

EDUCATION

Fagin Schools

By THOMAS MINEHAN

YOU remember in *Oliver Twist* how every morning Fagin used to place a pair of steel spectacles on his nose, tuck an umbrella under his arm, leave a kerchief sticking out of his pocket, and walk up and down the room in the manner of an old gentleman out for his daily stroll. The boys in Fagin's school were taught to pluck that kerchief out of his pocket without his noticing them, and the Artful Dodger acted as class leader or demonstration pupil. The boys were penalized for mistakes; they were rewarded for dexterous work. After sufficient practice they were able to whisk that kerchief out of Fagin's pocket from any angle, swiftly, silently, and unnoticed, and, after more practice, they were sent out on the streets where their subjects were real gentlemen from whom they were actually stealing. All of this, of course, was in the England of Dickens, nearly one hundred years ago.

Time and place change the outward appearance of things. Fagin is no longer a wizened old villain instructing homeless waifs in the niceties of petty thievery, but he still conducts his school in which he teaches the boys of this country the art of extracting the value of kerchiefs from near-sighted old gentlemen and kind-hearted housewives under pretenses that are every bit as reprehensible as outright stealing.

The modern Fagin is a well-dressed man with pep and personality. As often as not his seminar is conducted within the confines of the public schools, and always he secures the consent of the parents and the sanction and cooperation of the school authorities before beginning his work. His real purpose is disguised under a multitude of phrases about Character Building, Personal Development, Initiative, and Reliability. Usually he is a subscription agent for some publishing company although he does, occasionally, sell some other article. He does little soliciting himself, confining his efforts to obtaining the services of children to act as his agents.

He is the successor to the old time book agent who, a few years back, had his office next door to every college in the country. From there the agent sent out students every summer to harass the farmers and inveigle the housewives into subscribing for some book or magazine in order to help a poor boy work his way through college. Sometimes, in order to make the tale more appealing, the poor boy was also helping to support his widowed mother. Frequently, in rural districts, when the sob story began to be too familiar, these quondam book agents were taught to say that they were doing some work in connection with the state department of agriculture. While few students were able to earn their way through college by selling books or even make the wages of a day laborer, many a book agent who had never seen the inside of a college made a comfortable living, for the total volume of sales was high.

In time, however, people grew tired of helping students and the farmers learned that the state and federal departments of agriculture would furnish them all of the information they could use and furnish it free. Some new approach, obviously, was necessary. For a time, they worked the returned soldier appeal, but this did not last long.

From previous experience, the subscription men knew that any appeal coming from the schools or the school children would find the people particularly responsive, especially if that appeal were so disguised that it would appear that the school and the pupils were the chief beneficiaries. The agents began to canvass the schools and the parents for solicitors. They asked the parents not for subscriptions but for permission to hire their sons and daughters for a few hours each week, well knowing that the first prospect that the child would sign up would be Dad and the second, Aunt Mary. They did not suggest that the school teachers subscribe for the magazine; they asked for their cooperation in a deal that would mean money to the school's dramatic or athletic fund. Naturally, they got it.



Oliver amazed at the Dodger's mode of going to work. A Cruikshank drawing from Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist

The agents worked cleverly. Having secured the consent of the school authorities by promising the school a generous commission on all sales, they obtain the services of the children for nothing by making the getting of subscriptions a matter of loyalty and school spirit. The school is divided into teams and all of the tricks of mob psychology are practiced on the pupils. Sometimes different schools in the same town or in different towns are pitted against each other, and no man, woman or child in the community escapes a dozen solicitations. In the end, the school gets some money for its activities, the pupils on the winning team get a half holiday, the magazine gets a number of new subscribers, and the citizens of the community get another magazine which they did not want and will not read.

So far as the children are concerned, this system is relatively honest. That they are collecting money to help the agent and the publishing company far more than to help their school does not impeach their motives. They are doing it with the consent, at the urging even, of their teacher and principal, and there is where any blame should rest.

But school drives, at the best, can be conducted only once or twice a year; in order to make these drives successful they must not be staged too frequently. Some other method must be devised to keep subscriptions coming in every month of the year. To accomplish this it is necessary to hire the children and train them. Sometimes the sales manager holds a class; sometimes he gives individual instruction; often he conducts his instruction by mail. The agent's chief interest—in spite of all that he says about character building and teaching business principles—lies in securing new subscribers. And here it is that the Fagin schools come in. The agent carefully drills the children in that particular sales talk which he believes will "pull" the most subscriptions.

