

EDUCATION

Early Training an Advantage But Maturity More Important

IT USED to be that children started to school at the age of six or even later. The introduction of the kindergarten pushed the entrance age forward another year. Now psychologists and educators are emphasizing the importance of the impressions received in very early childhood, and as a result of this influence babies are being placed in schools under the guidance of trained educators at the very tender age of two years.

Parents and psychologists are wondering just how great an advantage early training is to the child. Will the child who receives no special training until a later age learn faster when he gets it and catch up with the child who starts his training younger? Or will he learn more slowly for the delay?

Recent striking experiments with twin babies in New York showed that early training will allow an infant to qualify as an athlete while his untrained brother remains just a baby, incapable of any extraordinary feats of prowess.

But encouragement for the child lacking in opportunities for early training comes from another experiment with

twins conducted by Dr. Josephine R. Hilgard, at the Clinic of Child Development, Yale University.

These Yale twins were four-and-a-half years old and so much alike that each one upon looking unexpected into a mirror mistook the image for her sister. Each one was given eight weeks of practice on skills dear to the hearts of childhood, such as cutting with scissors, tossing rings, walking on a narrow walking-board, and memory of toys, but what one learned the other did not "study." After three months each received eight weeks of practice on the skills practiced earlier by her sister.

In general, the later practice period resulted in the greater improvement. Nevertheless, after six months had elapsed, both had forgotten their skills to the same level.

It would seem, that while training gives a great advantage to a child, small differences in age at which that training is given become unimportant when compared with the changes effected by the passage of time.

Science News Letter, April 14, 1934

ANTHROPOLOGY

"Go East," Slogan of First Great American Migration

"GO EAST!" This was the slogan, whether expressed in exact words or not, of the real pioneers and discoverers of America.

David I. Bushnell, Jr., collaborator of the Bureau of American Ethnology, at Washington, D. C., has been mapping migrations of the first people who settled the land east of the Mississippi—the Indians. He reports the conclusion that America was first populated from the West eastward, just the reverse of the famous "Go West" drive of European colonists when they began to open up lands they had not yet explored.

Mr. Bushnell's study of great Indian tribal migrations east of the Mississippi is the first attempt to plot these prehistoric migrations as a whole. His maps, representing many years of work,

practically open up a new chapter in American history.

The Algonquians, the first Indians the English settlers met were migrants from Northwest, Mr. Bushnell states. They had, he says, probably "skirted the shores of the Great Lakes before reaching the country farther south."

The Algonquians were on a great southward trek when their progress was stopped by a wave of Siouan peoples moving from the Southwest. These forced the Algonquians eastward and northward to about the locations where the English explorers found them.

Except for these Algonquians, Mr. Bushnell believes, all the eastern Indians were southerners, who came originally from the Southwest.

Science News Letter, April 14, 1934



DENTIST'S THIRD HAND

A small mouthlamp that can be boiled and disinfected has been introduced in Germany. It is not necessary for the dentist to hold the lamp, and its mobility and flexibility enable it to follow a patient's moving head.

SOCIOLOGY

Exclusion of Subnormal Immigrants Suggested

MENTAL tests for immigrants desiring to come to the United States, and admission only of those who are normal mentally, was urged before the New York Branch of the American Psychological Association by Dr. Clairette P. Armstrong, psychologist of the Court of Domestic Relations, New York City.

Problem children appearing in the Children's Court, in the Parental School for chronic truants, as wards of the Department of Public Welfare, in the ungraded classes of the public schools and as mental defectives in the Children's Hospital, Randall's Island, in New York City, are largely mentally subnormal children born of parents one or both of whom had low mentality, Dr. Armstrong's report revealed.

An entirely disproportionate percentage of these "deviate" children are of foreign parentage. Only about a third are of American-born parents.

The barring of such mentally inferior persons would be a humane action, Dr. Armstrong pointed out, because it is so very difficult for such persons, even those who are only dull normal or borderline in intelligence, to adjust to the complications of life in the United States.

Science News Letter, April 14, 1934