

# THE KINDERGARTEN AND THE MONTESSORI METHOD

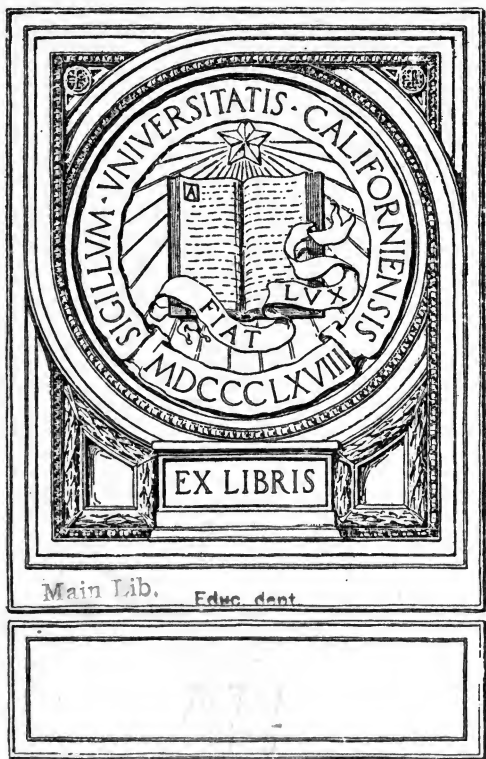
MARTHA MACLEAR

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# The Kindergarten and the Montessori Method

*An Attempt at Synthesis*

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
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## PREFACE

President's Office.

CLARK'S UNIVERSITY.

WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS.

November 18, 1914.

Miss Martha MacLear,  
Howard University,  
Washington, D. C.

DEAR MADAM:—Yesterday I had practically all of your entire manuscript, "The Kindergarten and the Montessori Method," read aloud to me. I liked both the style and the matter very much. You certainly have a very happy, fluent and lucid way of expressing your ideas, and naturally the conception of bringing together the ideas of Froebel, Montessori and genetic psychology and experimental psychology struck me as a desideratum I had long been waiting to see. I regret to say that as I have mislaid your first letter I do not recall with certainty exactly what you expected of me in sending your manuscript. If it was to get my reaction to it, you have it above. If it was to have it printed in my journal, I regret to say that it is much too long and a little outside the field my journal is coming more and more to commit itself to.

As to chances of publication for the kindergarten article, in book form, I am afraid my opinion would not be worth very much. I think the effect of the present war is depressing upon all publications and tends to make houses more careful.

The only practical suggestion I can make is that if you

could induce Professor Patty Hill of Teachers College, Columbia University, to pass upon your manuscript, I think you would have the best authority in the United States, as she is in my estimation the first thinker on the subject we have. She is progressive and I feel sure would be in hearty sympathy with the trend of your book. Why not write her, using my name if you wish for I know her well, and ask her if she will look it over and advise?

If I can do any more at any time I shall be most happy to do so. It is a very good treatise and ought to be accessible to all the kindergartners of the country.

Thanking you for letting me see your manuscripts, I am

Very truly yours,

G. STANLEY HALL.



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# The Kindergarten and the Montessori Method

## CHAPTER I

### THE KINDERGARTEN

**F**OR the past fifty years the kindergarten has occupied a unique place in the educational system. Brought to America by cultured German immigrants, its worth was soon appreciated in Boston, then the hub of America. Then followed years of support by private associations until, about twenty-five years ago, cities in various parts of the country began to incorporate it into their school systems. But the end is not yet for there still remains a large field to cover where kindergartens are not and there are still many believers in traditional things who are as yet unconverted to its value. For, in spite of many obvious short-comings, the kindergarten has great value.

This phase of education, planned for children from four to six years of age, is based on the philosophy of Frederick Froebel. In the early part of the nineteenth century Froebel began his work for little children. Although his interest up to this time had been in secondary education, he began to realize that little or nothing was being done for the education of young children. To meet this need he devised a plan of education suitable for such

children and gave it the appropriate name of kindergarten—garden of children. The scheme of work which he planned for this school was based primarily upon his idealistic philosophy.

Like many thinkers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Froebel was seeking a definition of reality. This definition he found, not in matter as had been the thought of Herbert and Pestalozzi, but in spirit. To him spirit was the all pervading, the all penetrating essence of each individual thing in nature and in man.

“In all things there lives and reigns an eternal law. To him whose mind, through disposition and faith, is filled, penetrated, and quickened with the necessity that this can not possibly be otherwise, as well as to him whose clear, calm, mental vision beholds the inner in the outer and through the outer, and sees the outer proceeding with logical necessity from the essence of the inner, this law has been and is announced with equal clearness and distinctness in nature (the external), in the spirit (the internal), and in life which unites the two. This all-controlling law is necessarily based on an all-pervading, energetic, living, self-conscious, and hence eternal Unity. This fact, as well as the Unity itself, is again vividly recognized, either through faith or through insight, with equal clearness and comprehensiveness; therefore, a quietly observant human mind, a thoughtful, clear human intellect, has never failed, and will never fail, to recognize this Unity.

