

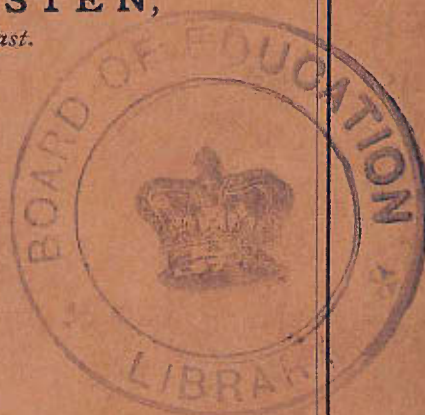
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A PLEA FOR
S L Ö J D .

BY
J. FRANZÉN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE SWEDISH BY
ANNA STRÖMSTEN,
Victoria College, Belfast.



London :
GEORGE PHILIP & SON, 32, FLEET STREET, E.C. ;
LIVERPOOL : 49 & 51, SOUTH CASTLE STREET ;
Agents for the English Slöjd Union.

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N O T E .

IN Sweden, where this little pamphlet appeared last year, *Slöjd* is of course a household word ; but as this is by no means the case yet in England, it may be as well to state that the word, which literally means “dexterity,” has been employed for some time as a general term for all sorts of educational hand-work.

My translation is the outcome of a desire to show my gratitude for the many benefits received last summer as a student and guest at Nääs, by doing something, however little, for the cause my generous hosts have most at heart.

I am indebted to a fellow-student, Mr. J. Russell, of University College School, London, for kindly revising my manuscript and seeing it through the press.

Belfast, June, 1890.

A. S.

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A PLEA FOR SLÖJD.

INTRODUCTION.

“LET bodily work be made a means of education, and, in consequence, let Slöjd be introduced into our schools,” cries a voice more loudly day by day.

But what does this really mean? What are the friends of Slöjd really aiming at? Bodily work in the school! How many parents are there who think to themselves: “My son is going to be neither a carpenter nor a blacksmith; why should he be put to such rough work?” And how many mechanics who say, “It is really too bad. Everybody learns a trade nowadays. How can we possibly live?” Nay, are there not even teachers to be found—though, happily, not many—who say: “We have no time for bodily work in our schools”?

The advocates of Slöjd, however, not only wish children to be set to rough bodily work in

school, but even urge that it is of such high importance that time *must* be found for it. As for the mechanic, he will rather gain, they say, than lose.

Their reasons for holding this view I shall endeavour to make plain in the following pages.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHILD'S NEED FOR ACTIVITY.

THERE was a time when men, in bringing up children, attached particular importance to the development of the body, and of the physical powers. But this was in those olden days when all training aimed at bodily vigour, when to handle the sword skilfully in battle, to send the arrow swift and straight to its mark, were considered the highest achievements.

But presently a reaction set in. Men, as is so often the case, went to the other extreme, and the body was entirely neglected. Instead of producing good and useful results by carefully developing its various powers, it became the fashion to mortify and torment it in every possible way.

The Renaissance, indeed, pointed out the absurdity of this, and insisted upon the harmonious development of body and soul. But it never got beyond theory, and though many of our greatest educational reformers have

earnestly pleaded for what they considered a most important factor in education—the development of the human body—their voices have been but voices in the wilderness, and have remained without effect.

Of late, however, the sad consequences of merely intellectual development have become so evident that it is no longer possible to shut our eyes to them, and we have begun to turn our attention to the physical education of our children. One of the consequences of this has been that gymnastics, reduced as far as possible to a rational system, have been introduced into our schools. This is an important step, but it is not enough; for, however beneficial gymnastics may be, they are not capable alone of supplying the deficiencies in our education, if that education is to result in the harmonious development of all a man's powers and capacities.

In looking round for some other means of supplying the want, we are naturally led to consider the one advocated by most of the great educational authorities of the day: the introduction of real bodily work into the school.

Is it not a most remarkable fact that this demand for bodily work as a means of education is heard in all parts of the civilised world at the same time? Among the many great

educational reforms which have been and are still being carried out in so many nations, this question has taken one of the most prominent places, owing undoubtedly to the advance made by pedagogy in its study of child nature.

In every child we find two needs that the educator must endeavour to satisfy: the need for activity and the need for knowledge. Of the latter, since the school has undertaken to provide full satisfaction for it, I need not speak; my concern is with the former.

At first this need for activity finds a natural expression in the child's love of play, but before long he is filled with the desire to do some real work, to make something useful. It must surely be the experience of all who have had to do with children that just as they are eager to have their questions answered and their curiosity satisfied—an eagerness, by the way, that is often condemned as inquisitiveness, whereas it is really but a natural thirst for knowledge—so they have a real longing for exercise and activity. Now, if this latter desire is not guided into the proper channels, it results in destructiveness, unkindness, disobedience, quarrelsomeness, and so on.

