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AUGUST ABRAHAMSON
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— GÖTEBORG 1904 —
WALD. ZACHRISSONS
BOKTRYCKERI A.-B.



DURING the last few years of the period 1860—70 and the beginning of the succeeding decade, there arose in Sweden a movement which, having at first a purely political-economical character, was finally transformed into a pedagogic question. In the countries of the North, the light nights of the short summers are soon succeeded by long, dark winter

evenings. The agricultural population cannot then work in the fields and meadows but, in accordance with the custom of their forefathers, these people are obliged at such times to find employment within the four walls of their cottages. Here, in olden times, the members of each family — and amongst this number the servants were also included — gathered readily around the stone-hearth, upon which a warm, bright fire of large logs blazed merrily and, to the strains of a ballad or a hymn, or while listening to one of the many northern legends of giants and hobgoblins, of brave champions and fair maidens, each one's fingers were busied with some suitable occupation. The men, for example, made rake-pegs, axe-helves, spoons, ladles, benches, tables and other articles necessary for farm-work or the home, often ornamenting each object

with simple and tasteful designs, while the women tended the spinning-wheel and the loom, or stitched some article of dress intended for their own use or that of the men. Such work, executed with simple aids by persons not belonging to any guild, has in Sweden for long ages gone by the name of *sloyd* (Swed. *slöjd*).



Original Sloyd

But in consequence of many co-operating causes, this skill in *sloyd* had by degrees begun to diminish and, in some places, even to die out and disappear. Much of the work which in former ages had been executed in the homes of the peasantry was now taken up by the rising manufacturing industries, and the improved communications—railroads, canals, etc. rendered it considerably easier for the country population to procure those articles which they had previously been obliged to make with their own hands. Such cultural progress, however, always unavoidably bears with it certain disadvantages and dangers. It is certainly true that, when work within the family is changed to work inside a factory, and when handicrafts are transformed into machinery work, a certain saving of time can be reckoned upon, but time saved becomes time *gained* first when it is profitably employed. If, on the contrary, this be not the case; if the hour which was before devoted to productive activity is now spent in idleness or, what is most surely worse, in drunkenness and other wrong-doing, then the hour saved becomes an hour *lost*, and that not only from a moral, but also from

a political-economical point of view. People came to an insight of this in Sweden some 35 years ago, and it was the reason that they tried to take such measures as should reinstate the sloyd of their forefathers in the honorable position which is its proper due.

* * *

Whether it be a question of spreading any new knowledge, any new kind of work, or of reviving that which is on the verge of extinction, we can, as is well known, go to work for the most part in two different ways. We can endeavor to influence either that part of the population which is already come to adult age, or that part which is still growing up; to influence either the generation that *is*, or the generation that *will be*. Thence comes, on the one hand, the forming of associations, the giving of lectures, the arrangement of courses and, on the other, the founding of schools for children, where they shall enjoy an education so ordered that it endeavors to prevent the deficiencies of the present day from becoming those of the future also. This latter method will, probably, prove to be the surest one on the whole; for the mind of the child is, as we know, always more receptive than that of the mature man, and a foundation should, therefore, be laid at an early date for each branch



The first sloyd school at Nääs

of knowledge. As surely as the future belongs to the rising generation, so surely should each religious, political, social and economical question be finally solved

as a question of education. Good schools, therefore, are the best gift a preceding period can give to a future.

* * *

Amongst the "sloyd-schools" thus established during the period we have mentioned, that at Nääs was one of the earliest. Nääs is an estate situated in the government-district of Elfsborg, about 18 miles from Gothenburg. This old property, the main-building of which is said by tradition to have served as a royal huntingseat during the 15th century, was 35 years ago in the possession of *August Abrahamson*, who had retired to the place in order to enjoy the fruits of an industrious life. Abrahamson, who was born December 29th, 1817, at Karlskrona in the south of Sweden, came to Gothenburg at the age of 14, and in 1840 founded an import



Vänhem

firm which gradually became one of the largest of its kind in Sweden. After having amassed a fortune, a somewhat considerable one from a Swedish point of view, he relinquished the business to others in 1868 and took up his residence at Nääs. Here, assisted by his nephew, the present administrator and director of the Institution, he established in 1872 the *Nääs sloyd-school for boys*, which

commenced its work in the early days of February of the year mentioned, with 16 pupils. Two years later a similar educational institution was opened for girls.

