

A PLAY SCHOOL THAT IS FRANKLY EXPERIMENTAL

The Mother with Public School Tendencies and the Child Who Skeptically Cannot Connect "Play" and "School" Will Be Beneficiaries if This Experiment Works Out as the School of the Future.

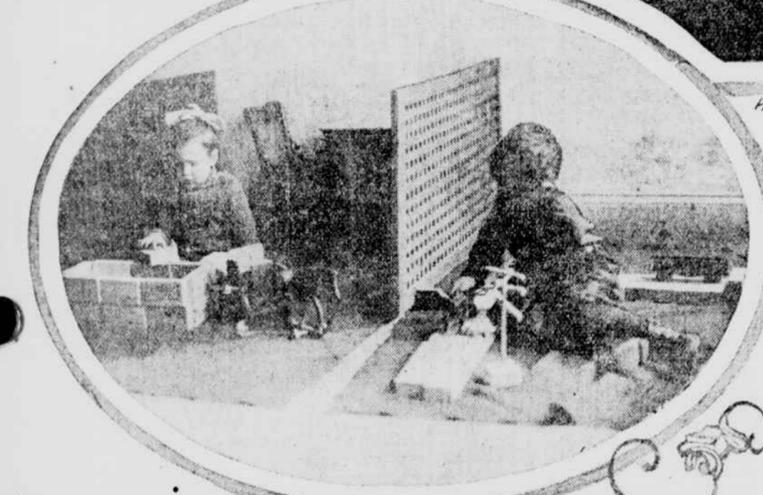
By DORIS E. FLEISCHMAN.
THE School of the Future. Imagination might picture a group of solemn, spectacled children—mentality and not much besides. That is a natural deduction for the ordinary pitiable mortal who went through the lower grades for reading, writing and arithmetic. School was a place where a teacher tried to make one learn things. And it was a state of affairs which must be. Now there is a strong



MANUAL ARTISTS

indication that school is to be a pleasure palace; a place where there is more fun than is to be found in playing by one's self. Of course one will learn there, too, but only one's elders will be conscious of that relatively unimportant fact.

"The Play School" would, at first thought, be received with equal skepticism by child and by parent. The child would say: "Play? Then how can it be school?" The parent would say: "Naturally, a school is no place for play." A little acquaintance, how-



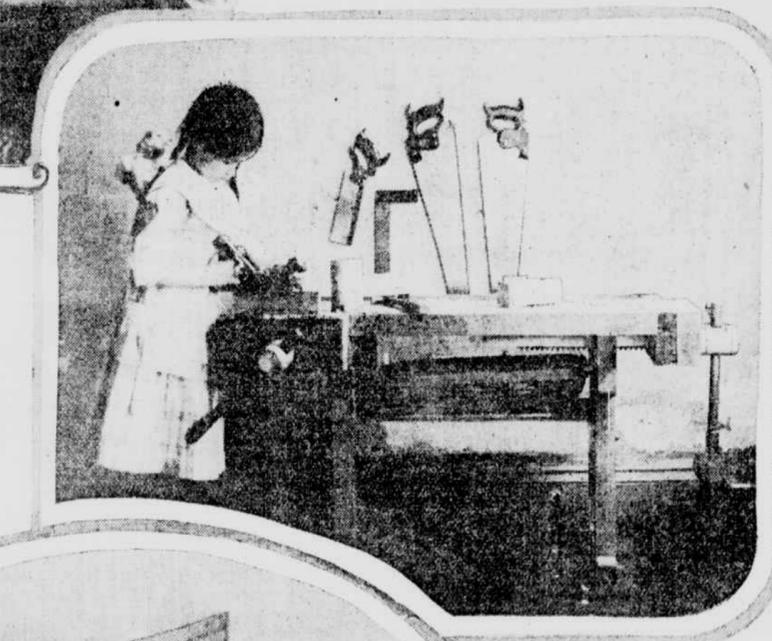
SEPARATE COMPARTMENTS INSURE FREEDOM FROM OUTSIDE DISTRACTION TO THE PUPIL ENGROSSED IN AN INDIVIDUAL PROBLEM.

ever, with the Play School, under the direction of Miss Caroline Pratt and Miss Edna Smith, would remove preliminary prejudices. For it is a place in which children are as happy as children playing the games they want, whenever they want, can possibly be. And these children learn all the things that a mother with public school tendencies might desire, and a great many more than she imagined possible. They

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know a certain kind of arithmetic, because in measuring the size of a wagon they wish to build they use arithmetic. And so figures are to them actualities and implements, in place of weary chalk and pencil, symbols of nothing that relates to their life.