“This Unity is God. All things have come from the Divine Unity, from God, and have their origin in the Divine Unity, in God alone. God is the sole source of all things. In all things there lives and reigns the Divine

Unity, God. All things live and have their being in and through the Divine Unity, in and through God. All things are only through the divine effluence that lives in them. The divine effluence that lives in each thing is the essence of each thing.”\*

Hence since spirit or God pervades all things, there exists among all things a unity or an inner-connectedness which binds all things together. And there arises the necessity of studying nature and natural phenomena because in such study we are studying God. So we find, in the kindergarten, a spirit of co-operation between teachers and pupils, and of kindly feeling among the children. The course of study itself bears out this ideal for it is based upon life activities. Such typical and necessary activities as those of the baker, the market, the milkman, the farmer are taken up and studied with the purpose of showing how dependent each member of the community is on every other member and that good to all can result only from each one doing his part.

Froebel carried over into education a scientific principle which was later formulated by Larmarck and Darwin. This principle of organic evolution Froebel applied to education and worked out from it a scheme whereby each part of education should be related to and dependent upon what had gone before. Hence education is not a process of grafting on something extraneous to the child but a process of development. In the Education of Man this general philosophic ideal is stated—“God creates and works productively in uninterrupted continuity. Each

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\*Froebel—Educator of Man, paragraph I.

thought of God is a work, a deed, a product, and each thought of God continues to work with creative power in endless productive activity to all eternity." Again, "God neither ingrafts nor inoculates. He develops the most trivial and imperfect things in continuously ascending series, and in accordance with eternal, self-grounded and self-developing laws."

The process by which the mind takes hold of things and works out its own development is self-activity. For the mind is not so much possessed of activity, it is activity. Through this activity it realizes itself, it builds up its own world, it becomes conscious of itself and it works out its own destiny. Therefore it is the duty of education to provide ways and means by which the mind, by means of self-activity, may work out its eternal destiny.

The kindergarten has endeavored in three ways to work out these fundamental principles of Froebel—by <sup>1</sup>symbolism, by motor <sup>2</sup>expression, and by a conception <sup>3</sup>of the school as a miniature society.

Symbolism is a direct outgrowth of Froebel's belief in the underlying unity of all life. This belief, re-enforced by his deeply religious nature, led him to the mistaken notion that the same processes of change are found in physical development as occur in spiritual or mental and social development. Therefore it must follow that a study of changes or laws in one of these realms must inform a person concerning similar changes in the other realms. That is, that a study of the laws of crystallization will teach one the laws of psychology and sociology. In his Autobiography, Froebel states this position:

"A life of more than thirty years with nature, often

it is true, falling back and clouded for great intervals, has taught me to know this, especially the plant and tree world, as a mirror, I might say, an emblem of man's life in its highest spiritual relations; so that I look upon it as one of the greatest and deepest conceptions of human life and spirit when in holy scripture the comparison of good and evil is drawn from a tree. Nature, as a whole, even the realms of crystals and stones, teaches us to discriminate good from evil; but, for me, not so powerfully, quietly, clearly, and openly as the plant and flower kingdom."

This abstract principle Froebel worked out in concrete form for the education of little children. He maintained that children are capable of appreciating symbolic analogies and that it is important that they do so. With this end in view he worked out a series of playthings and games in which he made provision for this need. In his *Pedagogics of the Kindergarten* he thus speaks of the principle as underlying the plays with the balls, the cube and the games.

"The child \* \* \* perceives in the ball the general expression of each object as well as of itself (the child) as a self-dependent whole and unity \* \* \* so the child likes to employ himself with the ball, even early in life, in order to cultivate and fashion himself, though unconsciously, through and by it, as that which is his opposite and yet resembles him.

"The cube is to the child the representative of each continually developing manifold body. The child has an intimation in it of the unity which lies at the foundation of all manifoldness and from which the latter proceeds.

“The pleasure with which the children play these games and others of a similar kind may therefore have its ground in a presentiment of what is symbolic and significant in them. May not their delight in these encircling movements, for example, spring from the longing and the effort to get an all-round or all-sided grasp of an object?

\* \* \* I am convinced that the exalted and often ecstatic delight of children in their simple movement plays is by no means to be explained through the exertion of mere physical force—mere bodily activity. The true source of their joy is the dim premonition which stirs their sensitive hearts that in their play there is hidden a deep significance; that it is, in fact, the husk within which is concealed the kernel of a living spiritual truth.”

In the beginning of the kindergarten movement symbolism, especially in the use of the gifts, was counted a necessary part of their use. It was contended that their value lay in their orderly progression and in the symbolic significance underlying them. But gradually this belief has been modified and there is an increasingly large number of kindergarten teachers who have discarded this theory as phantastic and absurd. Such a change of belief must necessarily be made in view of the developments of modern psychology. For it is only too apparent that the child cannot and does not grasp any such underlying meaning. In the *Elementary School Record*, Dewey points out the impossibility of the child's experiencing the symbolic meaning of a thing in the way in which Froebel intended that he should.

