

THE WINNETKA SCHOOL PLAN.

THE WINNETKA Plan of School Organisation has a history going back as far as 1922, to judge by its bibliography: it has therefore arisen distinctly later than the Dalton Plan, and is in many of its provisions a direct criticism of the policy involved in the latter scheme. Winnetka is a suburb of Chicago, having about 10,000 inhabitants. Mr. C. W. Washburne is Superintendent of Public Schools there, and is the author of the Winnetka Plan. He makes the same demand in principle as does Miss Parkhurst, of Dalton. He declares that education is above all else individual in its entire nature: the usual class system, says Mr. Washburne, tells against this essential principle, and hence it must be eliminated. But in his detailed processes Mr. Washburne exhibits a very decided policy, one having a much greater sense of the realities than Miss Parkhurst shows. Are individual pupils to have freedom to organise the use of their own learning-time every day? The Dalton Plan says yes—for all pupils 10 years old, able to read and write well. Mr. Washburne begins his answer to this question by experiment and exploration of what pupils are, in his view, capable of achieving: and he affirms that just one-half the pupils over ten years of age, in an average school, are to be given this power. The whole Winnetka Plan deals with the chosen half; of the fate of the others we are given no direct information, but evidently they have to be provided with an imposed curriculum and time-table showing scanty regard for the rights of “individuality.” With the select half of the school population at Winnetka, the procedure adopted is as follows:—There is an obligatory minimum programme, common to all pupils—including, possibly, the less proficient half of the school. For the select half, there is also a daily provision of work at their “free choice,” and there is also a period of “work in common.” Of every 100 hours, 11 are given to class work,

42 are given to work at "free choice" and to "work in common," 32 to individual work, and 15 to other categories of activity. The existence of formal class work is evidently a total divergence from the Dalton Plan, and the division given from the most recent official sources shows other deflections also, though the terms used are not very enlightening. There would seem to be a good deal of overlapping. Class work is surely work in common; work at "free choice" is obviously individual: and the undetermined 15 hours out of every 100 hardly justify their existence at all, in view of the nature of the other sections.

The determination by Mr. Washburne of an obligatory minimum programme of work is accompanied by other peculiarities of organisation. Each branch of study is broken up into "work-units," and each cognate group of units forms a "goal." The terms are different from the "assignment," the "contract," and the "job" in the Dalton Plan: it may be said that every one of them in both series, is an infringement of that avowed principle of "individual education" which both plans profess to have as their base. Each "work unit," and each "goal," of the Winnetka Plan, calls for the use by the pupils of manuals and textbooks specially written for the schools concerned. This quite new element is obviously a logical result of the "individual instruction" principle. It should be an even more obvious necessity where there is a total transformation attempted regarding the normal functions of the teacher, as in the Dalton Plan: but the idea seems not to have presented itself to those concerned with the latter system. The manuals for the Winnetka Plan are naturally planned so as to make self-correction by the pupils as widely effective as possible. They provide forms of tests which aim at enabling pupils both to "recognise" the existence of errors in their work, and to "diagnose" the sources of the error. The creation of such printed materials is a useful feature in the Winnetka Plan: but it is also an obvious hindrance to its widespread diffusion.

Mr. Washburne, however, is by no means content to rely on these self-applied "controls" over the diligence and intelligence of individual pupils. At the end of each work-unit comes an independent test of the pupils' mastery of the topic. This is called the "real" test: the use of the adjective is quite candid. Until that test by the teacher is satisfactorily answered, there is no admittance to the next "work-unit." Every such step of permitted advance is duly recorded, for each individual pupil and for every unit of every subject of instruction, in an elaborate Class Register. The real test is always of one of two types, in correspondence with the need of making it as "objective" as possible. Either a missing term (word, number) has to be supplied by the answerer, or else the one right term has to be indicated amid a group of terms colourably like an accurate answer. This process is clearly an application to actual schoolwork of those "tests" which have multiplied in America since 1917, tests which profess to be tests of "intelligence." They are really a very crude, not to say a debased or denatured type of examination: and their intellectual values and results are not likely to be of any moment. With such a system, it is claimed that the "recitation" or hearing of lessons, and the correction and marking of exercises, become unnecessary. The former element in education must disappear where there is no true class: and it seems that what is called "class work" in the Winnetka Plan is really a lecture-process. For immature pupils, collective instruction by a lecture-process is of very slender value. The element of correction and marking of exercises, it is obvious, is secured under another name. The "real test," at the end of each "work-unit," of each pupil, is clearly an exercise: it is clearly corrected, and its result is clearly recorded. The record is just the date when it is well answered: it denotes that the required mark of credit has been attained.

What is the nature of work done outside the "minimum obligatory programme"? There are co-operative

school debates; dramatisations of history, geography, literature; collective experiments in science, drawing, manual construction; joint work in the school garden, and even joint work in house-cleaning. While all this is going on at the "free choice" of pupils, something else is going on also. Teachers move everywhere among the collective groups, and also around where "individual work" is being done. Notes are taken giving full details of every "free choice" activity of every pupil. The whole record of each learner is then made out and sent to the pupils' parents. Between such duties, and the keeping of the elaborate Class Register, with its requirement of an immense number of individual examinations on individual "work-units" in each subject, it is fairly evident that the duty of true class teaching is merely replaced by a marked prevalence of written work on the part of "teachers." On this point, the Winnetka Plan is in substantial accord with the Dalton Plan.

Their marked contrasts have already been in part indicated. Two others may be referred to here. There seems to be no real connection made between the "minimum obligatory programme" of the Winnetka Plan, and all the collective occupations of the pupils. It readily exemplifies two separate systems of work, not one education. This feature is not present in the Dalton Plan. On the other hand, the Dalton Plan secures unity of process by a suppression, in the name of "individual" rights, of all collective action properly so called.

All these belated attempts to carry into popular education the anti-social and selfish tenets of Rousseau and of his followers give little expectation of good results. They are largely prompted by the debased and mechanical concept of class-teaching which is so widely prevalent in modern public school systems. There are to be found very large classes, almost devoid of all the necessary adjuncts, cultural, social, and religious, that have always fitted into the true class system of Christian Europe. A moderate measure of study in

the history of Education, directed towards the working of the real teacher in the real class system, in the Christian Schools of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, would be the "real" test for all these pretentious plans.

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LITTLE BY LITTLE.

Little by little are great bridges builded,
Little by little are towers raised high,
Little by little the whole world is gilded
By the Heaven-lit sun in the sky.
Little by little creep shoreward the billows,
Little by little come signs of spring,
The gold on the gorse, and the green on the willows,
The stems of the flowers, and the blossoming

Little by little the great cliffs crumble,
Little by little melts winter's snow,
Little by little do mighty and humble
Fade into the years that onward flow.
Little by little experience moulds us,
Little by little the shadows fall;
The mystery deepens and slumber enfolds us;
Dear God, we awake in Thy Judgment Hall.

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