"Our school," Miss Pratt kindly explained, "is an experiment in education. We do not yet feel that we have worked out the problem fully, but we are trying to correlate the child's life



HER SEX DOES NOT DEBAR HER FROM MANUAL TRAINING HERE.

teacher when she looked in at one door or another. Occasionally a child would run up to her and ask her some question. When it was answered the child went to its play again.

In another room a small boy was bent over the drawing board. Before him was a huge sheet of paper and a set of crayons. No one was near to help him or to suggest to him. He was working spontaneously and in utter forgetfulness of all around him. Drawing for the ordinary school child is a far different matter. He is placed laboriously over his task, and he must do exactly as he is told throughout the entire difficult period. A few enjoy it—those who naturally take to drawing. The others are in torture.

But in Miss Pratt's Play School drawing is merely a mode of expression. When a child wants to express something, he quite naturally gets his drawing materials and makes a picture of what is in his mind. When the children go on any of their numerous expeditions in search of knowledge they return with one impression upon them. It may not be the one which the teacher had in mind, but the child

merely a picture, it is a story as well. "This man is walking over the bridge. He looks down the river and sees this. He is going to this building, which you see here, and which is a factory which makes wheels"—and it also teaches them how to manipulate their fingers and writing material, thus making writing easier for them.

"But that I consider relatively unimportant," says Miss Pratt. "They will learn how to read and write anything when they are a little older. That is where the public schools make their greatest mistake. They spend almost all their time in the lower grades teaching the children how to read and write. I prefer to train the powers of concentration, and give them a little knowledge of the real things of life, so that they have something with which to correlate what they learn in their books. Then they will be able to understand better what they read.

"As it is, I have to send some of the children out during reading and writing lessons. They learn too quickly, and are apt to put too much stress on that, to the exclusion of their other interests. The Montessori method, too,

is based too firmly on the early acquiring of reading and writing.

concentration great. There are no rules. With one exception they do as they please, and when they please. The beauty of Miss Pratt's idea, however, lies in the fact that the children please at the right time. If all children are gathered around the kind cartoonist who has come to show them how to make paper animals, and one is much more interested in building a sand palace, she is asked to join. The joys of the animal game are pointed out to her. But when she reaffirms her choice of the sand, she is no longer molested. The one exception is that the children may not do anything to interfere with one else's inclinations. And this restriction is not very hard. They may not be boisterous, because that prevents some one from doing what he wants.

"We have not a picked class of children here," said Miss Pratt. "They are children from the neighborhood, and their fathers are of the class of skilled mechanics. Some of the children have learned too many of the street ways, and they must be firmly handled. But they are all intelligent and hopeful. I hope to keep them here

until they are ten years old, and I am sure they will enter the grammar school at a higher grade than is customary."

"Do you keep them with you all day after the feminist idea?" she was asked.

"No," she smiled, "although I believe in it thoroughly. But there is no real need for that yet. When there is, I am sure the system will prevail. Probably, after a while, too, all the schools will have small classes like this, which can give the child individual attention. It is eminently feasible for them, and will make an enormous difference to the child."

Then we watched the dancing lesson, which might have been the ordinary school child's recess, for each child took turns in dancing alone for the rest of the class. They worked hard, making up their steps, and trying to step to difficult rhythms, and their faces were glad.

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"I want them to know life as it is to-day, to sharpen their understanding of real things. When they see a wagon on the street they must know where it has come from and where it is going. On the way from the wholesaler to the retailer, and a simple explanation of the fundamentals of commerce, they learn about the policeman who stops the wagon, and traffic regulations. And incidentally they learn about police systems of other nations, and something about what the various governments stand for."

In this casual, natural way they learn all that is of interest around them. Their fund of information is wide for children who are only four to six years in age, but they are less precocious than the ordinary room full of children. They are unconscious. Their interest is easily aroused, and their

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THE BALCONY GIVES MORE FLOOR SPACE TO ALL

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Wherein the Woman Reporter, on the Scent of the Woman's Angle, Horticulturally, Found There Wasn't Any

By DORIS E. FLEISCHMAN.
THE woman reporter, intent on ferreting out the woman's point of view, eagerly scans each new activity as it comes into her vision and, magnifying glass in hand, analyzes, classifies and reduces it to laws. Quite in this scientific frame of mind I entered the Flower Show, which is being held at the Grand Central Palace, determined to see the women florists and to learn something concerning the growing and distributing problem from their point of view. And I also wanted to learn just how much women were aided in this profession by their universal love of flowers. I thought it would be interesting, too, to observe how constant contact with beautiful flowers influenced the character. Of this latter I learned much—much that was surprising.