The Nääs Sloyd-school for boys had, at first, to labor in what was almost unbroken ground; both as regards the aim of the instruction and its means. It is therefore self-evident that during the first few years it was necessary to confine the attempts made to mere gropings after right methods. It is seldom in this world that a Minerva springs fully grown and fully armed from the brain of Jupiter. But certain it is, however, that by degrees the fundamental principles of the work assumed a more definite form, and that these groping attempts became a well planned and organized process. The seeds, the beginnings, of what is now called the *Nääs-system* and the *Nääs-method*, have indisputably existed from a comparatively early period, though several years were necessary ere they reached their present development. We shall therefore give some further account of them in the following pages.

* * *

As we have previously mentioned, the *sloyd-instruction movement* on its first appearance was one having political-economical ends as its chief aim. But it was not to remain so long. For, almost at the same time that those who were striving for the revival of sloyd came to see that it was the child in its schoolage that they should endeavor to influence, the friends of an improved system of popular education began to have their eyes opened to the fact that sloyd was an educational means of the greatest value, well worth incorporating with the theoretical and practical subjects of instruction already adopted. The desire of the friends of sloyd



to gain the assistance of the popular schools was thus met half-way by the endeavors of the elementary schools to obtain some advantage from the use of sloyd. Resigned to, and received by the schools, the sloyd question remained no longer a political-economical, but rather a *pedagogical one*, and one of ever increasing scope. The attempt to use the school in order to train sloyders was changed to the endeavor to use sloyd in order to educate future men and women. The school in the service of sloyd was changed to sloyd in the service of the school. But this thought was by no means new. The history of pedagogy can show that, for centuries back, almost every pedagogue who stood a head higher than the multitude, endeavored to maintain the importance of bodily labor as a mighty means of education. Comenius, Francke, Locke, Rousseau, Basedow, Salzmann, Pestalozzi, Fröbel, are as we know, stars of the first magnitude in the art of education and all of them have, though may be in different ways and from somewhat varying points of view, given expression to the opinion that the training of the hand should proceed simultaneously with that of the head and the heart. But, as is well known, it was first in our own times that this thought has been understood and realized to any very great extent.

* * *



In the first school at Nääs — the building was opened in the summer of 1872—instruction was at first given 10 hours daily for a total of 50 weeks in the year. Of these 10 hours, 7 were devoted to sloyd and the other 3 to mathematics and geometrical drawing. This continued as long as the educational establishment served more as a higher grade-school for the boys who had already completed the courses at the elementary school. But the necessity of lowering the limit of age for entrance to the sloyd-school and the consequent changes in the scheme of instruction there, arose in the same degree that an insight was gained that instruction in sloyd, conceived and arranged on pedagogic grounds, should be fundamental in its work and should not intrude upon the domain of special education. The change was made in 1874, and the subjects of instruction became those fixed for the Swedish elementary school—Christian doctrine, history and geography, arithmetic and geometry, the Swedish language, natural science and writing—and, in addition, geometrical drawing and sloyd: carpentry, turning and wood-carving. In addition to this school for boys, August Abrahamson established one for girls in 1874 and a trade school in 1877. But all these schools have, however, since been closed, in order that the pedagogic activity at Nääs should

be the better concentrated at a single educational institution—the present Normal School for teachers of Sloyd.

* * *

The necessity of special teachers, trained for the purpose of giving instruction in sloyd, made itself felt in the same degree as sloyd schools were established, or as this instruction was introduced as a subject in the elementary schools.

For this reason, a higher division was formed at the Nääs sloyd-school for boys in the autumn of 1874, the object of which, according to what was then stated, should be “to instruct and to train young men who were



Seminarium

suitable to be employed as teachers, either in independent sloyd-schools, or in such as were attached to elementary schools.” It is from this higher division of the Nääs sloyd-school that the present *Nääs Slöjdlärare Seminarium* has gradually been developed. To gain admittance to this educational establishment—long the only one, as it was the first of its kind—the applicants should have reached the age of 18, have some previous acquaintance with sloyd, especially carpentry, should be in possession of knowledge equal to that enjoyed by those who had completed their education at the elementary schools, should not be afflicted by any such bodily deformity as could render him unsuitable for employment as a teacher, and should have certificates of good character. During

the course, which lasted one year, instruction was given in mathematics, natural science, pedagogics and school-method, drawing and sloyd; this latter branch of instruction comprising carpentry, turning, wood-carving and smithery. Other subjects were afterwards added—the Swedish language and the principles of physics and mechanics. The last of these one-year courses ended in April 1882: 62 sloydteachers had by that date received certificates of competency.