That a child's powers should need use is so evident that it can scarcely be denied by

anyone whose attention has been once drawn to the point. If, then, the educator does not try to satisfy this need, he is responsible for any mischief that may result.

A German writer on education, Salzmann, the author of "The Retrograde Movement, or a Talk on Irrational Education," and other works, says on this subject:—"If you do not try to satisfy your pupils' longing for activity, if you do not find other occupations for them than the use of books and pens, how much good do you do them? One thing at least is certain, and that is that you afford them the opportunity for more mischievous actions than I have now time to specify. This longing for activity does indeed exist in every human being, it is one of the Creator's most blessed gifts, the very spring of the machine. Books and pens cannot satisfy the child. Their use is too monotonous, and does not afford sufficient variety to arouse and maintain interest. And so we find that children who spend all their time at their desks do not find it a particularly agreeable occupation. Some indeed get accustomed to it; but, as this is only by overcoming their natural desire for activity, they end by becoming idle and slow. Those on the other hand who never get accustomed to it, and they

are by far the larger number, expend their pent-up energy in wildness and extravagance. And if we ask whose fault this is, the answer must be : 'The teacher's.'"

Salzmann strongly recommends that, in such establishments as aim at giving a good education, the children be taught to make their own toys and other useful articles. The advantage of this to the children is enormous. Above all, their longing for activity is satisfied, and the restlessness resulting from restraint is done away with. It is easier to manage ten children in the workshop than three without occupation.

"True," someone may answer, "but why should the school take this upon its shoulders? Would it not be better that the children should be taught such work in the home?" Well, if this were possible, it might perhaps be better; but what does the mother say when her little ones are kept indoors by bad weather, and begin to indulge in noisy play with chairs and footstools? Does she not generally tell them to be quiet, not to make the house untidy, not to make such a noise? "You can never be still!" she cries; and with perfect truth, for they never *can* be still.

These words, for ever on the lips of mothers,

are perhaps the most striking proof of the intense longing for activity in young children. Their noise and restlessness are but the quite natural expression of characteristics which in themselves are very good. Again, as the children grow older, "Father, mother," they cry, "what can we do?" And what do their parents give them to do? Very often, indeed, it is a most difficult matter to occupy a child's leisure, especially for parents who have never, as they ought to have done, studied any principles of education. Sometimes the child is set to do something which will occupy him for a short time, but which is really beyond his powers; and the consequence is that he soon gets tired and fidgety, having neither the stimulus of doing something useful nor the satisfaction of doing something well. It is obvious that such work can have little or no moral influence on the child.

I have here been led to refer to something that the teacher must neither neglect nor under-estimate: the joy and satisfaction of children.

Everybody must remember a time when he eagerly seized every opportunity of watching a carpenter or a smith at his work. Now, if children so much enjoy the sight of grown-up

people at work, how much pleasure would they experience from seeing work progress in their own hands? Have you never seen a school-boy so tired that as soon as he had finished his lessons he went to bed? And have you never seen the same boy some evenings afterwards so busy whittling a stick or using a fret-saw that he could scarcely be induced to go to bed? Is not this a proof of the pleasure such work affords? And this pleasure is quite natural, for not only does bodily work afford an agreeable change to intellectual work, but it encourages, as it were, a feeling of independence. The boy makes the thing himself; he is, in a sense, its creator, and has the satisfaction of seeing it slowly grow under his hands, till at last it reaches completion, when his pleasure in the visible result of his work in less keen than his pleasure in the work itself.

Wherever bodily work has been tried as a means of education, the result has always been that it has succeeded better than anything else in awakening children's interest, and making them bright and happy.

There is, however, a very great difficulty in the way of arranging such work and carrying it out with method and system. For my own

part—and, in what I am now about to say, I hope I shall neither give offence to parents nor be thought guilty of exaggeration—I do not think the home is a suitable place for it. Most fathers and mothers have no time, amid their daily struggle for the means of existence, to make themselves so well acquainted with educational principles as could be wished, nor have they, before becoming parents, ever had an opportunity of studying and understanding child nature.

But, even if parents did understand how to provide proper satisfaction for their children's longing for activity, I think there would be many practical difficulties in the way of their doing so. On the ground of expense alone, it would certainly be too much to expect any ordinary home to provide all the tools and apparatus that are necessary before bodily work can have any real educational value.

But what in this respect the home cannot do, the school can.

CHAPTER II.

THE SCHOOL MUST DEVELOP ALL THE FACULTIES.

BUT is there nothing in the school that fully satisfies the child's need for bodily activity? There is, in truth, nothing; for, however good and beneficial the practice of gymnastics may be, it is evident that this alone is not sufficient. Another means, then, must be found. Now, the means already tried, and everywhere tried with success, is bodily work. If this does really satisfy the children's longing and develop their powers, there is surely sufficient reason for introducing it into the school.

