

SHINING MORNING FACES TILL LATE AFTERNOON

No More "Creeping Like a Snail Unwillingly to School" if the School Be Angelo Patri's in The Bronx

If the Label "Gary System" Doesn't Scare or Prejudice You, Read and Learn How It Works in Practice



By Irwin Edman

Up in Public School 45, I was informed by the Board of Education, I would find the best instance of the Gary plan as it is worked in New York. The duplicate school, which is the core of the scheme, is made up of two sets of children—one doing the regular academic work, the Three R's, while the other occupies the playground, auditoriums or shops. These classes alternate

IN A good many towns in this forward-looking country they still go to school at 9 o'clock in the morning, and, except for the hour's recess at noon, spend their days imbibing from Teacher what have for schooldays memorial been known as the Three R's. They read tenth editions of the same old readers, and learn incidentally that Washington was the first President of the United States, that "i" follows "e" except after "c," and that Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania. Which is, to be sure, all very necessary and edifying information. But you will recall, if you are honest in the matter, that while until 1 o'clock these things took up a major part of your time they did not seriously absorb your attention, and that, unless you were wicked enough to be kept in, 3 o'clock meant a signal

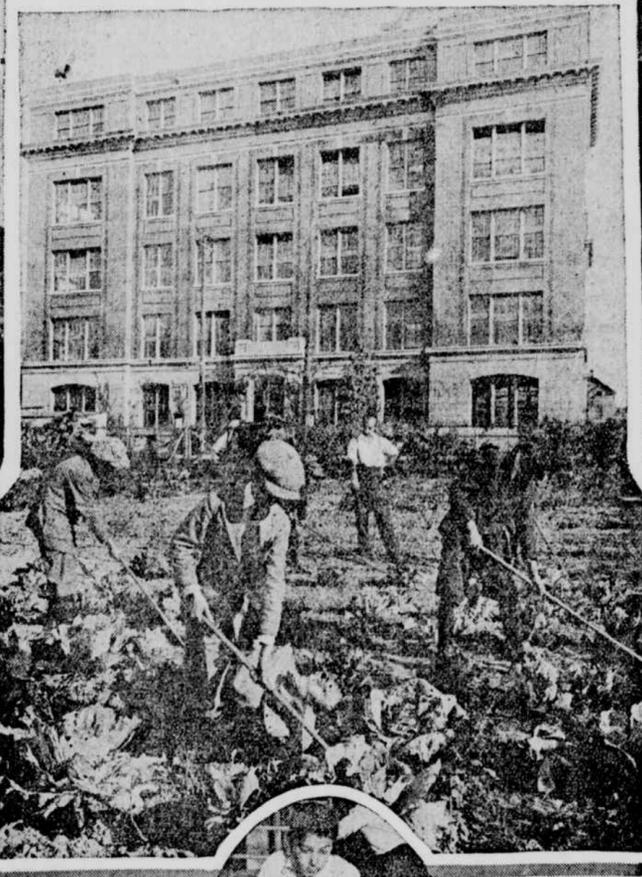
a dozen of the regular classes. Listening to a group in American history in Public School 45 reveals no such terrible revelation as those of the slate pencil tradition would have us believe. Indeed, from all one can gather, the dates and the points on the map and all the academic routine seem to be illuminated and enriched by the activities of the farm and the shop. Spelling has for generations been a

class of the day prepare to-morrow's desserts. But you may ask, as I did of Mr. Patri, whether it is our purpose merely to turn out professional cooks or expert printers; whether we have forgotten that it is the main business of education to turn out children who can think things through for themselves, growing human beings alive at every point of the mental compass? This kindly, gentle-voiced Italian eyed me a bit indulgently as I put the question. In reply, he turned dreamily to the garden across the way. "That doesn't look as if we were turning out mechanics," he said, as he pointed to a teacher demonstrating to a class a botanical fact by a flower plucked from a garden grown by the boys and girls themselves. "Or that," and he took from his desk some pictures of community dramatics that have not least contributed to the school's reputation.

A Real Commissary Department, Run by Pupils, from Entrees to Accounting



The Botanist at His Business; the Greenhouse a Living Textbook



Truck-Farming for

the Lunchroom



Theory and Practice; All the School Printing Done in the Boys' Printing Plant



(Photos. by Brown Bros.)

of release to do the things that really interested you. And before you got into the eighth grade you had begun to distinguish with your elders between the Cloistered School and the Great Outside World.