Sloydroom

* * *

Beginning with the year 1882 the Nääs Seminarium for teachers of sloyd entered upon an entirely new stage by the concentration of its activity upon shorter courses intended for

teachers of both sexes, already engaged in the work of instruction. Such teachers' courses in *geometrical drawing* had already been arranged at Nääs as early as 1874: in 1878 these were changed to *courses in sloyd* which, at first, were each of 5 weeks duration. As we have already mentioned, the movement for instruction in sloyd had been transformed from a political-economical question to a pedagogic one, and the special teacher of sloyd, the professional teacher, had thereby been obliged to make way for the pedagogically trained elementary teacher, the class teacher. When the plan of the new arrangement at Nääs was made, the original intention was to have eight courses annually, each course being for 15 students. By this means 120 teachers could be trained annually. But the insight was soon

gained that such a number of courses as eight could not be advantageously arranged, for then several of them must be held at a time when teachers in active service could only with great difficulty be absent from their schools. The number of courses given annually was, therefore, limited in 1883 to six, in 1884 to five and, finally, in 1886 to four, two of them being summer courses and two being held in the winter. At this number the courses for the present remain. For special reasons, only 3 courses have been given during each of the years 1898, 1899, 1901 and 1903. The extension of the length of the courses from 5 weeks to 6, dates its beginning from 1884. A further extension of time would be certainly very desirable, but is rendered impossible by the great difficulty the teachers would have, in being away from home and school for a longer period even should they themselves desire it, a state of things which is by no means always the case. When possible, the students in the first course of the year have, however, been permitted to remain from two to three or four weeks longer. Up to Course 13, July 19th—August 23, 1882, the courses had included only men-students, but since the beginning of that course the institution has admitted women-students too. From 1882 to 1889 the courses were for mixed classes on principle; but in 1889 the change was made that only women-students were admitted to one of the winter courses, while to the other only men-students were accepted, an arrangement which, it is true, proved to be advantageous but which it has since been found better to give up.

* * *

The following table shows the number of students at the sloyd-courses held at the Seminary during the

years 1875—1903. The apparent decline in numbers during the years 1898, 1899 and 1901 has clearly its chiefest reason in the fact that in each of these years there were but three courses held instead of four.

Another reason why the number of students in the sloyd-courses has diminished is, that, since the establishment of courses in games, gardening, school-kitchen work, the preserving of fruit and in needlework, there has been a demand upon the total number of beds available, for the participants in these courses too.

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| Year 1875 | 4 | Year 1890 | 276 |
| " 1876 | 9 | " 1891 | 276 |
| " 1877 | 11 | " 1892 | 283 |
| " 1878 | 14 | " 1893 | 281 |
| " 1879 | 19 | " 1894 | 268 |
| " 1880 | 27 | " 1895 | 290 |
| " 1881 | 29 | " 1896 | 271 |
| " 1882 | 102 | " 1897 | 272 |
| " 1883 | 114 | " 1898 | 236 |
| " 1884 | 114 | " 1899 | 227 |
| " 1885 | 149 | " 1900 | 266 |
| " 1886 | 158 | " 1901 | 236 |
| " 1887 | 219 | " 1902 | 250 |
| " 1888 | 249 | " 1903 | 259 |
| " 1889 | 277 | | |

It is true that an addition of these figures gives a total of 5186, but as a good many students have taken part in two or more courses, and should thus rightly be counted only *once*, the actual number of individual students who have taken part in these sloyd-courses up to the end of 1903 amounts to 3,909.

* * *

But these male and female teachers who go through the courses do not, however, come entirely from Sweden or even from Scandinavia. For as early as the close of the "seventies" attention had been drawn in other countries to this peculiar educational establishment in a country district of Sweden.



Group of nations

And not only have a comparatively large number of foreign teachers of both sexes taken part in these courses upon their own initiative, but various governments have also sent commissioners, or private competent persons to Nääs in order to study the organization of and system of teaching at the establishment. Such students came from Germany in 1880, France in 1882, Belgium in 1883, Russia in 1884, Italy in 1887, the Argentine and Chili in 1889, Uruguay in 1890, Brazil in 1891, Croatia in 1892, Roumania and the Orange Free States in 1893, Hungary in 1894,

Bulgaria in 1895, Ireland in 1897, Serbia in 1898, and Egypt and Greece in 1901. The 3,909 students at the courses represent 35 different countries.



