

What Do They Teach Your Children?

By CARLETON W. WASHBURNE, AS TOLD TO JOHN AMID (From Colliers)

When you see your boy or girl struggling over "home work" in Latin verbs or long equations, learning to spell big words and rattle off the dates of battles, do you sometimes ask "What's the use?"

Last spring I sat at the next desk to that occupied by a well-to-do manufacturer. It was at the University of Chicago Parent-Teachers' Association.

The test was part of an investigation going on in northern Illinois as to the degree of arithmetical speed and accuracy possessed by intelligent and successful men and women.

The first section of the test consisted of simple-addition problems. I am reasonably rapid, and start in at a good clip.

When we came to subtraction I put on all the speed I had, but it wasn't any use. That man was nearly twice as fast as I was.

Then fractions were announced. As if at a signal, from every part of the room went up one unanimous groan.

This did not reflect on the manufacturer's intelligence. It reflected on the schools which were putting far too much stress on a process obviously, not much used in life.

AN ANNUAL ACCOUNTING By JOHN T. ADAMS, Chairman of the Republican National Committee

The cabinet officers and heads of the various other federal executive agencies are making their annual reports to the President and the Congress.

reorganization looking to more efficient and more economical service. The irritating delays which have long characterized government bureaus in their public dealings have been altogether eliminated or reduced to a minimum.

There has been a recognition of the necessity of cooperation of all government activities in order to achieve the best results for business and industry, agriculture and labor, the nation and the individual.

learning the processes. The scores of sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade children from city after city showed that they could work circles around even the more intelligent parents.

This gave us a definite cue as to where emphasis was needed in schools—arithmetic. Speed and accuracy of the parents in addition and subtraction far outranked that of the average eighth-grade child.

Cheers for An Author The question at once arises: "Is the performance of adults the right way to determine what children should do?"

Overtraining in such subjects as fractions, obviously, simply results in later forgetting, and is therefore a waste of time.

We don't yet know what children should be taught. But we are beginning to find out.

Last spring my seventh- and eighth-grade children at Winnetka, Ill., had a banquet for the basketball team.

I wonder if ever before children have cheered the author of a school textbook!

Harold Rugg of Teachers College, Columbia University, is the compiler of a series of experimental-social-science pamphlets. With them the upper-grade children of the Winnetka elementary schools have been studying history in a new way and for a new purpose.

Another function of history and geography is to give children sufficient acquaintance with persons, places, and events to enable them to read and converse intelligently.

To decide what historical and geographical facts are alluded to frequently in the literature of to-

day, 15 Winnetka teachers met one evening every week for two years, sitting around tables in newspaper offices, or the Chicago Public Library, or in the school building, with magazines and newspapers, writing down on little slips every reference to a person, place, or event.

Spelling by Common Sense In Connecticut all the compositions written by the children in a number of different towns were turned in for tabulation.

In Iowa children of different schools brought from home 3723 business and personal letters received by their parents, containing a total of 261,184 running words.

Dr. Thorndike at Columbia University for years collected word studies. He used the Iowa list, but also counted the words in books, periodicals, and many other places, covering altogether 41 sources and over four and one-half million running words!

Having discovered the facts, it next became our problem to include them in study material which would be both interesting and accurate. An elaborate book-keeping system enabled us to find out which parts of our written material were readily grasped by the children and which parts they were unable to understand.

"The Northmen were Teutonic, like the English; and, like the ancestors of the English, they were great pirates and sea rovers. In the time of Charlemagne they began to swarm forth from their northern homes and overrun all western Europe.

And here is the equivalent, from the work done in Winnetka as the result of our investigation: "Once in a while Norsemen made long trading voyages to other countries. Most of the time, however, they were just pirates.

"The Norsemen sailed to England, to Ireland, and to northern France. When people saw them coming, they usually fled away in terror, for they were afraid of the Vikings. The Vikings' long ships ran up on the shore near some town or monastery.

The difference in simplicity of language, and interest, is evident. So much for history. How about spelling?

It is one thing to know that children ought to be able to spell. It is quite another to know what words. How much of your spelling time was wasted on unnecessary words when you went to school?

The old method of making a speller consisted of taking a dictionary and selecting by the author's personal judgment the words he thought children would use.

We found some amusing combinations. J. P. Morgan and Queen Elizabeth were of equal importance. So were Benjamin Franklin and Babylon.

Many of these incongruities disappeared when we separated the list into its time periods. That Roosevelt should outrank all other men in modern times was not surprising, nor that New York City should outrank all cities in frequency of occurrence in American periodicals.

On the whole, the list was very illuminating. We found, for example, that Augustus Caesar, Ponce de Leon, De Soto, and Antietam, Bull Run, and Shenandoah occur in most children's history textbooks, but had no place on our list.

defalcation meritorious gratuitous encumbrance ascendancy

that do not even fall within the 10,000 commonest, are included in widely used 5000-word school spellers.

What constitutes problem-solving ability in arithmetic? How much of it is needed? How can it be taught? What use is geometry? What parts, if any, of algebra are of value?

There is yet no answer to these and hundreds of other questions. The subjects now taught have crept into our American schools without a scientific investigation of their merits, or have remained long after the day of their usefulness has passed.

Algebra and much of our grammar-school arithmetic pushed their way gradually down from higher schools of learning, where they were included in the "general culture."

will be most useful to children in after life.

The University of Chicago, Teachers College of Columbia, Stanford, and a number of other state universities are beginning to attack these problems.

The new method consists of a scientific ranking of words in the order of the frequency of their occurrence, so that children may be taught the most important words, the words most frequently used, and waste no time on unnecessary ones.

is probably that headed by S. A. Courtis in Detroit.

Our Winnetka work brought us against the need for scientific knowledge with unusual forcefulness, because the first step in fitting our schools to individual children consisted in the clarifying of our objectives.

exactly what we wanted each child to be able to do.

How Not to Read We have made use in the Winnetka schools not only of investigations of what we should teach children, but those that bear upon the question of how to teach. No investigation has been more productive of helpfulness in this field than that carried on by the people

at the school of Education of the University of Chicago. They have been attacking the all-important problem of how to teach reading.

Recently they have been studying the eye movements of children in reading, by means of moving pictures.

A ray of light is cast from a distance (Continued on page 8)

Great Opportunity Presented TO YOU

KITCHEN CABINET Only \$1.00 Down

GAS RANGES Only \$1.00 Down

Advertisement for kitchen cabinets and gas ranges. Features a large illustration of a kitchen cabinet and a gas range. Text includes: 'KITCHEN CABINET Only \$1.00 Down', 'GAS RANGES Only \$1.00 Down', '\$1 down PUTS A GENUINE SELLERS Kitchen Cabinet in your kitchen', '\$59.00 to \$82.50', 'ONLY A LIMITED NUMBER AT THIS LOW PRICE ACT PROMPTLY', 'Don't Put Off Till Tomorrow', 'What You Should Do Today'.

A fantastic tale you say? Assuredly so. But the truth it holds is not far beyond the facts. For it is known that countless lives are blighted by kitchen work that enslaves—by old time, laborious methods that take their toll in long hours of irksome work, tired bodies and dull spirits.

Your old stove taken on account. In this range are combined all the features women have always wanted—convenience—efficiency—economy and sanitation. Just the type of a modern kitchen helper you want.

Watch Our Windows For Opportunities H.L. Stiff Furniture Co. COMPLETE HOUSE FURNISHERS Remember You Pay No Interest Here