Every fall a well known magazine having a large circulation in rural communities conducts a campaign for subscribers using the public schools in small towns and consolidated districts. A publishing house that sells books exclusively by subscription and specializes in student labor teaches the boys and girls working for them to pretend that they are hired to collect specimens of weed seeds when approaching farmers and home remedies when approaching housewives. A map company that hires only boys of eighteen or under instructs the boys to say that they are conducting a survey for the state highway department to ascertain the sentiment in favor of paving a nearby road. Children soliciting for a popular-priced weekly are taught to say that they are giving away sample copies—and they

are, with an eighteen months' subscription to a magazine.

Seldom does the child, who can make a concrete appeal to a man or woman, go unanswered, and in the making of such appeals the children are carefully instructed by the subscription salesmen. Some of the most common appeals are: Father was injured in an accident and has not been able to work for more than a year; mother is sick; father is in the asylum; the money is needed for a pair of shoes; the money is needed to buy school books. Sometimes a five or six year old brother is brought along to stand in mute appeal while the older child does the talking. Often the children are instructed to solicit after dark or on cold stormy days. Usually, they pretend that they have only one or two more magazines which they must sell before they can go home. The agent who hires and trains these children teaches them to tell such tales for his own profit. Children fall easily into this kind of work, and, after a very short time, they are almost as skillful as the Artful Dodger and his classmates became in their old-fashioned technique. So well have they learned their lessons in the modern Fagin school that they probably make more in a day than the Artful Dodger and his followers made in a week. And they run no risk.

They run no risk so far as the law is concerned, but they do run a risk when their future development is taken into consideration; for the benefits which they receive from this form of training are, to say the best, questionable. They are taught how boldness and lying may be used for financial gain. They are shown how the unscrupulous may take advantage of some of the better phases of human nature.

The real Fagin, the man who actually trained pick-pockets and thieves, was in reality engaged in work only a little more reprehensible than the men who are training children to lie and dissimulate in order to make money. Those trained definitely in crime may, sooner or later, come under the attention of the law and either be reformed or placed where they can do no further damage. Those trained in dishonest but not illegal practices will not be corrected until too late. They will grow up having a cynical disregard for the principles upon which all true character is founded, and the work that was supposed to help them succeed in life will, in the final analysis, cause them to fail; for business men in business dealing will not be as sentimental, as easily fooled as householders are by children who have been trained to fool them. Too late, these children will learn that the easiest way of making money is often the hardest, and that Fagin schools are the worst possible preparation for the real work of life.

Must Teachers Be Automaton?

By JANE GRAY

IN my state one must have a college degree with eighteen semester hours of professional studies in order to receive an "A" grade teacher's certificate. My own high school certificate carries credit for twenty-four hours in professional work. Nevertheless, I found that I was most inadequately prepared to teach as I believed one should teach.

My last work was in a rural consolidated school housed in a handsome new brick building. The principal was affable when we first talked together. He believed, he said, that the main purpose of the school was to strengthen

character. He did not want teachers who spent the majority of their nights in social pleasures when they should be preparing the next day's lessons. He explained to me that he had left his last position because the county superintendent allowed him no chance to exercise initiative.

In the schoolroom I found that my high school boys and girls possessed the usual attitude toward their teacher. They expected her to be a "hard boiled sister," to use their own phrase. The girls were rather mature and, on the whole, given to strong loyalties to the teacher. To the more active boys the teacher inhabited one world, they another.

If she was "hard boiled" they enjoyed their martyrdom and "got by" with what they could; if she wasn't, they did their best to plague her.

A good teacher must, of course, be a good disciplinarian. Still the problem seemed very grave to me. If the old, unyielding, do-as-I-say-and-do-it-quick teachers were "good" disciplinarians then why was it that the boys and girls subjected to them in the elementary school failed utterly to develop a sense of unity with the purpose of the school, and sufficient self-control and responsibility to make it unnecessary for their teacher to be an ever-vigilant policeman over them? It violated every ideal I had of the meaning of education and the relation of a teacher to her pupils to go in and snarl "Shut up!" as I once heard my principal do.