“Practically all he (the child) gets out of it is its own physical and sensational meaning, plus, very often, a glib



facility in phrases and attitudes that he learns are expected of him by the teacher—without, however, any mental counterpart. We often teach insincerity, and instill sentimentalism, and foster sensationalism when we think we are teaching truths by means of symbols. The realities reproduced, therefore, by the child should be of as familiar, direct and real a character as possible. It is largely for this reason that in the kindergarten of our school the work centers so largely about the reproduction of home and neighborhood life.”

Also Dr. Thorndike, in his “Notes on Child Study,” makes a similar criticism:

“And what shall I say of those who by a most extraordinary intellectual perversity attribute to children the habit of using common things as symbols of abstractions which have never in any way entered their heads, who tell us that the girl likes to play with her doll because the play symbolizes to her motherhood; that the boy likes to be out of doors because the sunlight symbolizes to him cheerfulness? \* \* \*

“If we live in houses because they symbolize protection, if we like to see Sherlock Holmes on the stage because he symbolizes to us craft, or Uncle Tom because he symbolizes to us slavery, or a clown from the circus because he symbolizes to us folly; if we eat apples because they symbolize to us the fall of man, or strawberries because they symbolize to us the Scarlet Woman, then perhaps the children play with the ball because it symbolizes infinite development and absolute limitation.

“No one has ever given a particle of valid evidence to show any such preposterous associations in children’s

minds between plain things and these far-away abstractions.”

Froebel's belief in reality as spirit and that the essence of man is spirit which must be provided with ways and means for its unfolding was worked out primarily in his provision for motor expression. For since man is made in the image of God, the Great Creator, he must necessarily create and bring forth like God. For men stimulate their own mental activity and more effectively promote human welfare much more by what they produce themselves than by what they may have acquired from others. It has become a truism to say that we never know a thing until we teach it. Also it is much more developing and strengthening to learn a thing by doing than it is by receiving it merely through verbal communication. Therefore representations in life and through doing, joined with thought and speech, are much more educative than merely verbal representations of ideas. Therefore the child should be trained primarily for creative work—play, building, modeling. In less complex times, under more simple conditions, this need was met through the child's instinctive desire to imitate the activities of those around him. In so doing he found scope for his activity by working in the garden, by doing chores around the house and by the hundred and one things which needed to be done when life was simple. Now, when these things are all done for us, when life in the home has become simplified, the school must provide the opportunity for such work which is so necessary for proper development.

Froebel planned four fundamental modes of self-ex-

pression desirable for young children. These were singing, drawing, painting and modeling. Later these were added to and all the work included under the names gifts and occupations came to be included.

At the present time many of those Froebelian gifts and occupations have been excluded, in the belief that other material of more educational value can be found. But the fundamental principle of the need and value for motor expression has been retained.

Since God is the creator of all things and since there is a spark of divinity in all men, it follows therefore that all men are brothers. Although this has been preached for many ages, the practical significance of it has seldom been brought out. Froebel found this only too true as shown in the lack of co-operation shown by adults. And he came to the conclusion that such a spirit of co-operation in brotherly love could be brought about only through habits formed in childhood. Hence he formulated his theory of the school as a miniature society. Here should be found and matured the activities and virtues which go to make up an ideal state.

The whole atmosphere of the school should contribute to this end, as well as the attitude of the teacher. But the chief contribution should be co-operative play. This may mean play with materials, as blocks, or it may mean physical play. The children may possibly unite in building a city with blocks or they may join in furnishing a doll house for the pleasure of all. On the other hand, in physical play, it is by no means physical control alone which is gained. Moral power also is achieved. In any playground may be seen justice, moderation, self-control,

truthfulness, loyalty, brotherly love, and strict impartiality.

For co-operation is a fundamental social necessity and virtue, therefore it should be cultivated from infancy. This can be done naturally and effectively since instinctively a child has a tendency to co-operate. And no where is this tendency more clearly shown, no where can it be more easily developed than in co-operative games.

The kindergarten to-day is the embodiment of Froebel's ideals and philosophy augmented by the best educational thought of the present day. That this is not true of all kindergartens is obvious. That it is true of an increasingly large number cannot be disputed. More and more kindergartners are asking, not "what did Froebel say" but "what is the truth." The fact that the teachings of Froebel form a large part of the curriculum both in the training school and in the kindergarten does not nullify this statement. For, in spite of many absurdities, there is a large amount of truth in Froebel's educational philosophy. And it seems safe to predict that no matter what change may be made in the daily routine of the kindergarten back of it all will always lie the truth in Froebel's teaching.

However, more and more teachers and leaders in the kindergarten are beginning to look to experimental psychology and child study for their justification. More and more they are planning to co-operate with the modern emphasis on child hygiene and the fresh air movement. More and more they are beginning to relate the kindergarten to the life of the child in the primary school.

Just how much the work in the kindergarten has functioned in the life of the child it is difficult to determine.