* * *

The instruction at which attendance is compulsory given during the courses is partly theoretical, partly practical.



Gymnastic Exercises

While the former includes lectures and discussions, the latter is chiefly represented by *sloyd*, *drawing* and *gymnastics*. Let us first give some details concerning the theoretical instruction. This consisted at first of merely some

few pedagogical lectures, having as their object to make clear to the student the aim and means of instruction in *sloyd*; but from the beginning of the year 1881 regular series of lectures were included in the programme of studies. During the years 1881—1883 only *one* such series was held, but in 1883 the change was made that the lectures were divided into two parallel series, one *systematic* and one *historic*. Of these, the former treated of the pedagogics and method of instruction in *sloyd*; the latter dealt with its history and also with scenes from the history of the art of general education, having special reference to those pedagogues who had endeavored to accentuate the importance of bodily labor for the education of youth. This plan was continued until 1887, when the purely *methodic* division was separated from the systematic lectures, thus giving rise to three series. Since then, a partial union has again taken place and the theoretical instruction during different courses has been more concentrated, now upon one branch, now upon another, of that widely extensive subject "*the pedagogics of sloyd*". Thus there are

included fragments of general pedagogics and method, of psychology, hygiene, esthetics, of the history of the art of education, of the technology of tools, and of aught else that stands in direct connection with a right understanding and a correct ordering of the instruction in sloyd given for the purpose of education.



Lecture in the open air

In addition to these lectures on the pedagogics of sloyd, lectures are also given on general pedagogic subjects but are given in Swedish only.

The form in which the lectures are given also varies, sometimes the lecturer alone speaking and on other occasions a kind of Socratic method being employed in the shape of a conversation between the lecturer and his hearers. The latter are expected to take notes which can afterwards be used as the basis of a written summary of the lesson. As a rule, the lectures are given by the Director and, during the summer, this not only in Swedish but also in English and German. Included in the theoretical instruction are also discussions of the opinions expressed during the lectures, and on the forms and practical utility of the models. When the weather permits, the theoretical part of the course is held out of doors. Under all circumstances the lectures are interrupted on suitable occasions for the singing of some song or other, an arrangement which has proved to be singularly effective.

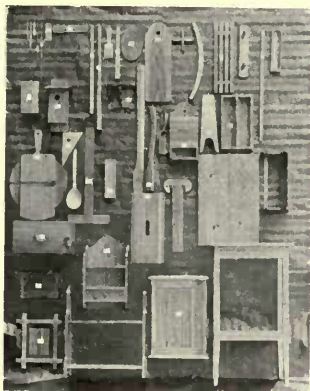
* * *

The work in the sloyd-rooms forms a whole with the theoretical instruction. Although this work has a greater number of hours devoted to it than have the lectures and discussions, still, the execution of the models is not to be regarded as the essential part of the course but more as an elucidation of the method. The teachers taking part in the courses obtain too, it is true, the series of models which are intended to be used as material for instruction in the schools. And, of course, a certain dexterity in the handling of tools and in the execution of work is also acquired, although in such a comparatively short time as six or twelve weeks any real skill in sloyd in the actual meaning of the word can scarcely be aimed at. What can be gained during that time in a technical respect is, at the most, some prospect of being afterwards able to acquire — either alone or under the direction of another — the skill necessary for giving instruction in sloyd.

The work in the sloyd-rooms, of which there are four, is carried on under the direction of the head-teacher in sloyd at the school. The direct instruction is given by assistant sloyd-teachers who are appointed for each course. The fact that the assistant teachers are not permanently appointed, facilitates in no small degree the efforts which have uninterruptedly been made to prevent, as far as possible, the instruction from becoming one of routine. For educational instruction is, of a certainty, exposed to no greater danger. As matters have developed themselves, the Seminary has always had the opportunity of choosing suitable men and women assistant-teachers for any course from out of the great number of students in previous courses. This can be done without feeling any sense of being bound for the future; for these occasional assistants in

sloyd instruction have, as a rule, permanent places in other schools. In accordance with the principle always strongly emphasized at Nääs, that the true educational instruction should be *individual* and not arranged as class instruction, each teacher is given a division which only with unwillingness is allowed to include more than 18—20 persons.