None of my studies at college had given me a technique for converting irresponsible boys, hostilely dependent on authority, into self-disciplined, socially responsible young adults. I had to experiment. We reasoned together and sought to find and eliminate the causes of their difficulties and misbehavior. I made mistakes and they took advantage of me, but we became friends. They were not afraid to express their thoughts freely about personal or impersonal matters. I came to know them as they really were. And the better I realized their actual needs for spiritual and material development the more impotent I felt.

They and I had several severe conflicts with the principal. Often I had to side with them. Once a twenty-year-old boy lost his temper when a small boy tried to trip him. He kicked at the offender, missed him and broke a hole in the wall. Quite sobered, he came immediately to me, apologized and offered to pay for the damage. The principal insisted that payment was nothing—the boy must be severely punished. The boy was sensitive and highly emotional. I could not consent to a punishment which would spoil his attitude for the whole year.

One day the principal kept study hall for me for two hours. When I returned a little thirteen-year-old boy whose life was one long wriggle came and leaned over my desk.

"Miss Gray," he drawled, "I'm so tired I don't know what to do. Mr. ——— made me sit still all the time you were gone."

This child's older brother was the most difficult pupil in the room. He was very sullen, suffered from an inferiority

complex and was obviously under par physically. The principal warned me, "You will offend his father if you ask him to take his son to a doctor or consult the county physician about the boy yourself."

But the conflict was not one-sided. There were a few cases of pure mischief in which I needed the principal's cooperation. Then I found myself unable to secure his help.

About the end of the school year the principal announced that no child who did not average "C" in "deportment" would be promoted without condition. Several of the boys were exceedingly upset and secured permission from their parents to stop school because they could not pass. Inasmuch as there had been no statement about the influence of conduct grades, I had to tell the children that the rule could not be put into effect. The boys were appreciative enough to cooperate better after that.

The matter of grading in general was a serious problem. I tried to grade objectively, using frequent and scientifically constructed tests. My principal became very impatient because I would not grade every response made in class which, from my viewpoint, would have been unjust as well as depressingly mechanical.

But our most serious disagreement was over the question of recreation. He demanded that I choose between being marooned in a country house with only my own books and the radio for stimulation or keeping strictly to the home-coming hour of eleven p. m. I did not go out on a school night more than a half dozen times during the year except at his request to see ancient, misty "educational films." The only opportunities for recreation in the community were old-fashioned parties or the fascinating square dance. These entertainments never broke up by eleven o'clock. The principal made no objection if he saw my light burning across the hall from him until two o'clock when I sometimes sat up as late as that correcting papers. However, the first time I came in after eleven he said in a "friendly" warning, "It is a reflection on a girl's morals to stay out after eleven at night. I will neither employ nor recommend a teacher who stays out after that hour."

I tried to teach boys and girls that freedom and tolerance do not mean either license or looseness.

"You consider school teaching a farce," the principal told me.

For the Students of Europe

By HENRY STRONG HUNTINGTON

LAST spring the German students in America held their first Festival in this country, devoted in good part to thanking us for our share in saving the intellectual life of Germany in the hard days after the War. The invitation to the festival especially referred to two benefits from America: the idea of self help, and the sense of international fellowship.

These new blessings came as no accidents. The university youth of Germany and of virtually all central and eastern Europe owe them to an organization as far-sighted as it was generous-hearted, but an organization whose name is scarcely known in America outside the colleges.

In 1920 John Mott sent Conrad Hoffmann, Jr., then secretary of the Kansas University Y.M.C.A., to see how

the students were getting along in Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Poland and the Baltic States.

What he found may be judged by the report of conditions in Vienna, made by Ruth Rouse about the same time: "Despair, suicide, one meal a day or less, no underclothing, sleeping in restaurants or lavatories, all these things the commonplace life among fifteen thousand men and women; and over it all, hanging like a pall, the feeling that nobody cared."

The World Christian Student Federation promptly organized a special committee to cope with the situation, under the name of European Student Relief. It immediately set about establishing hostels and cafeterias where by cooperative management it cut down the cost of living to

a minimum. The young people of America and Europe, with help also from the American Relief Administration and Rockefeller funds, provided not only the money for the work but also a great deal of volunteer service. In the first two years of its work the organization supplied more than twenty-five million meals. In six years it aided more than two hundred thousand young men and women, at a cost of nearly two and a half million dollars.

