

Playgrounds for Children

Interesting and Instructive Address Delivered by Mrs. H. Armstrong Before Mothers and Teachers Club of North Bend

The following is an address delivered before the Mother's and Teacher's Club by Mrs. H. Armstrong, at the North Bend High School. She was called on impromptu to substitute for Judge A. S. Hammond. She said:

I suppose the good Lord knew what he was about when he made children so that they want to play. Perhaps he might have made them so that their first impulse would be a desire to work—but my observation and experience tells me that He did not. All young things want to play, and they want to play something that means exercise. The human animal is the most helpless of all created things and doesn't even know enough to play until it has been taught, but if it does not learn to play it will never learn to work, for play is work before it has grown up. If the child is a good player he is likely, later on, to be a good worker. In play they not only develop their bodies by natural and healthful exercise, as Nature intended they should, but they learn to play the game of life, in which "to the victor belong the spoils" to the winner the prize. They learn that the only way to win in any game is to do a little better than anyone else. That the race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong, but that patience and perseverance are quite as apt to bring success. They learn that the one who does not play fair is despised, and a good loser is admired. They learn the cruel but necessary lesson that there is no place in the general scheme of things for a weakling—that the law of the universe is the survival of the fittest. These are lessons which have to be learned, and it is well if they are learned early in life, and how much more readily and thoroughly they are learned upon the playground from actual experience. If Johnnie comes home with a black eye, the chances are—if there is good stuff in him—that he will go into training, quietly improving and developing, until, as likely as not, the other fellow goes home with a black eye.

The game of life is played much like other games, and after all, the greatest pleasure is to play the game well. The chances are not even, the cards are not of equal value, and it is impossible that all should win, or that anyone should win all the time, but the one who plays his hand for all it is worth will be satisfied with himself and will win the approbation of his fellows.

These facts are absorbed by the children upon the playground as naturally as they breathe. But in order to get that training which will qualify them for the big game, several kids have to get together. There must be competition, opposition and something to arouse emulation. Just as sure as one kid sees another kid jump over a stick, just so sure there springs up in the heart or soul or stomach of the first kid a desire, to beat the other at his own game. Something has started, and there is no telling where it will stop. The experience of millions of ancestors is urging him to get into the game and win. The more children, the better the game. In the big game later on they will have as the world as competitors. Let them get busy and learn the rules before the stakes are too high.

A child who has not learned, as a child, how to bear defeat and how to win to success, is liable to be ruined, later in life, by a single failure.

But children ought not to be left to their own devices in play any more than work. They should be taught how to play. Children are imitators. They have no morals. They begin by doing what they see others do. It is important that they learn to play on the square, and to play the games that will develop their bodies and at the same time prepare them for the big game, by teaching patience, endurance, fortitude and resourcefulness. We devote a good deal of time and money to teaching the three R's, reading, riting and rithmetic. We even make the man who has no children of his own, help pay for this teaching, upon the theory that in order to maintain good government we must see that the children develop into good and intelligent citizens. If this is a good policy, why should not the public be equally interested in teaching the children how to conduct themselves towards their fellows, so that everyone shall have a fair chance in the game? It seems to me that we can do as much for the coming citizen on the playground as in the school-room. I had rather see a boy learn to play baseball well than to read

Greek. At baseball he will learn naturally, instinctively, quickly and joyfully, not only to use every muscle of his body, but to keep all his senses on the alert and his brain trained for instant action.

He learns to see, judge and act instantaneously. There is no chance for him to stagnate. He is all alive every minute. Also he learns that the other fellow must have an equal opportunity with himself. The rules of the game require that each player shall have an equal chance and there must be no cheating.

Every playground is a miniature world, where every citizen is taking an active interest in what is going on. What they learn there they will never forget, for it is absorbed into the system naturally, and becomes a part of themselves. What you have to stuff into a child against its will does not help its growth. The mind of a little child is a wonderful thing. It is a sensitized film always exposed to the light of knowledge, and is receiving impressions every moment of its life. It is eager for knowledge. It wants to know everything. But impressions are conveyed to the mind through the machinery of the body, and the machinery must be in good working order to get clear impressions.

The idea that a child must be compelled to do the things it does not want to do is contrary to the laws of Nature. Make the thing attractive and he will do it freely. If not perverted, our stomachs crave what is good for us and re-

ject what is bad. The food that we relish will do us good; that which we despise will not be assimilated, even if forced down our throats. Food to be beneficial must be palatable. The old lady correctly expressed the idea when some one tried to convince her that some kind of newfangled breakfast food would be very beneficial to her, by replying: "I'd rather eat what I'd druther." You can get food, or information, into a child with a force pump, but a much better way is to let them get it in the way they want it—taking care, of course, that they have the opportunity to get the right kind.

We ought not to turn the children loose to play hap-hazard on the street, or in the gutters, or where, from very necessity, they will absorb what is least desirable or learn to play poor or dishonest games, any more than we should set poor or unwholesome food before them. So I think it is just as important that we should have municipal playgrounds and municipal amusements of other kinds, for that matter, as it is that we have public schools, and for the same reason.

In order that popular government may not perish from the earth, we must produce, from the children, citizens who are healthy and intelligent, and more important still, who are in favor of a fair deal and a square game, all the time, everywhere, for everybody.

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Although many of our fashions are conceived with never a thought of the practical, for adornment alone, the sports coat, which is becoming more popular every day, is an exception.

This garment, I believe, originated with the mackinaw—a rough, heavy coat of plaid patterned after the garment of the same name worn by the Canadian woodsmen. It is now being made of all suitable coating materials, plain or plaid, and fills a very important place in the modern girl's and woman's wardrobe. A reversible coating is used with No. 8130; the outside is a soft, wooly fabric in dark blue; a narrow stripe of red runs through the reverse side and is turned back to form collar and cuffs. A stitched strip of the material forms the belt. The raglan shoulder, which shares honors with the yoke this season, is a feature, and the huge patch pockets are a convenience.

This garment may be copied in size 36 with 3 1/4 yards of 42 inch material.

A three-piece skirt accompanies this coat. It is developed in blue duvetyn and trimmed with bone buttons. The panel front is distinctive.

Size 24 in this design requires 2 1/2 yards of 42 inch material.

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No. 8116 is blue silk poplin, with the second tunic of blue chiffon and the upper one of the poplin. A few dark red bone buttons are effective as trimming.

This frock may be copied in size 36 with 6 1/4 yards of 36 inch material. No. 8130—sizes 32 to 44. No. 7981—sizes 22 to 30. No. 8116—sizes 34 to 42. Each pattern 15 cents.

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