But many other reasons can easily be found too. It cannot be denied that hitherto the school has chiefly had in view the development of the child's memory and reasoning powers. Has it not been forgotten that the child has eyes and hands, and that, if his education is to be in any sense complete, these need attention too? Indeed, how many people are chiefly

dependent upon the development of hands and eyes: the physician, the scientist, and the artist, no less than the artisan and the mechanic. And yet the school has in no way concerned itself with it. The old saying, "We learn for life and not for school," has, however, been repeated over and over again; repeated, but never put into practice.

Is it not a fact that many highly educated persons would hesitate to hang a picture on their walls, lest in using the hammer they should mistake their fingers for the nail? They did not learn, when young, to measure distances with the eye, or to control the muscles of the hand, and so, never having acquired any general dexterity, they have come to depend on others for the merest trifles. And thus their want of handiness increases in exact proportion to the increase in the number of manufactured articles. A schoolboy nowadays need not make his own copybooks, he finds them ready-made at the bookseller's. Nor need he spend his time in ruling them himself, the printer has already done that for him. Not very long ago he had at least to cut his blotting-paper to the proper size; but, fortunately, even that is no longer necessary, for he will find it between the leaves of any copy-book that he may choose. You

would really hardly think that children had hands!

It seems to me, then, that the school should take upon itself the responsibility of developing the hands and eyes of its pupils, for which purpose nothing can be more suitable than useful bodily work.

Again, when we consider the different capacities of children, we shall find yet another reason for making bodily work a means of education. How many children we see toilsomely passing through the secondary school, a plague to their teachers and themselves, the greatest number of whom should never have been allowed to think of entering the university.

In a letter to a Swedish newspaper, Professor Lidforss calls attention to this unsatisfactory state of things. After dwelling upon the fact that the schools have too many extra subjects and that the classes are too large, he continues: "Another great evil is the innumerable multitude—*sit venia verbo*—of pupils who are incapable of real intellectual effort, and who are yet to be found in every class of the secondary schools, where they give more and more trouble the higher they get. That such boys do actual harm cannot be too often insisted upon. They not only lower the general standard of work,

but are at the same time a serious drawback to many of their fellow pupils who, but for them, would certainly make very much faster progress."

And yet such boys are encouraged to go in for examinations and enter the universities, where, unsuccessful because they have neither capacity nor taste for study, they do, in most cases, but serve to increase the number of those whose pitiful existence is a curse rather than a blessing to their nation.

But why did they not give up their studies before it was too late? Because neither they nor anybody else ever knew whether they had a taste for any kind of useful work; because in their school days they never had an opportunity of trying whether they were fit for anything else but books. And yet it is more than possible that most of them could have done admirably in some practical sphere, since few men are so unhappy as to be fit for nothing.

Not till bodily work is introduced, will the school be able to say how each boy may most usefully develop his powers. It will then soon dispose of children without brains enough for university studies, who may yet be very clever in practical work.

Then, too, the less gifted children, to whom

“stupid” and other similar epithets are too often applied, will have the satisfaction of knowing that even they are good for something; nay, in certain directions, are perhaps better than many with a reputation for intellectual cleverness.

If we consider the ordinary school-work of children of this class, we shall not only find that it has produced little or no good result, but that in many cases no serious attempt has been made to produce any result, the children having been looked upon as “hopeless.” But if we look at them after they have been engaged in bodily work, we shall find that they have not only developed a taste for certain kinds of work, but have at the same time gained the moral courage which is the foundation of all character. This effect of their work will have great and lasting results, a fact, I think, which no one can realise without finding in it a sufficient reason for the introduction of bodily work into the school.

CHAPTER III.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SLÖJD FROM A HYGIENIC POINT OF VIEW.

I SHALL venture to point out one more reason for the introduction of bodily work into the school.

Everybody must certainly have noticed that amongst the pupils in our schools, and especially in our secondary schools, there are many whose appearance alone is enough to show that they are not in sound health. The pale cheeks and general bearing prove clearly enough that the young plant has already begun to wither, at a time when we should expect it to be most full of vigorous life. What is the cause of this premature decay?

Many different answers have been given to this question. Some say the overstrain on the mental faculties. This is, in truth, an old evil, that has spread its roots through many centuries, but that men and nations have now for the first time fully recognised and determined to destroy. But, despite the opinion of

physicians and educationalists, many people do not believe that bodily work will prove a remedy for the evil. For my own part, I cannot undertake to solve such a difficult problem, —a task requiring far greater powers than have fallen to my share—but, at the same time, I shall not hesitate to set down here two or three considerations of, as it seems to me, paramount importance.