Which reflections lead to the announcement that there are a few towns—and New York is beginning to be one of them—where they realize that the child's life, no more than the adult's, is bounded by the Three R's. We have learned that instead of setting the child at a desk from 9 to 3, if in school he is active and interested, it will be profitable to keep him there until 4 or 5.

It started in the West fifteen years ago, this idea that children ought to live in school as they live out of it if ever they are to become really acquainted with the world they have been exploring ever since they first put their infant thumbs into their mouths. John Dewey, then professor of psychology in the University of Chicago, noticed that children rapidly and aggressively educated themselves long before they went to kindergarten; that chairs, napkin rings and oranges were their first lessons in physics and chemistry and toy blocks their first adventures in architecture. Until six they romped about in enlivening excursions among the thousand novelties around them; from the A B C class until they were graduated, if they didn't leave discouraged to become errand boys, they sat with folded arms or hands behind their backs learning the principal cities of Europe and words often misspelled. Dewey and his colleagues suggested that if you only used the child's "restlessness" and "impatience" to advantage, if you kept an eye on what he really wanted to do, you might tap resources hitherto unsuspected and fill the child's school days with rich and surprising developments.

It took some time for the idea to come East, but after being whispered in the Sunday supplements for years the Gary system, as it is called, finally came into New York. Last winter, it will be remembered, Mr. Wirt, who was one of the successful pioneers of the new movement, was the storm centre of things educational in New York. Out of the fuss and flurry several trial schools resulted, and the passing of more than a year has left material for reckoning and review.

throughout the day, which, instead of being the five-hour day as of old, is extended to seven hours. The same amount of the traditional lore is taught, but the additional time is devoted to activities in which the child is given a chance actually to do things with his hands as well as his head, and to use his head on concrete problems of action, instead of merely swallowing the words of the teacher or text.

FADS AND FRILLS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS? MR. ANGELO PATRI CALLS THEM BY OTHER NAMES

The notion, simple enough, that a child will take more interest in what's going on if he's actually part of the proceedings was last year befuddled with all sorts of hysteric objections, many of them quite irrelevant to the main point. Hence, armed with all the skepticism I was able to muster from old-fashioned educators of my acquaintance, I sought out my way to the congested Italian district of The Bronx, where Mr. Angelo Patri has for a year been keeping the eyes of experts fastened upon Public School 45. On my way up in the subway I pictured a child chaos, where raucous youngsters rushed about, irresponsibly shifting at will from the print shop to embroidering, and from clay modelling to the shop. Or I recalled the earnest protests of organized labor, and counted on seeing an army of little mechanics turned out to be stupid cogs in a heartless machine. I remembered the words of a maiden aunt, who had told me the other night, on the twentieth anniversary of her teaching career, that there were too many frills and fads in present-day education; what we needed were the solid days of the 90's, when the Three R's and the essential virtues used from 9 to 3 to be impressed upon her memory. So while new movements leave me always vibrant, it was with misgivings that I entered Public School 45.

The principal, Mr. Angelo Patri, was very cordial. Of course, he had warned me over the telephone, a good deal of the equipment was still in the cellar, much of it had still to be bought, and the building had not yet been modified; if I was content to see the idea worked out in these extremely pioneer condi-

tions, I was welcome.

The school, I was therefore not surprised to discover, is at first glance much the same as the traditional plant. But as I seated myself opposite Mr. Patri in his office I noticed across the street a large garden, rich with the varied colors of its autumn crops. There were a dozen or more children, under the guidance of a professional farmer, actually conducting their own truck farm; a half-mile from the school there is a whole acre of farm land, in which the boys have engineered a complete system of irrigation canals, and in which they raise half the vegetables for the lunchroom.

That was the first index I had to the living quality of the work. Just as in the garden the children raised their own vegetables and the specimens for their botany classes, held right here in the open, so was the work conducted throughout the school. The pretty little booklet, with its colored cover and neat typography, which was my first introduction to the school was not only written by the pupils, but printed by them in the odd and tentative little print shop in the basement.

commissary department and providing an equipment for the kindergarten.