During the first courses, a model-series consisting of one hundred models was followed, but after 1880 this series was divided into two, a *fundamental* series and one of *repetition*, each including fifty models. Both these series were arranged with easy starting-points, so that even those who were going through the repetition series,—those who were enjoying a second or third course—did not at once receive a comparatively difficult task. The series, too, were so arranged that when united they formed a whole, i. e., a series of one hundred models. In 1887 four independent series were arranged, i. e., a *fundamental series* more especially intended for elementary schools in country districts, a *series for town-schools*, meant for elementary schools in towns, a *high-school series*, intended for high schools for boys, and a *series for girl-schools*, intended for high schools for girls. This latter series was done away with in 1887, while in 1894 the so-called *abridged fundamental series* was formed, intended too for elementary schools in the country-districts, but so far concentrated that it included only forty numbers, while each of the other series con-



Series of models

sisted of fifty. Since the beginning of 1902 by far the greater number of the students follow the Nääs



Examination of models

new series of models, which, consisting of 40 numbers, is intended to take the place of all the series of models previously used.

In arranging a series of models, the *exercises* entering into

this kind of sloyd are made the basis for a gradual progression. This is a characteristic of the Nääs method. For by this means it has been found possible to maintain the demand made of the partakers in the course, that the work executed by them should be neat and exact. They have not been allowed to hand in incorrect or halfdone work and, even if, as may be, more than one student, unaccustomed to such neatness and exactness, has complained of the "pedantic way" in which the work of the students has been examined, the complaints have been received with equanimity. For it is undoubtedly owing to the maintenance of these strict requirements that it has been possible to open the way to the schools for a system of sloyd-instruction which laid weight, not upon the amount, but upon the quality of the work executed.

* * *

The scrutinizing of the work executed, and the giving of marks for the same, is carried out by the Director or by the head-teacher in the presence of six or seven of the students in regular turn: these latter have to

see that the marks are given impartially, and have also an opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of the grounds on which the marking is based. Before a piece of work is sent in to be marked, the assistant-teacher shall, by means of a preparatory scrutiny, see that the student, before finally touching up



Björkenäås

the model, has made the greatest possible use of the so-called *sharp* tools. At the final scrutiny we first mentioned, each work is given one of the marks 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 or 0. The latter mark signifies that it has not been found possible to pass the piece of work in question, either because it exceeds or does not approach the fixed measures by at least 3 mm., or else because it is unsatisfactory in some other respect. The models which are approved of are marked with the stamp of the institution.

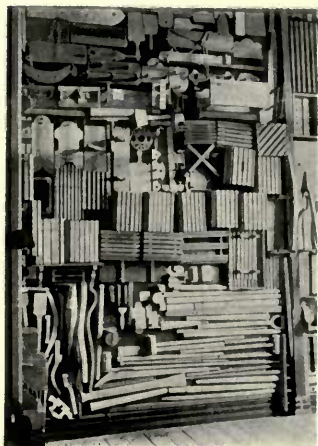
For practical reasons the marks are given in ciphers, whose signification is first made known towards the end of the course. These cipher-marks, as well as the remarks made on faulty work are written in a "scrutiny-journal", accessible to the students, in which there is a



Mellannäås

certain page for each of them. The number of the page corresponds to the "secret number", given to each student at the beginning of the course and with which he afterwards distinguishes his work. The use

of ciphers instead of names is a further guarantee of objectivity in the giving of the marks. The average mark



"Extra models"

for neatness and exactness in the execution of a piece of work afterwards forms a factor in the total-mark given to each student at the end of the course. The other factors in calculating this total-mark are: the number of exercises performed in making the models which have been passed, the independence shown in their working and the time which has been required for their execution.

In this total-mark we have mentioned, is also included, however, the mark for the so-called "alternative model" or, as it is usually termed, the "extra model". Since 1892 each student is required during the fifth week of the course to solve a task given simultaneously to each, a task which is of such a kind that it differs according to the stand-point on which the executant happens to have reached at the time. The task includes the construction, drawing and execution of a model suitable for incorporation as an alternative model in one of the Nääs model-series. It is required that the model shall include the number of new exercises calculated for that number of model, in addition to which, the preceding exercises, but no additional ones may be applied. The model which is thus executed according to the drawings made by the student himself or herself, are judged from practical, me-

thodical and esthetical points of view, regard being paid to that amount of inventiveness which may have been displayed by the student in the execution of his task. In addition, this "extra model" is scrutinized in *respect to its execution* in accordance with the same principles as those determining the mark given to the ordinary models. Although this "extra model" cannot be said to enjoy the special love of the students, it is beyond all doubt of very great value, not only for a right understanding of the method and as an exercise in "creating" in the sense given to the word by Fröbel, but also for purely practical reasons, as the student thereby gets some idea as to how he shall, within the framework of the Nääs method, be able to change a model in the series which may not be very suitable