But more important than its temporary relief work, it taught the young men and women the art of making their own way. No students have taken that lesson more to heart than the Germans. In Europe before the War, university tradition forbade the students to do any manual labor. But in 1920 the *débâcle* of the mark left the German university men a choice of begging, stealing, working or starving. That year two out of every five undergraduates in Berlin were earning wages as waiters, conductors, printers, builders, coal heavers, night watchmen or unskilled laborers. The next year, through the counsel of the Student Relief organization, the German students and the trade unions got in touch with each other. In spite of the current unemployment the workers agreed to admit twenty thousand students into the trades, with the single condition that a student should not replace a married man. In 1922 sixty thousand students, three quarters of the whole university student body, did summer work. Conditions in industry brought down the number to twenty-five thousand in 1925 and yet further in 1926.

The students' work has had important results. When last March at the national conference of the *Wirtschaftshilfe*, the student self-help organization, a professor protested against the new emphasis on manual labor by the students, two men answered him: the secretary of the German General Trades Union and Edmund Stinnes, son of the famous Hugo Stinnes: "What Germany needs," they both said, "is harmony with herself. The work of the students as mechanics and laborers is helping to bring about that harmony. It is bridging the gap between the two sections of society."

The *Wirtschaftshilfe* has secured the consent of our government to admit to America two hundred "worker students" who shall not be included in the German quota. Their presence here should help bring the two nations together industrially.

But more important than the worker students in bringing international understanding have been the student conferences held under the auspices of the Relief. Four years ago, when the French were in the Ruhr, the head of the German delegation could scarcely wait for the conference to open before he denounced the French occupation. But at

the end of the eight days' meeting, when the young people had had a chance to get acquainted, the leader of the French delegation could say, "We have seen here that on the other side of the great iron wall raised now between our nations, there are men and women like ourselves who try as we do to bring some happiness and fellowship into the world. Let us never forget that. We cannot rely upon the older people to bring in a better fellowship, but we young men and women can do it if we only dare. Let us dare!"

Thereupon the leader of the German group rose once more, this time with tears in his eyes. "On behalf of my fellow delegates," he began, "I want to thank the French students for the spirit they have shown in this conference." And then he "dared." He jumped down from the tribune, crowded through to the young French spokesman, and gave him his hand. It is hard to realize, safely isolated from the post-war hatred and bitterness among European nations, how much the incident meant, but to the audience who saw it, the boyish gesture was unforgettably beautiful and courageous.

At the last conference, held when the French franc was slipping down farther and farther day by day, the Germans brought in a resolution that the organization should stand ready to give relief if an emergency arose in France during the next academic year. When the call came last winter, the Germans telegraphed back the first pledge for the needed fund.

The story of European Student Relief gives one hope for better understanding between the nations in the coming generation.



Reading Girl.
Drawing by Emil Orlik

The School Goes to the Home

By MARIE J. CONCISTRE

ABOUT seven years ago, in the vicinity of Angelo Patri's school, our work of teaching English to the foreign-born women in New York City began. It was started under the state school authorities, but later the Education Committee for Non-English Speaking Women took it up. We organized English classes in the homes wherever we could get six or seven women together. The community is essentially Italian.

The question in the minds of many is, "Why the home classes when we have evening school and even day classes in schools or other public places?" Most foreign women have two, three, four, five, six children or more and it is not easy to leave them at home at night. In the day time, the children come home from school at all hours of the day for their meals. Consequently we say, "The school should go to the home."

For obvious reasons, teaching English to the foreign-born is important, but few people realize how much is bound up with it. For instance, the conflict between the younger generation and their parents is a vital problem; yet some very well-meaning persons would have the children of immigrants teach their parents English. Picture the situation: These children, who have a "superiority complex" developed to the nth degree are directed to "teach" their parents! Often the parents are not apt pupils. The result is bound to be an aggravation of a tragically difficult situation. Again, a leader in a so-called Americanization movement a few years ago said to a group of teachers: "You

must go into these foreign homes with the American flag and teach them to sing the Star Spangled Banner!" Such teaching may and usually does defeat its own ends.