It is easier to say what he should have learned. Undoubtedly the products of a year, or better of two years spent in the kindergarten, should be a sense of responsibility, a gain in bodily and mental control, the ability to work with his fellows, a certain facility in handling material, the rudiments of music, a love of good literature based on a store of good tales, a certain power of self-expression in word, song, games, or handwork and the desire to encounter new tasks and the perseverance and ability to keep at them until they are accomplished.

Whether or not children actually carry over these desirable traits into the first grade is a matter of conjecture, influenced more or less by the personal bias of the observer. It should be one of the tasks of the kindergarten to ascertain the facts in the case and by co-operation with first grade teachers, to make sure that any advance which may have been made in the kindergarten, is not nullified by the work of the first grade.

The kindergarten is not a static phase of education. It is in a stage of growth and must continue to grow and to change as new truths are developed in the educational field. That in the past it has seemed disinclined to change, that it has appeared to cling to the letter and not to the spirit of Froebel's teachings may have been true but it is not true to-day. Rapid steps forward are being taken. It is my purpose in this volume to designate some changes which I believe are necessary before the kindergarten can measure up to its great opportunity. These changes, I feel, can be achieved in no more effective way than by combining the fundamental principles of the Montessori system with the best that is found in the kindergarten.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MONTESSORI METHOD

**T**HE Montessori method is the product of one woman's experimentation with a theory and doubtless owes much of its extraordinarily rapid growth to the impetus given it by the influence of her wonderful personality. This is not to deny that it would have gained a hearing on its own merits. But the fact of personality as a strong factor in its propaganda cannot be gainsaid.

Dr. Montessori is a medical doctor in Rome who, through her work in a class for abnormal children, became much interested in this pressing problem. The conclusion she reached was that abnormality in children, represented by the insane or the defective, is a pedagogical rather than a medical problem. This conclusion she announced at a gathering of teachers at Turin in 1898. The address fell upon fertile soil and the interest aroused was so great that she was asked to deliver a course of lectures at Rome on the education of feeble minded children.

This course led to further study on Dr. Montessori's part at the University of Rome, and to a most intensive private study of the works of Itard and Seguin, two pioneers in the field of abnormality. The result of this intensive study was that she came to the conclusion that a type of education which would produce such wonderful results with defective children must necessarily be bene-

ficial and work big results with normal children.

Her opportunity to put this theory into practice came. There was founded in Rome an association for Good Building. The object of the association was to improve the homes found in the worst quarters of Rome and to provide some educational agency which would insure a proper treatment of the houses by the tenants. Here Dr. Montessori found her opportunity. Here were opened the first schools which embodied the principles worked out so carefully by her. From this small beginning, the movement has spread into parts of the world as far distant as India and America. It has aroused the interest of the non-technical laymen to an unprecedented degree and rivals equal suffrage as a topic of interest in newspapers and magazines. That the theory is not all new, that many other educators have theorized along the same lines, does not vitiate the worth of Dr. Montessori's message. She seems to have arrived at her conclusions independently and above all, she has had the courage to carry them out to their rational end.

The method and the material which are an outgrowth of that method are based on the theory that brain development is closely connected with and dependent on the development of the hand. The ancestor of man in the very early stages of growth attained his superiority over the brutes through the use of his forefeet as hands. In doing this he not only developed his hands but his brain as well. So that in the evolutionary process it was the animals with well-developed hands and brains who survived.

Various experiments have been made to authenticate this fact. It has been found that the speech area in the

brain of right handed persons is on the left side, while that of left handed persons is on the right side. Also in testing two hundred children to ascertain the relation between slowness of hand movements and rate of movement of brain processes the same relation was found. The children were first divided into two groups, the division being made according to their mental capacity. In the group composed of good learners, it was found that 62% were quick with their muscles, 30% were normal while only 8% were slow. On the other hand, in the backward group, there were none who were quick in muscular action, only 25% possessed normal control over their muscles, 35% were slow and 40% were strikingly slow and halting in their movements.

In the history of the race there is a close connection between the development of the brain and that of the hand. Gesture is certainly the parent of speech. For man communicated with his fellows by means of signs long before he was able to articulate words.

In view of these facts it would seem only rational to spend the first year of conscious education of the child on the training of the senses. For in doing this we shall not only provide a much needed education of our rather defective senses but shall cultivate the brain as well. The importance of this, as a first step in education, can hardly be over-estimated. The need of such training can be appreciated when a comparison is made between those who have received such training and those who have not. The ear of the musician can hear notes and harmonies, can appreciate sequences of themes and repetition of motifs, which are entirely lost on the average listener. The eye



of a trained scientist can see properties in a drop of blood under the microscope which are completely hidden from an ordinary observer. An artist can see colors in the landscape, can appreciate combinations of colors which add greatly to his enjoyment of life. Although it is not possible and would not be desirable to achieve such results with every child, yet an approximation of such skill would undoubtedly add greatly to the joy of living.

On the other hand such training reveals very clearly to the teacher many defects which might otherwise pass unnoticed. The demands on our senses of the ordinary routine of daily living is so slight that such defects are often overlooked until they are hardened into defects which can not be cured.