No one, I imagine, will deny that mental activity and physical activity stand in quite definite relations to each other. It is, besides, a well-known fact that that organ attracts the most blood which is the most often used. If the brain, then, which is the organ of thought, is active for too many hours in the day, it attracts more blood than any of the other parts of the body, and, to a certain extent, robs them of their strength. And if this excessive mental activity begins in childhood, the rapid and unnatural development of the brain to which it gives rise is almost bound to produce bad results. Physicians have proved that in such cases the brain itself is inferior to a normally developed brain, both in size and quality. And this is only what fathers and mothers have often experienced. Children who were once able to master all difficulties with ease, are

some day suddenly arrested in their development, to the bitter disappointment of their parents' proud hopes. The brain, which has been working for some time outside the limits of healthy activity, is now overtaxed and exhausted, and refuses even its normal functions.

But this is not all. It is a recognised fact that the brain and the nervous system exercise a very great influence over the whole organism. Most parents know from experience that a child's appetite fails as soon as he begins to work really hard at school, and everybody is aware how sudden emotions give rise to indigestion. Similarly, disorders of various organs—at first slight, but steadily increasing—are brought about by a long-continued application to brain work, of which general debility and a ruined constitution will be the final result.

Dr. Hufeland says: "If you force children to sit for a long time indoors over their books, and occupy themselves solely with their lessons, you will be robbing them of the noblest part of their vital force, which will thus be consumed in brain work. Your action will also give rise to stunted growth and defective formation of the limbs, weakness of the muscles, impaired digestion, and, as the result of the destruction of the nervous system, other

evils, the effects of which are often felt even in old age."

The German "Society for the Preservation of Health" has satisfied itself that this sad state of things does actually exist, and therefore proposes that the school hours be shortened, in order to make it possible to bring about a more harmonious development of the children. The same proposal has also been made in the Prussian Reichstag, amid universal acclamation, by Dr. Lucius, who lays special stress upon the necessity of giving more attention to physical training.

Herbert Spencer, in his famous work on Education, says:—

"But while to all it is a familiar truth that a forced development of intelligence in childhood entails either physical feebleness, or ultimate stupidity, or early death, it appears not to be perceived that throughout youth the same truth holds. Yet it unquestionably does so. There is a given order in which, and a given rate at which, the faculties unfold. If the course of education conforms itself to that order and rate, well. If not—if the higher faculties are early taxed by presenting an order of knowledge more complex and abstract than can be readily assimilated; or if, by excess of

culture, the intellect in general is developed to a degree beyond that which is natural to its age, the abnormal advantage gained will inevitably be accompanied by some equivalent, or more than equivalent, evil."

Everybody knows how common nervousness is nowadays. At a congress of physicians in Sweden, Professor Ribbing drew attention to the importance of checking this disease as far as possible, and to the value of physical education as a remedy. After pointing out that those students are most subject to it who are entirely without practical occupation, such as theologians, lawyers, and humanists, he continues :—

"This is, moreover, a question of great social importance, inasmuch as the disease gives us such a number of mental invalids. It is, indeed, a sad state of things when young people, apparently healthy, but unable to make a way for themselves, become a burden to poor parents or relations. It is absolutely necessary, then, that the education of children be so directed as to get rid of the nervelessness which seems to be in the very atmosphere of the nineteenth century. Do train them in such a way as to make them less delicate and less sensitive to every little pain ! "

But it is not only physicians who have dis-

covered that our education fosters an unnatural growth. Educationalists too are aware of it. In his book, "The Sacrifices of Culture," that warm-hearted philanthropist, Pontus Wikner, describes how the mental faculties are living at the expense of the bodily powers by robbing them of their proper food, and urges that it is the duty, both of those who make the laws and those who carry them out, to see that the health of our children be no longer sacrificed to mental development.

The man who in Sweden has treated this question most fully is Professor Key. By most careful investigations he has conclusively shown that this over-pressure of children does really exist.

I will not weary the patience of the reader by quoting at any length from the many interesting observations he makes, which have no doubt all been carefully considered by many members of the Government; I will merely refer to what he says about Slöjd. Speaking of the general complaint that children are gradually losing the power of using their eyes and ears and hands, and that they are every day becoming less and less practical, he says:—

"I cannot help noticing, in this connection,

a movement that has been set on foot in our country for introducing handicraft and Slöjd into the schools as subjects of educational importance."

After referring more particularly to the great interest taken in this movement in Stockholm, and to Director Salomon's valuable work at Nääs, he shows how Slöjd is making its way more and more into the elementary schools, and then adds:—

"How long will it be before all our schools adopt this most important means of education, which is no less fitted for remedying the defects of the secondary than of the primary school, defects plainly enough visible, not only to scholars, but to so-called practical men, whose chief concern with the children is only when they have left school?"

If the value of this bodily work be not counteracted by the opposition of its adversaries, it is, indeed, sure to cure many an educational defect. Think, too, of the beneficial effect of Slöjd and other similar work on the health and general development of the body.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MORAL POINT OF VIEW.