Up the wide white stairs I went into the vast hall full of noise, color and fragrance. I walked slowly past the hyacinths, glowing in all the colors of which a hyacinth is capable, and back to the stands of that incomprehensible flower, the orchid, whose bulky, sordid roots and stems emit the fragile blossom. "It ain't right," said a fat, big-handed woman; "I tell you, Sophie, it ain't right." Perhaps she was thinking vaguely of eugenics and heredity.

And passing to the roses, more beautiful than any seen in the Louis gardens, and to the lilies, the various bedding plants, I found that while all the most beautiful were named for women—such as the Princess Victoria Louise, the Alice, the Mrs. Roosevelt—almost all were exhibited by some man or his company.

This was most curious, so I wandered around among the women, listening to the remarks of those who knew and those who admired ingenuously, until I came to the stall of one of the large exhibitors, in which two men were proudly holding forth to an eager circle of smartly gowned women.

"Are there any women florists?" I asked, taking a blond boy to one side. He scratched his head and smiled. "Why, I suppose there are some, but I can't say as I ever heard of one, except, of course, the little flower stand women."

"Why aren't there any big successful women florists?" I "asked to know," finding the fact of their absence in the flower profession rather astonishing.

formation that he could—until he ascertained that I wanted to know about women.

Flower Growing "No Work for a Lady."

"I don't know anything about them, lady. We have five hundred members. But not one of them's a woman. You see, we are professional florists and growers. And that is no work for a lady. It is hard work. She would have to get up at all hours of the night and light boiler fires. She would have to shovel dirt. And, besides, it would take capital."

"Couldn't she have a man do the heavy work, and she direct and do the scientific part?" He did not know. He thought maybe she could, but it might not pay. "But maybe the president can tell you."

But the president, Harry A. Bunyard, had no idea as to the reason why. "Sure, madam, I don't know. There are none in our club. No, our laws don't exclude them. But they just aren't. Sorry, but it's no business for a woman." Perhaps he was thinking of unwritten laws.

I continued my search, determined to find a woman who was responsible for at least a part of the business of this flower show. Groups of intelligent women stood about roses and decided that theirs had never been as large. But one felt instinctively that the gardener had done most of the manual labor and had given almost all the advice. And there were nice old women who stood about the hardy herbaceous perennials and admired the spring Adonis, the bishop's weed, sweet William, Canterbury bells, lollyhock, del-

phinium and all the others that used to grow in unorderly profusion in the garden beds. These, by the way, are coming into fashion again.

Old-Fashioned Flowers Return to Favor

"Women love them," explained one of the florists, "but men don't particularly. You see, men like things to be more orderly and laid out more artistically in color schemes. But these can be made artistic, too, and they are going to be very popular this year."

Two little old ladies (they must have been long past seventy) stood in front of that exquisite plant the Crown of Thorns. For a long while they stood before the beautiful dusky purple of the densely thorned vines, which twined about in thick curves, shooting forth here and there a bright, starlike little red flower.

"My mother's was not nearly as thick as that. And the flowers grew on top. I wonder how they manage to do that." And I found many of that type of sweet flower lovers were there, but no horticulturists.

Finally, the reasons for woman's absence from the profession, which one might expect her to love and to be most proficient in, were explained to me by one of the workers employed by a prominent New York florist.

"Women like flowers, but they do not like to work."

"They like to cut them, to buy them; but not to study them."

Even if she were merely there to do the arranging of the flowers, and that sort of thing, the work would be too taxing.

Florists Take to Drink

"No, it's no business for a woman. At least, not here. In the West there are lots of big florists who are women. But in the West there are no very good florists."

I was amazed and indignant. Florists needed uplifting. They needed the softening and beautifying influence of woman's hands. But I was well-nigh resigned, for the difficulties seemed insuperable.

But, tucked away in a corner of the second floor, I found two booths which gave me hope, and sent me out full of rejoicing. In one I learned of the Women's National Agricultural and Horticultural Association, and in the other I learned of the Horticultural School at Ambler, Penn., which teaches women the various phases of scientific flower growing and how practically to apply them. In this school is being educated a class of women who will vie with men, and perhaps outdo them and in a few years hence perhaps the flower show will be dedicated to women by women. Once more men will have to alter their conceptions as to those professions which are suitable to women and acknowledge themselves mastered. And here is an occupation which the committee on business opportunities for women might well add to their lists.

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