Dr. Montessori felt the need and the value of such training but she realized that it could be of little use unless it were built upon the spontaneous activity of the child. In stressing this she has but followed the path opened by all modern education. For what is the spontaneous activity of the child but its ability to react in many different ways to its environment. In other words, insistence on spontaneity as the requisite for education is simply saying that a child's tendencies can be modified—that he is an educable being.

But in the beginning he needs no education for the spontaneous activity supplied by nature provides all the education necessary. The wiggings and twistings of a baby are not valueless. Watch an eight months old baby squirming along the floor; every feature from the laughing eyes to the laughing mouth—every sound, from the low soft chortle of satisfaction to the wild scream of success—

all join to show how great is the pleasure of learning to walk. So it is with the fundamental activities. But soon there comes a time when spontaneity of itself cannot provide all the training necessary and here conscious education must step in. The determining factor in this process, Dr. Montessori claims should parallel the different stages of race development.

The culture epoch theory was suggested in the eighteenth century but was not definitely formulated until the nineteenth. Many distinguished names have been connected with this view, as Hegel, Goethe, Herbart, Spencer. Although the theory may not be accepted literally it cannot be denied that there are many points of similarity between the young child and the savage. There is found a resemblance in many instinctive activities, such as the sudden temperamental changes to which savages and children are both prone, their impulsiveness, their lack of power to control present actions by taking thought for future consequences, their little vanities and egoisms as well as their delight in strong contrasts and colors.

There are other evidences of this in the delight which children take in games of concealment like peep-a-boo or hide and seek, in hunting games and tribal games where one is a captain; in their delight in caring for pets and their preference for crude and simple playthings. However, even though we grant all this, the extent of our ignorance is so great that we are not able to lay down any hard and fast line of demarcation. In fact it is impossible to tell what echoes of the past would appear in a normal child in a normal environment. And although Dr. Montessori has laid down the dictum that the educa-

tion of the child should follow the development of the race, and that the fullest liberty should be given for the play of the child's spontaneous activity, yet the Montessori method has for its underlying principle the provision of an environment which shall be so unfavorable to certain of these spontaneous tendencies that they die a very unnatural death.

Among the many spontaneous activities of all organisms, two may be cited as fundamental. These are the tendency to repel or avoid hurtful experiences and the tendency to attract or repeat pleasurable ones. In the past these tendencies have been the prime incentives in education and have been considered adequate for all demands made on them. If a student were unruly and refused to learn the proper amount of Latin grammar or to recite in the exact words of Cicero, the tendency to avoid pain, as represented by the birch rod, was considered an adequate incentive. This kind of doing, that is performing an act for some reason other than the joy of performance, may be called indirect or secondary spontaneity. While direct or primary spontaneity would be the desire to perform an act simply from the desire to exercise the activity. In regard to the education of the senses and muscles, Dr. Montessori has been guided as completely as possible by the direct or primary spontaneities, this is, for the most part, true in regard to intellectual activity but, in regard to the activities which relate to social conduct, she is guided not by the child's primary spontaneous activities but by her own conception of what is desirable conduct and in inculcating these conceptions upon the child, she relies chiefly on sympathetic encour-

agement, and on the child's spontaneous desire to please those who treat him kindly. However, she does not hesitate to employ whatever measure of discipline may be required to suppress anti-social conduct in the case of normal children. But she is far ahead of the average teacher in her insistence on the medical examination of refractory children. Her belief is that, at an early age, moral defects are usually founded on physical infirmities.

Although Dr. Montessori bases her method of education on the spontaneity or freedom of the child, this does not mean that she uses always the direct or primary spontaneity, for she uses the secondary or indirect as well, and grafts tendencies on it which seem to her desirable. This practice has been used always in education, viz. the tendency to learn Latin grafted on to the tendency to avoid pain. But the new education has made a different application of the principle. The new education is quite ready to graft one tendency on another but it chooses its tendencies with greater care. Therefore, it lays great stress on the observation of the child, so as to find out what the child's spontaneous tendencies are, in order that they may be utilized at the proper time. Then it usually casts about for some more fundamental tendency on which the new tendencies may be grafted and made permanent. It is to Dr. Montessori's credit that she has applied the modern view with an unprecedented thoroughness.

The modern method of grafting on to a fundamental tendency, a specific tendency which we wish to endure, as encouraging a boy to collect stamps at a time when the collecting instinct is at its height, does result, not only in increased knowledge on the part of the pupil but also

has a civilizing effect on character. For it is of the very essence of civilization that the motives which we share with the savages and the brutes should become less and less the mainspring of our actions. The desire of the animal or savage to avoid immediate pain must be transformed into the civilized man's desire to avoid long delayed pain. Also the very nature of pain and pleasure are transformed and take on a spiritual character.

Dr. Montessori seeks to achieve this result chiefly by supplying such an environment that good character must inevitably result. In this achievement the so-called didactic material is not the main factor, important as that undoubtedly is. The human element is by far the most important factor in shaping character. Of this Dr. Montessori seems to be unconscious although it is undoubtedly her personality and not the material which has worked such wonders.