The neighborhood English teacher aims at the adjustment of the foreign-born mother. With her sympathetic understanding she can do more to interpret America to the foreign-born mother than any other agency. The following are extracts from letters from some of these women, who express their needs and their appreciation in their own way:

My dear friend:

I am writing to show you the progress I made since I went to English school. . . . In a few months the whole class made a great progress. I hope that you will come to learn this beautiful language. It is necessary for us to write and read so that we will be happy.

Dear Teacher:

Slowly the school is closing and then I want to thank you for what you have done for my learning. I am very much obliged to you. I will never forget your kindness.

Really America is a beautiful and free country. He gives to us many opportunities and this among them: free education. And I love this country as I love my mother country, Italy.

Other things I would say to you but it is quite hard for me to do it.

Dear Miss

Yesterday Mrs. C. . . . called me up on the telephone and she told me that she came to see me Monday but did not find me home. I told her that I had to go to school. On hearing that she began to laugh. "You could have a much better time going to the show instead," she said. I answered: "I do not enjoy myself at the movies as I do in school. Our teacher is very friendly and patient and she teaches us very interestingly. Before I went to school it was very annoying to me when I could not understand my children speak English. I could not read letters or understand speeches. I did not enjoy myself in America. But now I am very glad and happy to know I can read the English papers, I can understand the people and know what is going on around me. This is true also on election day

when I go to the polls to vote. I can read the issues of the day with very little difficulty. And I vote according to my opinion. This makes me very proud."

Before I was through talking Mrs. C. . . . said, "You have almost persuaded me to join your class."

It is quite clear that these women want to become citizens and vote. They wish to understand their children, to mingle with Americans, to read American books. In other words, they wish to be part of American life. After five years of work in this community, we often meet our women going to the library with their children. At the closing exercises last June, Angelo Patri addressed a group of eighty women in English and from the expressions on their faces it was clear that they understood and enjoyed what he said.

The women who have attended our classes are anxious to extend the same opportunity to foreign-born women in other communities. They have given several entertainments to raise money to start such classes. This seems to us the clearest proof that our class members feel the need of what the community teacher gives them and appreciate the chance to learn to speak and read and write English and to become acquainted with American ways, in the midst of their toilsome days crowded with endless home duties.



PUBLIC SERVICE as a career for young Americans is the subject of the November issue of the always stimulating little Antioch Notes, written by President Arthur Morgan "as I might do in picturing to an Antioch student a possible career. . . ." (See The Survey, June 1, 1927, p. 259.) "I should not want to be simply a routine administrator, but should want a part in defining and executing public policies. If I had the native ability I should want in time to contribute to the theory and practice of government. My job should be my laboratory, as well as my day's work." From this approach, President Morgan considers the training necessary for such a career, including study, research and apprenticeship, and the possible line of progress in public service. The bulletin is valuable not only as a specific job analysis. Its simplicity, emphasis on essentials, and practical idealism make it a helpful model for other vocational studies.

AN EXPERIMENT in carrying over into the school year the plan of "education for the fun of it," worked out at the Oakland Summer School of Adult Education (see The Survey, October 15, page 87), is being undertaken by the school department of Sacramento, California, in cooperation with the State Department of Education. The first adventure in this field will be a lecture and discussion course, meeting weekly for fifteen sessions in the auditorium of a junior high school. The theme of the course is to be: Some vital problems of the United States in relation to the other English-speaking countries, with particular reference to Australia, Canada, South Africa and the Irish Free State. The class leader, Professor M. J. Bickley of the history department of the Sacramento Junior College, was educated in Australia with graduate study at the University of Sydney and has travelled widely in the Orient and in Europe. The announcement of the course states: "There are no credits or examinations and no textbooks, but outlines and reading references will be available for those who desire them. Each evening the first fifteen minutes will be given to discussion of some topic of current interest; this to be followed by the main subject. . . . The free expression of differing points of view will be encouraged."



Preparing for May Day. Cover drawing by Suzanne Cocq, from *The Labour Woman*, England

HEALTH

What Price Efficiency?