Fruit preservation Course

for the district in which his school is situated, for one more fit. While the other models executed by the students may be taken home, the "extra model" is left to increase the collection of the insti-

tution, a collection which now includes about 3,000 models constructed and executed by the students at the courses.

* * *

Drawing stands, of course, in the closest connection with sloyd, and that in many respects. Even in the execution of the most primitive work, a kind of construction must be a guiding help, and the more im-

portance one puts on producing a work correct in form and size, all the more carefully must one previously construct the necessary contours upon the piece of work to be constructed. This is done partly with the help of the ruler and compass, and, in solitary cases, by hand alone. When instruction in sloyd is being given, however, sloyd and drawing should be presented in another connection than this of a drawing upon the piece of work to be constructed. The pupils should be exercised both in draw-



ing copies of the models and in executing sloydwork from the drawings. During a good many years attempts have been made at Nääs to discover how this connection between drawing and sloyd should be arranged in a way which could satisfy both pedagogic and practical points of view. At present the method is so arranged that the student has to draw the model on paper before executing it in the sloyd-room. During the last few years, presence at the drawing-lessons has been compulsory. All the students are also expected to take part twice daily in the gymnastic exercises which are arranged in accordance with the Swedish—Ling's—system.

* * *

To this principal task of laboring for the introduction into schools of a pedagogically conceived and a methodically arranged instruction in sloyd, the Seminary has



Games

joined others. Thus, courses for the training of leaders of *games* have been given at Nääs since 1895. For in Sweden as well as in a great many other countries, it has become evident that the young people of both sexes have, to a certain extent, lost all interest in playing games, and that even a knowledge of, and skill in different kinds of games have diminished in a very serious degree. The causes of this condition of things—a very painful one to every friend of a healthy and natural youth—are many, but in any case it appears to be the duty of every educator to endeavor to do what can be done to counteract them. So, in addition to sloyd-courses there have also been arranged at Nääs *courses for male and female teachers, in the theory and practice of out-door games*. Fifteen such courses have hitherto been given which have been attended by a total of 381 students, of which number 298 are from Sweden and 83 from other countries. These teachers of both sexes who participate in the game-courses exercise out-door games suitable for children and youth—running games, ball games, games to the accompaniment of song, etc. — out in the playing field or, in case of unfavorable weather, in the gymnasium. A special house for the practice of the games is now under construction. In

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Games

addition to this, lectures are given and discussions held on general pedagogics and on the theory and history of games. The course also includes the making of the more simpler requisites for the games, and especially of different kinds of balls, and exercises in giving instructions as to the playing of the games. At present two such courses are held annually; the one given in the early summer lasting six weeks, and that held later in the summer four. Special evening courses in games are arranged for those who are taking part in the sloyd-courses given during the summer, whereby about 800 male and female teachers have been trained as leaders of games.

Besides the courses in sloyd and games there are at present arranged at Nääs courses for instruction in *fruitpreserving* and in *gardening* (since 1902), and courses in *school-cookery* and in *needlework* (since 1903).

The instruction in the first-named course, which embraces both the preserving of fruit and lectures on the subject, is intended to make the students in the course male and female teachers and wives and daughters of teachers familiar with the drying, salting, and preserving of the products in question; the boiling of fruit, its hermetical boiling for the purpose of preservation, the making of sirups, the making into jams, and

other methods of making preserves. At the course for *gardening*, the male and female teachers from the country districts receive instruction, based on practical exercises, in the proper laying-out and care of a school garden. The course in *school-cookery* is intended to impart a knowledge of the daily events in the sphere



Course for gardening

of the home and the household, and a practical skill in household duties, partly for the immediate benefit of the students in the course, and partly that those students may be able to give instruction in the subject. And, finally, the courses in *needle-*



Course in school-cookery

work are intended to train women-teachers from country schools as teachers also in needlework, such as knitting, sewing, mending and marking.