The second general principle which underlies the Montessori method is the principle of freedom. This principle appears to include first—that we are to provide full opportunity for the exercise of the child's motor activities so far as they are not anti-social and, second, that while we are to repress anti-social activities we are to do so with as little conflict as possible between the child's will and our will. In other words one important part of education consists in correcting mistakes made by the children. But in doing this, there should be as little exertion of authority as possible. This should be done, not so much to avoid the clashing of wills, but that the child may be led to depend on his own mental processes and not on the assistance of the teacher. In the training of the senses

and muscles, this object has been accomplished very successfully by making the material so simple that the child cannot help detecting his own mistakes.

Dr. Montessori lays great stress on the suppression of acts which are anti-social. She emphasizes especially the importance of the first days in the school room. This is the most trying time for the inexperienced Montessori teacher, and often she is tempted to interpret the principle of freedom too loosely. Dr. Montessori writes that she "saw children with their feet on the tables, or with their fingers in their noses, and no intervention was made to correct them. I saw others push their companions, and I saw dawn in the faces of these an expression of violence, and not the slightest attention on the part of the teacher. Then I had to interfere, to show with what absolute rigor it is necessary to hinder, and little by little to suppress, all those things which we must not do, so that the child may come to discern between good and evil.

If discipline is to be lasting, its foundations must be laid in this way, and these first days are the most difficult for the directress. The first idea that the child must acquire in order to be actively disciplined, is that of the difference between *good* and *evil*."

Of all the applications of the principle of freedom, the most far-reaching and the most original is the general liberty of the school-room. The door is always open, so that the children can leave when they desire—the chairs and tables are so light that the children can carry them about and choose their own places; nor need they sit longer than they desire. This freedom promotes a double purpose. First, it promotes the welfare of the pupil; next,

/// it helps the teacher to discover the natural tendencies of the child.

Children have sat at desks so long that it seems the most natural thing in the world to see them there. On the contrary, it is the most unnatural. For keeping a stated position is harmful not only to the general health but it has more specific ill-effects—such as chest contraction, and spinal curvature or weakness. Any method which succeeded in banishing fixed chairs and desks from the school room would do an immense amount of good.

All educationalists are agreed on the importance of founding education upon a study of the child. Dr. Montessori argues that such study to be effective must be made when the child is free to express himself. This does not happen under the usual regime of the school-room. Therefore she has gone far beyond most educators in applying this knowledge to school-room practice. This with an insistence on the value of repetition; on the right of the child to do its own thinking; and a physiological justification of the doctrine of liberty may be mentioned as other important points in her system.

In striking contrast to the adult, the child is interested in doing simply for the sake of doing. Give a child a pail and some sand, and he will fill and empty the pail to an endless extent. In education it is important that the child be allowed opportunity to satisfy this tendency. The complaint is often made that children are inattentive and volatile. Is not this due in large measure to our interference with the young child's desire to repeat and repeat until the impulse has worn itself out. We have all seen nurses and even those who should know

better present one toy after another to the child, just for the pleasure of seeing the look of joy on its face. Not realizing that such interference must necessarily make for lack of perseverance.

Nerve cells become effective only through long continued exercise along a certain channel. Repetition is therefore as necessary for their development as digestion is for the growth of the body.

It is of the utmost importance that children should learn to do their own thinking and yet this is one of the very things which even the most indulgent mother would deny them. Naturally we are all interested in and take delight in watching the physical development of a child. We are content to stand back and see the baby crawl around the floor or roll over and over a pillow. But we are not willing to sit quietly by while a child puzzles out for himself the answer to some perplexing thought. And yet this is of equal importance!

Perhaps the reason for this difference may be found in the fact that we can watch the physical processes, while the mental processes are hidden from us. So that we lose sight of their importance and look only for the result, as if that were the important thing. This is such a common failing and the attendant evils are so great that Dr. Montessori cannot be too much esteemed for bringing it once more to attention.

The physiological justification for freedom for young children lies in the fact that as brain matter, or more generally all nervous matter, is organized by action, it should be the object of the educator, so to control the organization of the pupil's brain matter that it shall be as



effective as possible. That is that in regard to the development of the sensory and motor system it is important, in the early stages at least, to let the organism develop itself by means of its responses to an environment which encourages these responses to exhaust themselves in an orderly way, rather than one which counteracts them as soon as they are initiated—in which case we should lose control over the paths of their discharge and the resulting organization of the brain. With regard to mental development, the same rule applies, though here the environment must be selected with even more care if we are to get the best results, because the inward impulses toward mental efficiency are by no means as vigorous as those toward physical well-being. Therefore it is of prime importance that an environment should be provided which would contribute to this result. Such an environment would include not only physical objects but spiritual influences as well. The Montessori material has been worked out to meet one need but the personality of the teacher must supply the other.