By HELEN J. MAYERS

DISPENSARY—9 a.m. and 1 p.m. daily—a long line, winding back and forth between iron rails—humans treading a Porteus maze with the same uncomprehending trials and errors of the original white rats—hundreds every morning, every noon: men and women of every race and color, some frightened, some complaining, some demanding, miserable, ailing in body or mind. At the desk, behind the wicket, the registrar—taking in quarters, doling out paste-boards, red, green, a color for every ill, a passport for every aching member.

For hours the line passes, to be interrogated and directed, and to every unfamiliar face is thrown the challenge: "Can't you pay a doctor?" For the most part there comes back a meek "no," until a less docile spirit, flaring at the suspicion implicit in the form and tone of the question, retorts in characteristic racial fashion with another query: "If I could pay a doctor, do you think I'd come for charity?" The offended authority snaps back: "Don't get so fresh! Answer me yes or no!"—and the shouting is on.

The crowd stares with dull interest. One or two, taking courage from the sentiment of the group, seize the opportunity to articulate a long suppressed resentment and join in the altercation. The hubbub grows general. A burly policeman thunders forth: "Stop that noise there!" and pushing a few stray bodies into line, rushes his impressive physique to the source of the disturbance to lend support to his fellow dignitary. Thus overwhelmed, the offended applicant with the inconvenient sense of personal dignity departs in a rage, and the registrar turns triumphantly to her supporter: "I know that fellow's got enough money, he's just the kind!"—and thus are the goats sorted from the sheep.

The glow of satisfaction is not for long permitted to suffuse the registrar's horizon. A paranoid woman waving a card from the mental hygiene clinic has slipped out of the dispensary routine and must be made to obey the involved rulings. Her repetitious queries and insistent demands grow more and more exasperating, until finally the registrar shouts: "Oh go on, you're crazy anyhow!"

Outside the door of the surgical clinic a small colored boy sits looking wistfully at his mother who is buttoning up his topcoat in bewilderment, tears streaming down her face. The other patients have been attended to and gone, the clinic secretary is locking the files. A stray person notices the mother's distraction and stops to enquire the cause. In disconnected sentences the terror is laid bare: this is the

third time she has brought her boy for a circumcision. The special doctor isn't here—she doesn't know when he will be. Two weeks ago a neighbor told her it must be done before the age of four—and to-morrow is her boy's birthday. If it isn't done—and all the old wives' tales of the tenement are poured forth. No person has given this woman any exact information, nor troubled to allay her superstitious fears.

A woman aiding her crippled daughter down the tedious steps comes at last to the pediatric clinic. The quota of patients for the day has been registered, she is told, she will have to come again, next week, at an earlier hour. Distress, exasperation, defeat show in her tired face. She has been upstairs an hour, not knowing where to go. She had enquired and had been told to wait—she waited until just a few moments ago. There are only she and her crippled girl—she works all day—to-day she has lost half a day's pay to take her daughter to the clinic—the child cannot get into a street car, she has had to take a taxi—it was costly,

but it would be worth it, to see the big doctor—now she must go through it all again—if only they had not told her to wait!

The occupational therapy class is alive with concern. Jimmy has a black eye! Jimmy is the pet of the fifth floor, an infant prodigy, a tribute to the patient understanding of the occupational therapy worker. Two years ago Jimmy had been completely negative, headed for a state hospital with the label "dementia praecox" affixed. Some subtle charm had attracted the worker, and she had begged to be allowed to have

him in her class. For over a year and a half he had been mute, often dangerous. Suddenly, some months ago, he had begun to speak, to take an interest in his appearance, to make friends with other patients, and he was now holding a simple job and looking forward to a summer at camp—still somewhat overactive at times, too playful and too readily excited, wavering on the edge of health and sanity. Today he had found the elevator empty and had run it down alone. The elevator boy had caught him, and the black eye was the result of the encounter.

A shrill imperious voice comes from the social service office across the hall: "No indeed, you can't put that kind of thing over on me. You've lied to us, you've got property, we know, we have ways of finding out. Don't think you can get away with anything like that here. No, leave me alone, I don't want to hear any more about it, don't let me see you in this office again!"

Although the incidents here related are drawn from a hospital, writes the author, the problem involved is one which confronts every social institution. When the term patient is used it will refer not only to the person seeking medical relief, but should be understood as the generic term for every type of client.