

FITTING the SCHOOL to the CHILD

World Wide Movement to Better Conditions of Children

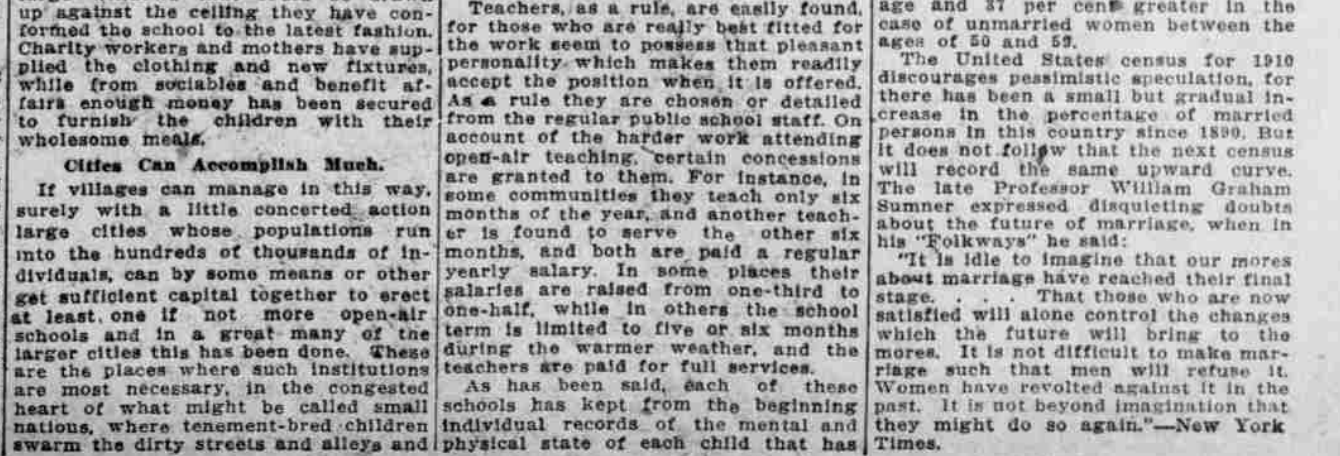
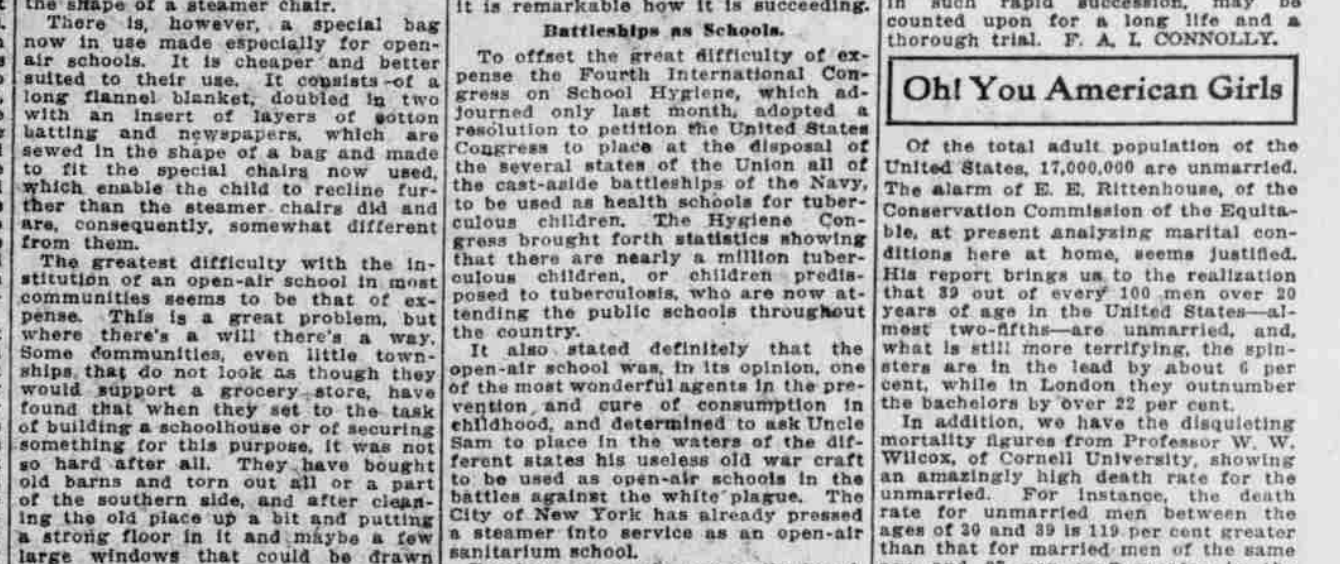