## CHAPTER III

### AN ADJUSTMENT

**I**N theory the kindergarten and the Montessori school are very closely allied. In one much emphasis is laid on the self-activity of the child, in the other, the spontaneous activities of the child are made the starting point of education. Whatever self-activity may mean philosophically, psychologically there is very little difference between it and the spontaneous tendencies of the child. In both, it is assumed that there is something within the child which seeks expression.

A belief in self-activity necessitates a belief in liberty as well, very much, perhaps exactly the liberty upon which Dr. Montessori insists.

Also the kindergarten and the Montessori school believe in the value of motor training and sense training, for the effect which such training will have on the mentality of the child. That the material used in the two schools differs does not alter the fact that in theory they both stand for the value of such training.

But theory and practice are quite different matters and do not always agree. Therefore we find that there is a wide divergence in the practice of the two schools. This may be due to the fact that, in the kindergarten, much assistance is placed on Froebel's fundamental law of unity, which finds no place in the Montessori theory. But, unfortunately, the real cause is only too apparent. The

practice in the kindergarten does not coincide with the theory.

Unhappily for the best interests of the movement, the kindergarten was established by one man and has been carried on almost entirely by women. It has lacked the calm, impersonal criticism of the masculine mind, and in too many cases loyalty and enthusiasm for the cause has been interpreted as loyalty to the master. The spirit of Froebel has too often been lost sight of in adherence to his practice. Even the theory has been defended against any modification by modern thought, just as if all truth was enunciated by this one man and that one was fore-sworn if she questioned it. For example, we have talked a great deal about self-activity in the kindergarten. We have written many philosophical articles on it. We have lectured about it. In short we have done everything but allow the children to practice it. They may be self-active but their self-activity must run along lines prescribed by us. At a certain hour every day they must be self-active along the line of the gifts, at another hour their self-activity must show itself in games, at another time in conversation or music. Woe betide the self-activity which wishes to continue to build when the teacher wishes the child to play.

In short, in practice we turn self-activity on and off by the clock. The child works at one thing until the clock says it is time to work at something else. We assume that the flow of self-activity can be turned off or on like a spigot. If the flow becomes too great and the child wishes to do something beyond what is prescribed for that period, quickly we turn off the self-activity and tell him

to fold his hands or stand on the circle or sit up straight. When self-activity comes in conflict with the teacher, it is not the teacher who backs down.

Self-activity needs liberty to work itself out. Theoretically the kindergarten has stood for very much the same kind of liberty which Dr. Montessori advocates, liberty which is based on a respect for the personality of the child. This is not an easy achievement for we are so accustomed to the belief that age carries wisdom that we are confident that we know better what is good for the child than he knows himself. There is no more difficult task or one calling for more self-control than that of standing back and allowing children to educate themselves. Yet we all know from our own experience that we know nothing except what we have taught ourselves. And we taught ourselves simply because we were interested to know this especial thing. The fact that we have taken courses, filled note-books and passed examinations does not mean that we know anything of the subject. The result to me of five years spent in studying higher mathematics was so meager that, although all examinations were passed and term marks high, I could hardly make change. It was not until I felt the need of such knowledge in house-keeping affairs that I taught myself an easy method of computation.

Latin, too, presents a parallel case. For although the Odes of Horace were once at my tongue's end and the essays of Cicero gave point to my conversation, it is impossible for me to tell how many declensions there are or the number of the conjugations and spelling is an undiscovered country.

These cases are quite typical and could be duplicated from the experience of kindergarten children, if they had the ability to analyze and objectify their mental processes. Since this is impossible they are at the mercy of the dominating teacher.

That the teacher does dominate in the kindergarten much more than she does in the Montessori school is very apparent. Too often she leads the morning circle, or leads the march, or conducts the gift lesson; she chooses and arranges the occupation, she leads the games and sings the good-bye song. The reason for this is not hard to find. It is the result of all the years of the teacher's training. Any other attitude would be a complete reversal of a whole life-time of thought. From the moment she entered school as a student until the time when she left the training-class, the teacher has been a witness to the dominance of the teacher. During her period of practice teaching, she has been taught the most tactful ways by which a teacher may dominate. Therefore, to retreat from the centre of the stage and to assume a less-controlling position calls for a complete change in her point of view, re-enforced by an enormous amount of self-control. To present an educative environment and then to stand back and watch the uses for self-education which each child makes of that environment in order that she may learn the needs and capabilities of each child, is no easy task for the teacher. It is far simpler to prescribe a set task and see that it is accomplished.

It is just here that the Montessori method can help the kindergarten. Based as it is on the spontaneous activities of the child, its insistence must necessarily be upon the

importance of a study of the child. For a knowledge of such activities can come only from an intensive study of children under normal conditions. So first of all the Montessori teacher is a student of child psychology. She surrounds the child with the environment which should, according to her best belief, furnish him with the proper means of self-development. Then she studies him and from such study, makes what changes are necessary in the environment. But her main interest is in the child.

