea unless trained to drink it from infancy. As for themselves, tea was, in the majority of instances, a necessity brought about by the habit of a lifetime. That black tea and uncolored Japan were the only brands allowable, and that Young Hyson should never be seen on the table.

Coffee was received with much greater favor, several of the mothers told me it was "like meat," and at least 50% of the assembly allow their children a cup of weak coffee in the morning because as they said, milk was more expensive, not so agreeable to youthful palates, and less productive of warmth and nutriment. About 10% said the children would not eat breakfast without it. One American woman living with Germans, considered cold, strong coffee better than brandy as a remedy for heart failure. An Irish woman, also an American, concurred.

Three of the mothers (American) thought the use of tea or coffee *might* lead to intemperance, and advocated warm water as a beverage at meals, or a combination of one-third coffee and two-thirds water, while the whole assembly seemed quite anxious on this point though unable to advance any decided opinion.

The general idea was that coffee should not be given to a child of full habit, rapid pulse, etc., that it was more adapted as a beverage to use in cold weather than warm, and might be beneficial, if taken in small quantities, to children with weak circulation, as indicated by blue finger tips, etc.

Reference was here made to the robust Polish children who bring a noon-day lunch consisting only of black rye bread and black coffee, the latter in large quantities. Opinion stated that this "coffee" is a decoction of toasted bread, grains, etc., sweetened with molasses. Hence it did connect with subject of discussion.

Spices. Several of the parents brought out the idea that highly seasoned food was injurious to children, except in cases where the stomach needed stimulative food, that it created thirst and was a great cause of intemperance among travelling men. This statement received a general assent.

One woman (American) recommended the use of cocoa as a beverage, but only two agreed with her, the others seeming to regard it as undesirable. One American said it "thickened the blood," two others, that it was too heating, produced flesh too rapidly, etc.

Intemperance. The women here entered into a general and somewhat assisted discussion of the relation of food and poor cooking to intemperance, and expressed themselves very strongly as follows:

1. That very frequently intemperance arises from thirst, or craving for stimulant.
2. That this craving is often caused by weakness of some organ, as liver, etc.
3. That this weakness may be inherent, as the result of insufficient nourishment, particularly in early childhood.
4. That it is necessary to learn what foods are best calculated to supply the nutriment needed by different parts of the system, and to practice the modes of cooking which will best preserve the nutriment contained in each.
5. That careful study of these subjects, will do much for the cause of temperance in succeeding generations.

An American gave as her opinion, supported by the alleged testimony of physicians, that the use of tea by very young children was conducive to kidney trouble.

One woman (Dutch) said that a catholic priest stationed among German laborers expressed to her his firm conviction that the direct cause of much of the intemperance in his parish was found in the poor, innutritious bread consumed by these men.

A general discussion of the length of time that primary school children should go without food, then followed.

It was generally agreed that pupils of five or six years should not fast more than three or four hours, and that some slight refreshment, as a bit of bread and butter, a biscuit or an apple should be brought for the short intermission occurring at 10.20.

The following thoughts were also brought out: Certain kinds of occupation require certain kinds of food; that growth in intelligence is marked by a corresponding attention to this law, a recognition of which runs like a tiny thread through the history of savage peoples and finds a partial expression in the belief of the North American Indian who eats the heart of an enemy that the bravery of his murdered foe may be imparted to him.

A few of the mothers (vegetarians) spoke of the advantages of an exclusively vegetable diet, stating that grain contained all the nutritive qualities of meat, quoting the ox and the elephant in support of their theory; the opposing faction stated in denial, that, as one pound of pork yields about as much nutriment as ten pounds of corn, man would need not only the appetite but also the stomach of an ox to thrive on this restricted regimen; also, that we never eat the flesh of carnivora, but merely that of grain or grass-eating animals, meat is, therefore, merely vegetable matter in condensed form—objection, are fish carnivora?

The fondness shown by epileptics for meat. The tendency of children to imitate them—ought they to be allowed in school?

A general plea for greater use of fruits, milk, and vegetables was made at every meeting in which the subject of foods was discussed,

and I wish it were possible to note in this article the many suggestions given in reference to this topic, at each gathering.

Below is given, in brief, the outline considered during the last half of the year; our largest attendance was reached in the months of January, February and March, when from eighty to one hundred persons were present at the discussions.

February 25. *Children's Lies*; can little children always distinguish between reality and imagination? Can older people? Why?

March 24. *Purity*; responsibility of parents and teachers; purity in conversation at home, etc.

April 28. *The subject of foods concluded*; spices and condiments, uses and abuses; sudden changes in diet.

May 26. *How we teach children to be selfish*; reasons why this generation will be particularly so.

June 16. *What shall we do for our children in vacation?* Plans for their welfare. Selection of topics for next year.

A few of these selected topics are given, as follows, to indicate the general trend of thought:

1. Obedience; government of children.
2. Ought boys to work while attending school?
3. Ought children to drink tea or coffee; does either retard growth?
4. Are people of limited means more foolish in their expenditures than wealthier people of the same mental capacity?
5. How and when should girls be taught to sew?
6. How can we teach girls to dress more plainly at school?
7. How can children learn to be more thorough, thoughtful, independent?
8. How can children be taught to be less selfish, more useful?
9. How can greater respect for parents be inculcated?
10. How many children learn contentment? To feel satisfied with home and its surroundings?
11. Should parents choose an occupation for children while yet they are young?
12. Children's dishonesties. Appropriation of missionary money or other public funds, even with intention of replacing it; use of cancelled stamps. Responsibility of public trusts.
13. Please recommend or select a course of reading for children from fourteen to fifteen years of age.

Of the above questions, numbers 1-2-6-7 received the greatest number of votes; among other subjects for next year's discussion are—

1. Necessity for more sleep.
 2. Benefits arising from going barefoot.
 3. Danger of sitting on stone steps.
 4. Cold water as an aid to digestion.
 5. Necessity of laughter and cheerful conversation at meals.
 6. Bathing; clothing; care of the eye, ear, teeth, nails, hair, etc.
- The possibilities for usefulness in this line of work grow daily, and the teacher is made to feel her own limitations by such questions and requests as—

"How can my girl grow stronger?"

"What can I do to interest my boy?"

"Please name some book that will help me."

As an answer to the last need, the nucleus of a small circulating library has been formed which, it is hoped, will add considerably to our helpfulness.

The results of these meetings as observed up to date, are—

1. Children are much better clad, and the provision of rubbers,

umbrellas, and other protection against inclement weather has improved about thirty per cent.

2. An ever growing gentleness on the part of the children, and a gradual disappearance of the stiff, formal relation of pupil and teacher.

3. An awakening on the part of the parents to the fact that maternal instinct does not bestow the knowledge needed in the training of children, and that the sacred office of motherhood calls for the same careful preparation as is accorded other vocations.

4. A consequent appreciation of and sympathy with the teacher's difficulties.