* * *

On the 6th. of May, 1898, *August Abrahamson*, the founder of the Nääs Slöjdläroresemnasium, departed this life after having reached the great age of more than eighty. But in order that the work to which he had devoted the last 25 years of a busy life should be able to continue its existence after his death, he made

the following dispositions amongst others in his will:

The educational establishment founded by him shall for all future time be kept up at Nääs under the name of "*August Abrahamsons Stiftelse*" (*Foundation*).



"The grave"



Drawing-room

Its aim shall be, by the continued training of male and female teachers who have already devoted themselves to the task of instruction, to work for education in general and especially for the employment in that cause of

pedagogic sloyd. It is moreover determined that the activity of the Foundation shall, as far as its funds permit, always be carried on in accordance with the demands of the times. The Foundation, endowed with the Nääs estate with its dependencies, and the personal estate appertaining thereto together with a capital of 380,000 kronor (1 krona = 27 cents = 1 sh. 1 d.) is donated to the State. The total value of the Foundation may be estimated at about 700,000 kronor. The



Dining-room

will further determines that Otto Salomon, the testator's nephew, who has directed the institution ever since its establishment, shall be entitled during his life-time to continue his directorship either personally or by deputy, and to be the sole administrator of the Foundation, with unlimited power and authority to determine everything connected with the educational work of the institution. Finally, it is the will of the deceased that male and female teachers from foreign lands shall also be allowed to enjoy training at the school. By a mandate dated 28 April 1899, His Majesty in Council has, on behalf of the State, expressed himself willing to accept the Foundation on the conditions determined by the testator. *The August Abrahamson Stiftelse* has thus been transformed from being an entirely private establishment to a State Institution.

* * *

The Nääs estate which has been donated to the Foundation embraces an area of about 1200 hectares (almost 3000 acres) of which, it is true, the greater part consists of forest land, while



The Castle

125 hectares are under cultivation, 100 hectares of this forming the home farm and the remainder being let on lease. The main building, the *Castle* as it is called, contains a number of large, and in part splendidly decorated rooms containing very valuable furniture. According to the provisions of the will, the state rooms are

to be used when occasion requires, for meetings and festivities: the sleeping apartments are to be retained



Hall

ned for the use of prominent personages who are interested in the institution and therefore desire to spend some short time at Nääs. The great salon on the other hand which, with its *empire* furniture, occupies the whole width

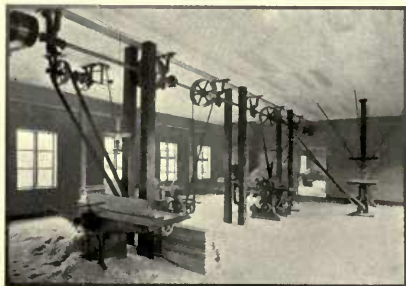
of the upper story is used for the more solemn opening and closing of the courses, as well as for occasional lectures and discussions. The castle has also a winter garden built in connection with it, and an extensive park with large gardens. Among the buildings which are intended to form more directly the school establishment may be noticed: the *Seminarium*, containing a lecture room, three sloyd rooms, a model room, dwelling-rooms etc.; *Björkenääs*, the residence of the Director, *Vänhem*, with dining-rooms and drawing-rooms, spare bed-rooms etc.; *Källnääs*, containing a large sloyd-room, a gymnasium and bed-rooms, and *Mellannääs*, *Lilla Nääs*, *Babel* and other buildings intended as dwelling-places for the students. Outside Mellannääs lies the playground intended for the out-door sports. In a special pavilion there



Library

is a newly formed pedagogic library for the use of students. A large building intended for games in rainy weather and for the giving of lectures is in course of construction. Quite near the Seminarium is the *model school-garden*, newly laid out in 1902.

In connection with the Foundation there are in addition the Nääs Verktygsförsäljning, whose mission is to provide schools at home and abroad with benches and tools for instruction in wood-



The Factory

sloyd,; and the Nääs Skolmöbeltillverkning, a little factory for the making of schoolfurniture such as schooldesks, blackboards etc., manufactured after good models.

It is, perhaps, not unworthy of mention that Nääs, the principal parts of which are situated on and around the little lake of "Säfvelängen" ("the long lake of reeds"), is widely celebrated for the beauty of its scenery.

