States Of Learning

Kay Smith

I SCHOOL IN VIRGINIA

School is a very important factor in a person's life. There are innumerable public schools all over America; each there for the same purpose. It is interesting to note that each state has an almost entirely different curriculum. The schools in Virginia stress culture. It is put far above the three "R's". The particular school I have in mind is the Jeb Stuart Grade School in Richmond. This two story building surrounded by spacious grounds in a clean residential section makes a pleasant place to start to school. Life in a Virginia grade school is leisurely. To be sure, one learns the fundamental things, but learning to live nicely with other people is the more outstanding feature of Southern schools. To do this, games of all types are played. Children are taught to spell and to do arithmetic by games. This teaches them to be unselfish.

A child is taught first of all politeness. He must at all times remember to say "Mam" and "Sir." Secondly he is taught about other countries, their customs, manners, and cultural aspects. The children then make little scenes representing the various countries they are studying. This gives them constructive and artistic training. Responsibility is taught through the organization of each class. Officers and committees are chosen for each class from the kindergarten on up. Punishment isn't severe. For talking excessively or noisy conduct the child is asked to stand outside the door for a period of time. Every morning before lessons begins, the children are given a chance to get up in front of the class and tell of some incident that happened after school the day before. Flowers and animals are revered by the children of this school. Each class has a small plot of land where the children raise a number of flowers. Virginia has an early spring and a late fall. This leaves plenty of time for the cultivation of flowers. Just about every class has a pet like a bird or fish, and the children are taught how to care for them.

The historical background of Virginia and the South is always prominent. At least once a month classes make trips to museums, art galleries, and historical homes and places. Southern statesmen and military leaders are lauded at every turn. In fact, most schools are named after these famous Southern men. The Virginians are proud of their Old Dominion. They want their children to know the history. Hospitable, mild mannered people, they instill these traits in their children through the schools.

II SCHOOLS IN PENNSYLVANIA

A small town school in Pennsylvania doesn't represent the state system of education; it does present a contrast to schools of other states. The school I have in mind is a well disciplined grade school in a central Pennsylvania town. It is an attractive and friendly school where every day many little children get their fundamental schooling. The rudiments of mathematics and English grammar are stressed in this school more than any other subjects; although spelling, too, is important. When a child leaves for high school he has a good basic knowledge of these subjects. Children from
the first grade to the fourth stay in one room for the day's work; fifth and sixth grade pupils move from one room to another for their classes just as high school students do. The State of Pennsylvania furnishes pencils, paper, ink, and all books. The student needs to buy only a notebook binder. The hours of this school are from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Everyone is given an hour at noon for lunch.

Every Friday there is an auditorium program. Each week a different room is in charge. Everyone looks forward to and likes these programs. Many times the Junior Band, composed of fifth and sixth grade students, gives the program. This band is an important part of the school. The Mothers of the band have projects in order to earn money for the music and uniforms.

Once a year a hobby fair is given and children eagerly exhibit their collections and handiwork. This affair is always anticipated with enthusiasm. Other entertaining activities include annual parties on holidays such as Christmas, Valentine's day and Easter. The students make their own decorations for these parties and this is, many times, as much fun as the party itself.

The halls of the schools are where special work of children is exhibited. The school rooms also have drawings on the bulletin boards. Every room is a sunny, airy place with flowers in the windows and attractive pictures on the walls. Teachers are agreeable and children are fond of them. Good behavior is maintained at all times. All in all this is a very enjoyable school.

III SCHOOL IN NEW YORK CITY

A New York grade school is a gloomy, brick building set in between numerous other hard, cold, unfriendly buildings. P. S. 182, Manhattan, is an excellent example of this description. It is a four story building situated in the middle of the block of 146th Street right off Broadway. The building looks more like an office than a school. It extends from 145th Street to 148th Street. The first floor is a rather dark place. There are no offices or class rooms on this floor. This is where the children line up to go to their class rooms. The boys enter from the door of one street and the girls from the entrance of the other street. If one is unfortunate to have classes on the fourth floor, there are three long flights of steps to climb each day.

One finds all creeds, sects, nationalities, and colors represented in each class. In order to maintain order the teacher rules with an iron hand. In every subject, discussion, or auditorium Americanism is stressed. In English the patriotic speeches, poems, and essays are dwelt on. One learns the ordinary things which are taught in every other school. Girls are taught cooking, and sewing; boys are given training in shop. An unusual thing is to find all colors and races of teachers teaching in the same school. New York, I imagine, would be the only place in America where you would find such a system. Since Columbia University is in New York and they prepare many I. Q. tests, New York children are given these tests before they send them out to other schools. Never a week goes by without one of these tests.

Although the surroundings of this school aren't as cheerful as those other schools and the playground is a dark city one with no grass or trees, the New York City children have many places for pleasure. Every week, or at least every
other week, classes take trips to the numerous museums, historical sites, and other places of interest there. A class may be seen boarding a subway train or a double-decker bus, which is itself a pleasure, going to the Museum of Natural History, the American Museum, Grant's Tomb, or the Aquarium. Every school has its pleasures and drawbacks, but going to school in New York City is a definite adventure which gives an unusual kind of education.

Peter Pan’s Paradise

CAROL FALL

The European Rooms in Miniature, by Mrs. James Ward Thorne, exhibited at John Herron Art Institute contain the depth of reality and the realm of fantasy. The realization that the objects in these rooms are perfect miniature replicas of exemplary period furnishings catches one’s imagination.

“Our Lady Queen of Angels” is an appropriate title for the enchanting model of a Roman style Catholic church. It is the largest and most awe-inspiring of the rooms. An atmosphere of peace and sanctity seems to be prevalent in this scene. Streams of light that pierce the stained glass windows and break into prisms of color, enshroud the altar and seem to say, “Quiet and peace reign here.”

The attitudes, the customs, and the history of a people are reflected by the interior decorating in this dwelling. The Great Hall of the late Tudor period with its romantic suits of armour and its robust furniture is a sharp contrast to the fanciful Italian Baraque and Callalitis of the Stuart period. One can easily tell by looking into these rooms the great effect that world events have upon architecture. The discovery of Pompeii brought the classical period to Europe in which the architecture of Ancient Greece reigned. The anteroom during the period of Napoleon’s empire was highly decorated with Egyptian motifs and color schemes. These rooms, in my estimation, hold the key to the revolt of the common and middle class people of Europe against the aristocracy. One can realize how indignant he would be to see such splendor amid dire poverty.

Being an ardent admirer of modernistic architecture, I liked the contemporary rooms most of all. These rooms seem to be made for comfort and beauty, not the artificial beauty of the straight high backed chair or the coldly formalized pillars and rigid design.

If I were Peter Pan or Tom Thumb, the modern English room is where I would like to stay. I would visit the modern French library or foyer and stroll into the garden beneath the sun, but I would always return to the English room. I like the soft lightning effect, the tiny crystal horses in the dining room, and the thick carpet in front of the fireplace. This room would be decorative, yet simple in comparison to most of the other types of rooms in this exhibition. Being tiny like Peter Pan would have its advantages for this English model is the most beautifully simple, “livable,” room I have ever seen.