THERE are not a few who attribute weakness in children to moral corruption. I have already mentioned some of the evil consequences of not satisfying the child's longing for activity, pointing out that the need is a very real one, and that, if not satisfied by what is good and natural, it will lead to indulgence in what is bad and unnatural. I do not hesitate to add that dissipation and vice are often but the result of the child's energies having been originally misdirected.

In speaking of one-sided intellectual development, I cannot help referring to this subject. Rumours are often heard of moral corruption in youths—nay, even in young children. People whisper of sins which, while they aggravate all the evils of intellectual over-exertion, play havoc with the child, body and soul, often blighting his whole life. What father or mother can hear these sad things

without thinking with pain and anxious dread of some boy or girl still bright and strong and happy? Would they not do anything in their power to prevent the evil, did they but know how? For myself, I doubt whether any more effective means can be found than bodily work, which gives the child not merely a temporary, but a permanent interest, and thus clips the wings of a too daring imagination.

Luther clearly saw this long ago, and found much fault with the schools of his time for making boys spend so many years over Latin and other subjects for which they would afterwards have so little use. He asked that the hours for Latin might be reduced, and that the boys might be occupied with bodily work a great part of each day. Zwingli asked the same, "in order that the very roots of dissipation and evil living may be destroyed"; and our great master in the domain of education, Pestalozzi, wrote that "the industry and physical activity of our race is the holy and eternal means of harmoniously uniting all our powers in one common power, the supreme power of humanity." He understood how bodily labour strengthens the reason and fortifies the heart, how it protects from excesses that rob the body of its powers and life of its

purity, how it closes the gates of a too froward imagination, takes the poison of idle talk from frivolous lips, and roots deeper and deeper the sense of duty. In his school, Pestalozzi had a joiner's bench, a turning-lathe, a grindstone, and many other appliances for physical education.

There was in the old Swedish Catechism a passage that is not to be found in the new, which, as many complain, has thus been robbed of one of the soundest maxims of life. It ran thus: "Activity promotes health and wealth, withholds from many a sin, strengthens against many a temptation, and gives consolation and peace of mind in the evil days." Few, surely, could be found to deny this. And if true of work in general, how much more so of bodily work in particular? Let us be careful, then, not to overlook this blessing which is within our grasp.

CHAPTER V.

RESPECT FOR BODILY WORK.

THE number of those who have acknowledged the great importance of bodily work is immense ; why, then, has it not been introduced as a means of education ?

There may have been manifold reasons, not the least weighty of which has been that the expression "bodily work" has never sounded well. And, indeed, it still sounds ill to many ears. "Gymnastics are all very well," it is sometimes said, "but to engage in rough, productive, bodily work is beneath our dignity." The principal reason of the alternate indifference and prejudice with which bodily work has been regarded is, perhaps, to be found here. Rousseau brought out the absurdity of this prejudice in his own lively way, in an answer he once made to the exclamation of a proud lady: "A trade for my son ! What, sir, are you thinking of ?" "I am consulting his interests," he replied, "better than you,

who merely wish to make a lord, marquis, or duke of him, and will some day end, perhaps, by making him less than nothing. I, on the other hand, wish to give him a position that he can never lose; that will make him honoured in all times. I will make a *man* of him, and, whatever you may say, he will have fewer equals in this dignity than in all he might inherit from you."

Although I shall be touching a sore point, I cannot help drawing attention to the foolish opinion, still so often expressed, that bodily work is to be despised as being something of quite inferior value to intellectual work. That this opinion is even generally held amongst the middle and lower classes is clear from the fact that nearly all those parents who can afford to do without their children's help at home send them to the secondary schools to be made into university students! Teachers have sometimes frankly told such parents that their children were entirely lacking in the ability necessary for a professional career. But with what result? Instead of acting on the advice with thankfulness, the unwise parents have persisted in attempting to make learned men and distinguished citizens of their unfortunate children, who have thus been

kept year after year on the school benches, declining *Der Bär, des Bären*, and the like, the laughing-stock of their companions, and the despair of their teachers.

In the higher classes of society it has so long been customary to avoid anything like rough, bodily work, that to-day there are actually men who consider it undignified, nay, a veritable disgrace, to endure the fatigue of carrying a parcel or a portmanteau for a few steps. Yet these same men will live year after year at other people's expense, trespassing upon their kindness, and squandering their money with no thought of shame. They will even cheat the tradesmen to whom they are indebted for their fine appearance, rather than demean themselves by some honest, bodily work, which would enable them at least to dress in their own clothes.

Was not a law once given to all human beings that they should work in the sweat of their brow? Can it be right in the sight of Heaven for some not only to take no share in the world's rough work, but to look upon it as degrading? Despising the work, they must also despise the workers; and thus another of those partition walls is built up that divide society into so many hostile camps.

Not every member of the higher classes feels this contempt for bodily work, it is true—there have at all times been a few reasonable men—but it is equally true that a very large number not only feel it but show it in word and deed.