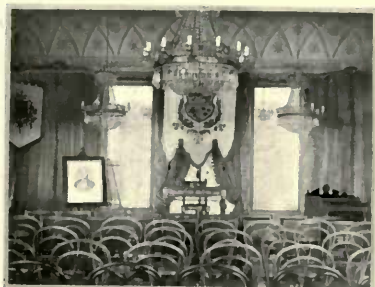


"Säfvelängen"

* * *

It was at Nääs that the fundamental principles of the so-called "Nääs-system" were formulated, and that the "Nääs-method", as it is called, was elaborated and tried. The chief reason that so

many male and female teachers, often from foreign countries, visit this Swedish educational establishment is, of course, their wish to become acquainted at first hand with the *Swedish pedagogic sloyd* and its method. Neither the plan nor the space of this little pamphlet permits to here give a more detailed account of these. We must therefore be contented with a few, very brief words on the subject. Those who are interested in the matter would do best



Salon

to come and see with their own eyes; would do best to learn by actual experience, and not from reading, the distinguishing marks of instruction in Swedish sloyd.

The Nääs system was first mentioned in connection with its significance

as a system for training in work, whose aim was chiefly pedagogical and not economical. The two important fundamental rules of the system stand, of course, in close connection with this; — the rules that the instruction shall be methodical, i. e., be given in a *methodical* way — this in contrast with the plan formerly employed of allowing exterior contingencies to determine what should be executed by the pupil — and that the instruction should be given by a *pedagogically trained* person and not by the first artisan who offered himself. According to the Nääs-system, instruction in sloyd shall constitute a factor in *general education*, and not be a direct training for any special handicraft. In opposition to other systems which permit the time and strength of the pupils to be divided and ex-

pended upon several kinds of work, the Nääs system has maintained the necessity of *concentrating the instruction* upon one branch of sloyd, that of *wood-sloyd*, the most suitable of all. Other important fundamental principles are: that the instruction shall be *voluntary*, not compulsory; that *useful objects* and not articles of luxury shall be made; that the instruction shall be *individual* and not arranged as class-teaching; that the articles made shall become *the property of the children* and not be sold for the benefit of the school; that the work *should be carefully executed* and not carelessly done, and that the work shall be carried out with *the body kept in a good position*. It may perhaps seem that all these propositions appear to be pretty self-evident and scarcely worth mentioning. But they, and several others have first been adopted as parts of a connected whole, in the Nääs system, and each of them has had to strive hard in order to gain any great degree of general recognition. Some—as, for example, the important rule that all instruction which is educational in the true sense of the word should be individual—have still many opponents, both in theory and in practice. Still we have a lively conviction that even their time shall come; that time when there shall exist no difference between the principles which make up the Nääs system, and those which shall then form the generally recognized principles of education.

* * *

Concerning the *Nääs method*, its chief characteristic is, that, in contrast with many other methods in the

sphere of instruction in manual labor, it does not build upon practice in abstract exercises, — sawing, planing, the use of the chisel etc. etc. — but upon the making of *concrete objects which can be used in daily life, and which are good when viewed from an esthetical standpoint.* A series of models is used as a guide in instruction; this series, again, being based upon an *exercise-series* of 68 exercises. As a result of the model-series being based upon exercises, any one model can be exchanged for another which may be more suitable for the place where the instruction is being given. Thus, in the matter of instruction in sloyd, the Nääs system has endeavored to apply the didactic rules of proceeding from the easy to the more difficult, from the simpler to the more complex, from the concrete to the more abstract. As patterns, the Nääs method employs models, both models and drawings, and also drawings exclusively. Amongst the models there are many which are termed “modelling-models” which, similarly to modelling work in general, is of great importance for the development of the eye and the sense of form. Especial weight is laid upon employment of the *knife*, which, according to the Nääs system, should be the fundamental tool.

* * *

Finally, without entering into any further details, we wish to fix the attention of the reader upon the fact that the Nääs-system and the Nääs-method, both products principally of the joint work of Swedish teachers has, year after year, gained greater dissemination and more adherents and that not in Sweden alone, but also in many

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other countries. It is, of course, quite natural that, when they are transplanted to foreign soils, both national and local peculiarities must be regarded, and for this reason Nääs has continually warned the teacher: *Remember, that you can work according to our system without us-*



will never forget that the letter of the law killeth, but that the spirit giveth life.

ing one of our models, and that it is possible to use our models and still not follow our system. We hope that they have understood this admonition, and thus

Otto Salomon.