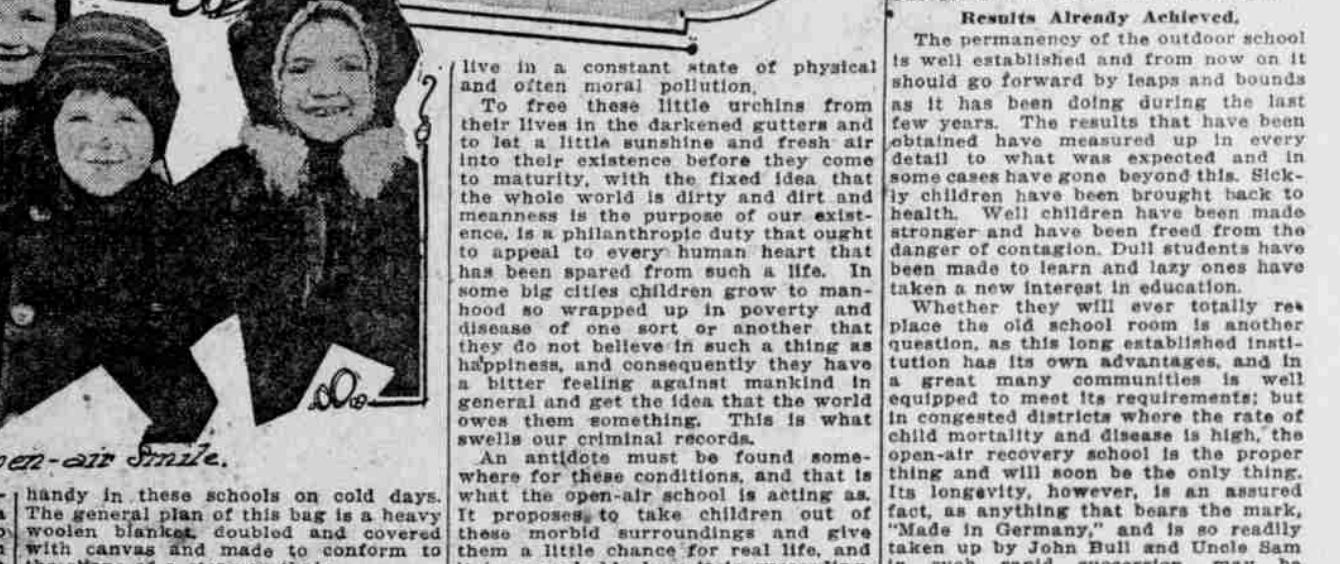
Give the Subnormal Child a Chance, Is Modern Demand—Child Properly Treated Does Better Work—Open Air Schools and Their Growth.