It may be objected that it is impossible nowadays for everybody to occupy himself with bodily work. This is true, and nobody would ever propose such a thing. But let us never tire of repeating that bodily work is just as respectable and honourable as intellectual work, and that the ideal towards which we must ever strive is for a man or woman's position in the human family to be decided, not by birth or any other accidental circumstance, but by individual talent and individual worth.

But nothing can give real respect for bodily work so much as engaging in it, and hence the necessity of introducing it into the school.

This opinion comes out very strongly in a speech made at the opening of a new Slöjd school in Paris in 1883, by Jules Ferry, the then Minister of Education. He said :—

“ In order that the nobility of hand work may be acknowledged, not only by those who engage in it, but by the whole community, we have chosen the surest, the only practical means : we have introduced it into the school. Do you

not think that when plane and file have taken a place of honour by the side of maps and histories, and hand work is taught in a rational and systematic manner, many old prejudices will die out, and the traditional division into castes at last disappear? Social peace will thus begin on the school benches, and the future of our beloved nation will be crowned with a glorious halo of unity and concord."

As long as our schools refuse to place bodily work on the same level as the hitherto recognised branches of instruction, the pupils must retain the idea that it is inferior to intellectual work; in this way a foundation is laid for disrespect, and by turning out numbers of young men with a contempt for bodily work, however intellectually distinguished they may be, our schools are rather hindering than helping the solution of a great social question.

What has already been said may be summed up as follows:—

(1) Children's longing for activity must be satisfied, and a right direction given to their energies. And further, nothing but bodily work can properly satisfy this longing.

(2) A sound education can only result from the harmonious development of every faculty and every power, and this includes the training

of hand and eye. And further, if bodily work be treated as a means of education similar to the other means generally employed, it will equally serve to develop the child's general capacities and talents.

(3) From both the hygienic and moral points of view, bodily work is of great value. And further, it serves better than anything else to counteract the evil effects of intellectual work and sitting still.

(4) Children should be taught to look upon all men as their brothers, and respect all kinds of honest useful work. And further, bodily work alone can give the children respect for bodily work, and is of such extreme importance that time must be found for it in our educational establishments.

CHAPTER VI.

WOOD SLÖJD.

IN what precedes, reasons have been given for introducing bodily work into our schools. The question now arises : What sort of bodily work must it be? It would be obviously impossible to introduce every sort, even if every sort would answer the purpose. For, since the time to be given to the work is in itself very limited, if that time were divided between several branches, very little indeed could be done in any one of them.

The answer to the question is very simple : We must choose that kind of work which is most fitted for the particular purpose, and *which possesses the greatest advantages from an educational point of view.* Judged from this standpoint, we shall find wood Slöjd, if properly organised and conducted, to be incontestably the best. By "wood Slöjd" I mean Slöjd carpentry, Slöjd turnery, and Slöjd wood-carving. It is most important to keep to the

general term "Slöjd," lest any should suppose that it is the trades of carpentering, turning, and wood-carving, that we wish to introduce into our schools. If the work is to be made to serve educational ends, it must not be looked upon as a trade, and still less conducted as such, these ends being other than the training of tradesmen.

Of the three kinds of Slöjd above mentioned, wood-carving presents the fewest advantages, and is therefore much less practised than the other two. This is a very important fact. Wood-carving is very fashionable, especially amongst women; and when I opened my private Slöjd school, many people imagined that it would form the chief part of the work. Had this been the case, I am sure that I should have had many pupils who, as things are, have not cared to come to me.

All honour, I say, to wood-carving, which, from the æsthetic point of view, may be admirable, but which possesses one most serious drawback: it cannot strengthen or develop the bodily powers, and is a corrective neither for intellectual work nor for sitting still. On the contrary, it does but make the pupil sit still the longer, and generally in an uncomfortable position, bad both for respiration and circulation.

And whatever our school children require, it is not an increase of sedentary occupation.

No, Slöjd, if it is to be of use in the school, must be real work, capable of satisfying the longing for activity and strengthening the bodily powers; it must be rough work—or it will inspire no respect for rough work—and it must aim at the production of articles, not of luxury, but of use.

It is in accordance with these principles that a system of Slöjd carpentry has been arranged by a man whose efforts have attracted the attention of the whole civilised world—Director Otto Salomon, of Nääs.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NÄÄS SYSTEM.

I WILL take this opportunity of saying a few words about the Nääs system, which is not, as many people think, a mere series of models, but a carefully elaborated method, based on educational principles, for making Slöjd a real means of education. One of the most important principles of the system being that the articles made must be used in the home, the series of models, graduated to represent the different exercises or manipulations, is subject to frequent revision, certain models not being useful in all parts of Sweden, and still less so in other countries. When models are replaced by others, the new ones must, of course, represent the same exercises as the rejected ones, or the regular gradation of the series will be interfered with. The series naturally proceeds from the easy to the difficult, and is so arranged that the children may at no stage have work beyond

their powers, and yet find in each new object some new exercise. In this way, interest is excited and sustained, there are always new difficulties to be overcome, and the children develop a taste and love for properly organised work. You should see their faces beaming after each new difficulty overcome, you should witness their joy in having accomplished something independently, and you would no longer doubt that Slöjd can help to fashion energetic and worthy men.