But I was still skeptical. As we passed from shop to shop, through groups of boys so absorbed in their activities that neither the presence of the principal nor of a visitor disturbed them, I began to be worried about the Three R's. "What," I asked, "of history, arithmetic and spelling, geography and penmanship?" It seemed to me that any boy with a normal sense of boy values wouldn't have much use or energy for the dates of Jefferson's Administration after spending an hour or two in the garden or printing shop. My maiden aunt's cult of discipline was still strong upon me.

Mr. Patri smiled and took me through half

pointless exercise to the boy in the primary school, because in his young experience it really matters very little whether or not he spells "necessary" correctly. But if the proof has to be corrected and the type reset, spelling becomes, as it has in Public School 45, one of the world's prime concerns.

Mr. Patri opened the door of a science room, and with politely stifled reluctance I entered. At this very time of the day when I was at elementary school we had studied the lever, and the boredom of the fulcrum had remained with me all these years. But as the door opened I gazed into a darkened room, at one end of which stood a boy lecturing to the class on a lantern slide of a complicated piece of machinery, flashed on the screen by one of his classmates. And before I left I saw a group of boys, with standard equipment from the Bureau of Weights and Measures, getting a knowledge of levers, not through drab definitions of a fulcrum, but through practical training in appraising the weights of the beans, the cabbage, etc., which constitute the diet of the district. Incidentally, Public School 45 is situated in a neighborhood notorious for "short-weighting," so science is here a species of practical wisdom.

LAMB-FRICASSEE, SALAD AND PIE ALL COME UNDER THE HEAD OF CLASSROOM WORK

The cooking classes, too, are something more than the messy fritterings of amateurs. You can get a very good luncheon in this school, cooked by the children as part of their regular work; your bill will be checked up by one of them, and the total fiscal operations of the day will be tabulated and accounted by a group in domestic bookkeeping. And not only does the food taste good, but you will learn, if you stay after luncheon for the class in nutrition, just why these little white-capped student cooks found lamb fricassee, a tasty salad, pie and bread and butter the proper staff of life for you and their teachers. And if you have the time, a little after 1 o'clock, you can see the next class operate the dish and towel washing machines and get the kitchen into shape in rapid-fire order. If you still have the time, from 2 to 3, you can wistfully watch the last

"There are such stores of energy that we have never touched; every new thing we can teach the child to do enriches his experience, whether it be printing, or a garden, or dramatics, or the shop. I hardly think we are cramping these children's lives by keeping them happy at school most of the day, instead of letting them roam in the streets. It is our business to fill these cramped lives, and we are doing it, and the parents around here have responded."

And the neighborhood confirms Mr. Patri. The Italian population of the district, for the most part laborers, have come to love the school and think of it as their own. Many of them, though they can very ill afford it, have kept their children at school long after working papers were obtainable, because they were not only doing useful things, but the children themselves had come to identify their whole lives with 45. The morning I was there, a recent defector, now a timekeeper on the night shift of an ammunition factory, came in his off hours to play with his ex-classmates and keep in touch with the school.

The pupils, too, have responded; truancy is no longer a major problem, and scholarship has improved since the additional work has been introduced. And the idea is just in its beginnings. Mr. Patri is one of those modern educators who believe that the school is not a thing unto itself, but a part of the community; and so last summer he organized adult classes in the playground, where children, under expert guidance, taught their own mothers the English language. There have been concerts at which some of the talented Italian musicians of the district give recitals for the community.

There are, of course, difficulties, of which even Mr. Patri, who has overcome them, is acutely aware. There are thousands of teachers who know the new idea means more work, a longer day and new problems, and even to the most generous, teachers' salaries are not a temptation to put in overtime. It means, moreover, continual inventiveness and judgment, for the modern school is not a single rule of thumb, nor can it be well managed by people exclusively trained to pound things into children's memories in the old-fashioned class. It means more than the installation of a garden or print shop, for behind these is necessary the installation of a new philosophy, which those of the schoolhouse do not easily acquire. As a test case for the modern school P. S. 45 seems to have worked. But it means more men like Mr. Patri—this I learned from other sources—schoolmasters with the enthusiasm of the poet and the patient power of the executive. And the seats of the mighty among teachers are not often filled with such as these.