Chicago Snow Birds



After Lunch Rest Hour



THE open-air plan school originated in Germany, a little less than ten years ago. Since that time the world-wide movement for open and outdoor schoolrooms has gone forward by such steps that it is now one of the most interesting of the present-day sciences. The old slogan, "Fit the child to the school," has been punctured and riddled so that it now looks unsightly, and in its place has arisen the saner and more scientific cry, "Fit the school to the child." Every trial has been an undoubted success.

Sickly children who never before even dreamed of acquiring an education are now finding conditions in which they can not only study, but in which they can at the same time improve and in some cases regain their health. Laggards and dull students who had begun to despair of ever making up the classes which they had wasted or lost are rejoicing in the new and interesting schedules of work and play, and are setting to their tasks with a will, while students who have always been perfectly normal, instilled with sunlight and oxygen, are rushing on to the acquisition of further laurels. In fact, this new system has been so successful, especially in the cure of children who have tuberculosis, that a plan is now on foot to have the old and discarded battlements of Uncle Sam's Navy turned into open-air sanatorium schools.

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His fellow-students may be suffering from tuberculosis, and he is compelled to breathe the air passed out through tubercular lungs and from sour stomachs and mouths in which the teeth are half rotted away. Something had to be done to relieve this poisonous condition of affairs, and the open-air school was the only solution of the difficulty.

Children who were under the old methods laggards and truants naturally take a liking to the new outdoor schools, with their revised and more entertaining schedule of study, and instead of trying to shirk school they are anxious to attend. The reports of every outdoor school now established show that from the beginning children who were sent to them because of their incoercibility are making marked and rapid progress. Besides, there is little grading done in these institutions, and students who are naturally dull do not find reason for discouragement in the loss of their classes, since each child is given the opportunity to make up any matter in which he has fallen behind.

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The children are bundled up in steamer chairs or cots and bade to go to sleep while their lunch digests. Poor old grandmother gasped many a time before the discoveries of science were able to persuade her that this method of procedure would not send the child to an early grave or leave him a cranky, nervous, and nervous creature. The schools have the proof of their wisdom right in their own records, which show that contrary to the old belief, the children grow strong, and healthy under such treatment.

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At 2 o'clock some study of nature or one akin to it is indulged in, such as botany or geography, and an instructor escorts the pupils through the fields and hills and points out to them the different objects such as pools and slopes and lakes which the dry textbook frequently only half impresses on their minds. After an hour and a half of such talk, with nature, recreation and games are again in order until 4 o'clock, when some handwork or other study fills the time up till the serving of supper, which is now usually ready to be eaten.

The menu for this meal is very changeable, including meats and vegetables, milk and other healthful foods. By 6:30 the children are again in their homes, and after telling mother and father, in those cases where there are a mother and a father, all about the day's work, they are thoroughly ready to run off to their waiting cots for a good night's rest. Under circumstances of this nature it is no hard matter for a child to spring quickly back to health.

As the fundamental idea of this movement is to fit the school to the child rather than to make the child measure up to the requirements of the institution, there can be no set schedule or routine which will apply in all cases. Presently the schools will have to include in the walks and games of the other children, but in these cases a teacher is always provided to interest them in vivid stories which often give as much knowledge as the pupils can acquire in their rambles. In cases where the condition of health is such that it will not permit of attendance at all of the classes the invalid is allowed to rest during certain periods while the others go ahead with their work. Many of the schools even employ buses and automobiles to collect the feeble children from their homes in the morning and return them in the evening.

Immunity From Colds.

Another difficulty arises in the winter time when the weather would ordinarily be termed inclement. Almost the first question asked by critics and opponents when the proposition of open-air schools was launched was, How will you keep the child from catching cold or even pneumonia, if you expose him to the rigorous open air of Northern

Winters? This question partially answers itself, because there is such a thing as man becoming acclimated to weather conditions, and the children who attend these schools in a short time become almost immune from colds.

If, however, a child who has been walking or playing in the snow gets his body or feet wet, there can be no harm done if it is as long as he is active, and the moment that he steps in on the floor space, or, as in some classes, the open room, he is immediately hustled to the warm, inclosed baths and there thoroughly dried before he is exposed to the cold again. But as long as he stays out of the dampness there is no danger at all, because the temperature can be and is, when necessary, modified by a big jacketed wood stove that can throw off enough heat to drive the children out if forced to it.

Then the clothing answers the rest of the difficulty, for it would be foolish to attempt such an institution without properly clothing the child. Everything that can tend to make him comfortably warm is afforded. After he bundles himself up in such paraphernalia as soapstone hot water bottles, foot boxes, mufflers, sitting out bags and arctic hoods he is little apt to need the heat of a fire after a little acclimatization. Moreover, nurses are always in attendance and a doctor pays weekly or semi-weekly visits of inspection and is at hand when called upon.

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An antidote must be found somewhere for these conditions, and that is what the open-air school is acting as. It proposes to take children out of these morbid surroundings and give them a little chance for real life, and it is remarkable how it is succeeding.

Battleships as Schools.

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It also stated definitely that the open-air school was, in its opinion, one of the most wonderful agents in the prevention and cure of consumption in childhood, and determined to ask Uncle Sam to place in the waters of the different states his useless old war craft to be used as open-air schools in the battles against the white plague. The City of New York has already pressed a steamer into service as an open-air sanitarium school.