It follows from this that the work must be done entirely alone. No slovenly bungling is possible here; no comrade's whisper of any avail; no opportunity for "cram." The pupil must understand for himself; he cannot be merely passive, but must *do* something, which is what children delight in. Could anything, then, be more fitted to develop self-reliance than Slöjd, in which each worker reaps the fruit of his own work? Set to make something with definite form, something which is to be an exact copy of something else, how closely the child will examine the object, how attentively consider his work! You might walk along a road fifty or a hundred times without noticing what trees you passed, or whether, indeed, you passed any trees at all; but you could certainly

never make a paper-knife without noticing what it was like. Slöjd does indeed develop the power of observation to a remarkable degree; it compels you to notice things, that you may copy them exactly.

It may be asked whether a paper-knife that is an inch too short or too long, that is even not quite straight or smooth, is not equally serviceable for cutting paper. From the commercial point of view, yes; from the educational, no. If you are content to let odds be evens, you will but train up a generation of fumlbers; but if from the very beginning you insist upon exactness, exactness will become a habit, and will last for life. We must not, of course, look for perfection in children; but, on the other hand, we must not be too easy. Some may object that, if too much stress be laid upon exactness, the children will often be compelled to begin their models over again, and so be discouraged. They will certainly often have to begin again; but, in this world of imperfection, what man is there, worthy the name of man, who will not bravely bear the consequences of failure? May it not be good for children to learn betimes not to lose heart before adversity, but to work steadily on with courage and energy? Perseverance is a virtue. If you

show the child his mistake, and encourage him to begin again, you will not, in most cases, dishearten him. And his subsequent joy in conquering the difficulty will greatly exceed the pain of having his first efforts rejected. Moreover, the child who spoils a model will be sure afterwards to exercise increased care. In Slöjd, all who are attentive, industrious, and persevering will gain the prize, which, since each reaps the fruit of his own labour, is the finished and perfect work. Children are often inclined to accuse their teachers of partiality and unfairness, but here such a thing is impossible. Nobody can help seeing what is good work and what is bad, and the great lesson is thus learned, that sin is its own punishment, virtue its own reward.

As I have said, the Nääs system requires that such objects be produced as can be used in the home. It here differs very widely from the German system, of which the chief exponent is Dr. Götze, of Leipsic, who thinks that Slöjd should, as far as possible, be made to serve the purpose of object-lessons, and therefore chooses such objects as are made use of in the school. Space does not allow me to say much on this point; but, whatever the reason may be, it is certain that the child feels great joy and satis-

faction in seeing his father or mother using something that he himself has made.

The Nääs system further aims at developing general handiness. With this object many different tools are used, so that the Slöjder may have an opportunity of using his hands in many different ways. The system does *not* aim at producing dexterity in any particular trade, nor is the importance of Slöjd to be measured by the market price of the models. People are often heard to say: "A wooden spoon like that is to be bought for a few pence, and yet my son is kept working at it for six or eight hours. Surely that is not worth while." No, it is certainly not worth while from a commercial point of view; but I would ask those who reason thus whether for a few pence they can also buy the moral and physical qualities that Slöjd, rightly used, is capable of developing. In estimating the value of Slöjd, then, we must not look at it from the tradesman's point of view, but only from the educator's. It is not intended to teach a trade, but only to give such general dexterity as would be useful in all trades, nay, in every position in life. And although we have chosen wood Slöjd as the best means to this end, there is no danger that all our children will be carpenters. In Gothen-

burg, the town where the greatest efforts on behalf of Slöjd have been made, it has already been taught in the elementary schools for fifteen years. At one time some attempt was made to give a technical training, no less than nine different trades being taught: carpentry, brush-making, smith's work, house-painting, turnery, coach-building, book-binding, tin-work, and basket-making. Surely here then, if anywhere, there should have been plenty of carpenters, smiths, and so on. But if we look at the result of the experiment, what do we find? That the attempt has lately been abandoned, and that the committee entrusted with the organisation of Slöjd in the schools says in reference to it: "As to the supposed advantage of teaching different trades as a preparation for future employment, the committee wish to add that in very few cases has it really happened that boys have turned for a living to the branch of bodily work in which they had been trained at school."