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As has been said, each of these schools has kept from the beginning individual records of the mental and physical state of each child that has

attended them. These records alone are a certain proof of the practicability of the theory upon which the open-air schools were founded. But these do not constitute the only proofs of it.

Those who have intimate knowledge of them and can keep their eyes on the children that have been turned out of these schools can readily testify to the soundness of this theory. Some of their first pupils have now reached maturity, and what were once puny little children are now big, strapping young men and women with a glow of health in their cheeks that rivals even a husky farmer lad's.

And one of the strongest things about these children is that pupils who were formerly very dull and slow to learn seem to have grasped facts eventually much faster than their brighter neighbors, and many of them are now quite successful business men and women.

Results Already Achieved.

The permanency of the outdoor school is well established and from now on it should go forward by leaps and bounds as it has been doing during the last few years. The results that have been obtained have measured up in every detail to what was expected and in some cases have gone beyond this. Sickly children have been brought back to health. Well children have been made stronger and have been freed from the danger of contagion. Dull students have been made to learn and lazy ones have taken a new interest in education.

Whether they will ever totally replace the old school room is another question, as this long established institution has its own advantages, and in a great many communities is well equipped to meet its requirements; but the open-air school, where the rate of child mortality and disease is high, the open-air recovery school is the proper thing and will soon be the only thing. Its longevity, however, is an assured fact, as anything that bears the mark, "Made in Germany," and is so readily taken up by John Bull and Uncle Sam in such rapid succession, may be counted upon for a long life and a thorough trial. F. A. L. CONNOLLY.

Oh! You American Girls

Of the total adult population of the United States, 17,000,000 are unmarried. The alarm of E. E. Rittenhouse, of the Conservation Commission of the Equitable, at present analyzing marital conditions here at home, seems justified. His report brings up to the realization that 25 out of every 100 men over 20 years of age in the United States—almost two-fifths—are unmarried, and what is still more terrifying, the splinters are in the lead by about 6 per cent, while in London they outnumber the bachelors by over 22 per cent.

In addition, we have the disquieting mortality figures from Professor W. Wilcox, of Cornell University, showing an amazingly high death rate for the unmarried. For instance, the death rate for unmarried men between the ages of 30 and 39 is 119 per cent greater than that for married men of the same age and 37 per cent greater in the case of unmarried women between the ages of 50 and 59.

The United States census for 1910 discourages pessimistic speculation, for there has been a small but gradual increase in the percentage of married persons in this country since 1890. But it does not follow that the next census will record the same upward curve. The late Professor William Graham Sumner expressed disquieting doubts about the future of marriage, when in his "Folkways" he said:

"It is idle to imagine that our mores about marriage have reached their final stage. . . . That those who are now satisfied will alone control the changes which the future will bring to the mores. It is not difficult to make marriage such that men will refuse it. Women have revolted against it in the past. It is not beyond imagination that they might do so again."—New York Times.

Victory for the Plan.

After most careful and rigid experiment this modern system of open-air schooling has come out of the test wreathed in victory. Yet it is not altogether a new idea. Going back to the times of the ancients, we find Aristotle in his gardens, walking among his pupils and delivering to them his principle of logic in nature's own theater, and Placinius standing on battlements or the Grecian equivalent for them, in the streets of Athens, addressing the passers-by. Tracing the processes of dispensing knowledge down through the ages, we hear very little of schoolrooms until after the world had begun to come out of its long sleep of the Dark Ages.

Then the idea of gathering the children around some master's chair within four walls began to come into prominence. The youngsters with the wild blood of youth flowing in their veins, were herded into closed-up classrooms, where so much dry knowledge was paid out to them. This system had its advantages, but there was no reason why it should be the only system on the face of the earth.

Yet it came to be so fixed a fact that when the question of sending children who were physically weak to study within doors arose, the only answer that the economists of the last century could give was either to make the children suffer the ravages of indoor life, or else give up all hopes of being educated.

First Experiment in Germany.

Necessity, however, proved in this case, as in others, the mother of invention. When, lately, state legislation began to impose on all children the obligation of going to school, some means had to be resorted to accommodate the sub-normal child. Then the first experiment of open-air schools for sickly children was begun, Germany, as usual, was found master of the situation, and came into the foreground with its little forest school at Charlottenburg, a small suburb of Berlin. The reports from this school soon spread throughout the empire and were so startling

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