Let the carpenter, then, fear nothing. On the other hand, it must surely be much easier to train to any particular trade an apprentice who in his childhood has been taught to use his eyes well and to make his hand, that most wonderful and valuable tool,

the ready and dexterous servant of his will. And it is even an advantage for the mechanic that children who have *not* afterwards to work with their hands for a living should be taught Slöjd in school, for, knowing something of the time and care required for good hand-work, they will not be so likely as customers to have exaggerated notions of what they ought to get for their money.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RAPID SPREAD OF SLÖJD IN LATE YEARS.

As I have already mentioned and partly shown, the importance of bodily work as a means of education has been long acknowledged and insisted upon, but it is only in our own time that any serious attempt has been made to give practical effect to the belief. To-day earnest efforts are being made in many places, and educational bodily work is, as it were, starting on a triumphal march through the civilised world.

I should like to describe at length how the life-idea of the veteran Finnish educationalist, Uno Cygnæus, has been energetically and earnestly revived by Director Salomon at Nääs, and how he has devoted *his* life to it; I should like to show how educational Slöjd has already made its way into Denmark, Norway, Germany, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Russia, Italy, Spain, Algiers, and the United States. But space fails me, and I can only mention a few facts.

From Nääs—to-day of world-wide fame—

where, thanks to Herr August Abrahamson's unbounded generosity and Director Salomon's admirable energy, Slöjd has been actively practised for fifteen years, no less than a thousand Slöjd-teachers have been sent to Sweden, Finland, and many other countries. Moreover, the crowd of those going there to learn is still yearly increasing.

In France, Belgium, and Finland, hand-work has been made obligatory in all training colleges and national schools. In Germany still more important steps have been taken, for not only has Slöjd been introduced into many of the training colleges, but a special training school for hand-work has been opened in Leipsic, under the direction of the before-mentioned Dr. Götze, similar in many respects to that at Nääs.

In 1884 Slöjd was introduced into no less than 869 national schools in Hungary. In New Orleans nearly £10,000 have been spent upon a Slöjd-school, to be connected with the high schools of the town. In Norway, too, great sums are annually spent in supporting Slöjd-schools and training Slöjd-teachers.

But it is, perhaps, in Denmark that Slöjd has been taken up most warmly, especially in the higher schools. A society has even been

founded, called "The Danish Slöjd Union," which is actively engaged in promoting the spread of educational Slöjd.*

How Slöjd has fared in its own country may be seen in the public prints. This time it is the national school that has had the honour of showing the way. Slöjd has been taught in the elementary schools of Stockholm and Gothenburg for fifteen years. In 1886 there were 1,472 boys learning in Stockholm and 1,950 in Gothenburg.

The movement has affected not only town schools, but country schools, in most of which Slöjd is now taught. Ministers have also given much attention to the subject, and the Senate has granted a subsidy for the encouragement of this new and valuable means of education. Some of the local authorities have also supplied funds. Another important fact is that Slöjd has been introduced into three of the principal training colleges.

But the higher schools stand in need of the blessings of Slöjd no less than the elementary schools. The question was discussed from

* There now exists an "English Slöjd Union," formed with the same object, the Hon. Sec. of which, Miss M. Ward, High School, York, will be glad to answer any inquiries.—[TRANSLATOR.]

many points of view at a congress of secondary teachers in 1887, with the result that resolutions were passed in favour of its introduction. A small beginning has already been made by some of the higher schools in Stockholm and other large towns, and it is to be hoped that before very long many others will be found to follow their example.

Slöjd is not simply a fashion of the moment, is no mere chimera. Founded upon sound principles, it cannot but endure; and the more men see of its working, the more will they be convinced of its high educational value.

Mr. Berg, the head of the science school at Fredriksborg, in Denmark, where Slöjd has been introduced, writes: "I have seen that the introduction of Slöjd, as a school subject, into the higher schools has had an important effect upon their development. I have, moreover, seen nothing but real advantages result from its introduction, and no disadvantages whatsoever."

In some girls' schools, too, Slöjd is now introduced. Some people, perhaps, will be astonished at this; but has not a girl, in many respects, the same nature as a boy? And is it not a pleasant change of occupation for her to occasionally use some other tools than

her needles, and make something else with her hands than an infinite number of more or less similar stitches?

Again, if you consider what I have said about Slöjd for children, you will see that it is almost equally advantageous for grown-up people engaged in intellectual or sedentary pursuits. It satisfies the need for activity; it exercises the body while it rests the brain, thus counteracting the evil effects of intellectual work; it gives general handiness; it inspires respect for rough labour; it encourages observation and exactness, and, if I do not deceive myself, has the same good moral effect that it has on children.

The Universities of Lund and Upsala have each done their best to promote the study of Slöjd. Lund has five large Slöjd-rooms of its own, furnished at its own cost, and Upsala has for years supplied gratuitous instruction to poor students.

A word in conclusion. I have not said, nor do I think, that Slöjd is a remedy for every evil, a means for regenerating society. But what I wish to urge, and what I do most fully believe, is that it is an extremely valuable means of education that we shall do well not to neglect.

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