From such a constant study of the individual from three to six years, by trained teachers, there must necessarily arise valuable additions to our very meagre knowledge of child psychology. At present the material available on this important subject is quite inadequate and what we have is not always valuable. In fact, it has been said that nothing is known about children of this age. Although an exaggeration, this statement approaches too near the truth to be pleasant reading to kindergarten teachers. We have had a splendid opportunity to make contributions to the subject which would be of lasting value but we have not done so. There is a chance now, by interpreting self-activity in the psychological terms of spontaneous activity, to make good the omission.

Also the kindergarten can learn from the Montessori method the true meaning of liberty. The kindergarten has always stood theoretically for liberty and freedom of thought and movement. But practically the freedom in both has been limited by the teacher. For example, the children pass the material for the gift or occupation lesson, but they receive the material from the teacher and return it to her. The children choose the game at the

game period, but the teacher decides whether it shall be played and for how long. In fact, the children usually keep one eye on the teacher to see if they are doing as she wishes. Such a thing as leaving the children alone to work out their own games, with only such interference as is necessary to maintain good conduct, exists in few kindergartens.

To accomplish such a result—a scientific study of the child and liberty for self-development for him—would necessitate a complete change in the daily procedure of the kindergarten. The regular schedule of work must be given up, as well as the morning talk and the gift lesson.

The daily programme has been a very convenient prop for the young or the unthinking teacher. It has saved much time and energy but, at the same time, it has stultified thought and has led to an attitude of mind which is willing to have another do its thinking for it. Props are convenient but are detrimental to healthy growth. So the kindergarten teacher, in too many cases, has been content to present the same material to the children, year after year. In such repetition she has come to value the material as being good in itself, not realizing that the value of any material rests primarily in its ability to meet the changing needs of the child. Not realizing this the teacher has been led to emphasize the material and not the activity of the child.

To follow a schedule necessitates an adherence to time, therefore the clock must be watched. The work of the various periods must be so regulated that it will end on the minute. Small children and large children must be held to the same time limits. Such an adherence cannot

be conducive to a watchful study of the child. If the teacher has a certain lesson to give, and a certain amount of time to consume, her attention is divided. She has three things to think of whereas there should be but one.

Also in following a schedule uniform demands are made on small beings who are not uniform. There is a wide divergence among children as to their power of attention, their ability to sit still, the duration of their interest. This is especially true of very young children since they have not attained to the control of their spontaneous activities. Therefore there is the more harm done if they are required to conform to the same standard. The very material itself may make less of an appeal to some children than to others. And hence may become tiresome to some while still maintaining its interest for others. Therefore time is wasted in requiring children to work with material which means nothing to them when they might be employed with something which would be valuable to their growth.

A schedule of work tends to over emphasize the importance of the material. If certain periods are set aside for a gift lesson or an occupation lesson, the assumption is that the gift or occupation must be used at that time and nothing must be allowed to interfere with such a presentation of material. This is laying emphasis in the wrong place. Many occasions may arise where certain children may need very different presentations on a certain day and only harm can result to them if they are compelled to conform to the standard set for the day.

In suggesting that there should be no set programme in the kindergarten the claim is not made that there should



not be certain activities every day. For no day should pass without due observance of the lunch hour, the game period and rhythmic exercises. But in setting apart a definite time for such activities, it should be borne in mind that all the children be not required to take part in them. This, of course, is a needless limitation, for what healthy child ever refused to join in games or rhythms or allowed the lunch hour to pass by. But if such an unexpected event occurred, it would be an opportunity for the teacher. Dr. Montessori would doubtless send for the doctor.

The morning circle was designed to give training in self-expression and to present to the children desirable experiences. It is certainly debatable how far this ideal has been realized. The usual public kindergarten is so large that it is difficult to interest and hold the attention of so many young minds. In some kindergartens ninety children meet morning after morning in the circle, in others fifty. It would be difficult for an adult, under such circumstances, to preserve his individuality. It is often a very serious question with college students whether they shall say the thing they believe or what the professor wishes them to say. If the problem is present with adults, how much more acute must it be with little children. They love their teacher and naturally they wish to please her. So they say the thing which she wishes them to say or they say nothing at all. The advantages from this kind of general conversation are so slight that it is a waste of time both for children and teacher. Much better results could be obtained by means of individual conversations or informal talks with groups of children. When

children are vitally interested in anything, they do not need to be urged to talk and if they are not interested they gain nothing from forced conversation.

The morning talk usually consumes thirty minutes. This in itself is detrimental to the children's welfare for fifteen minutes is as long as any child of this age can concentrate his attention. Especially is this true if the subject for contemplation is presented to him. The children lose interest and sit in their chairs in quiet apathy even if they are not actively naughty. How much better it would be to allow the children to spend this time in eager work on something which could command all of their attention. This is just what the teacher in the Montessori school does. She allows the children to talk to her when they have something to say. And, since the environment is so attractive and so conducive to conversation, there is not a day passes without an occasion arising for helpful conversation with each child.

The gift lesson is one of the greatest stumbling blocks in the advancement of the kindergarten. There has been, from the first, such a halo of symbolism and reverence surrounding them; there has grown up such respect and tradition for them, that it is almost impossible to see them simply as material planned to aid the child in his self-development. Since this is the case, since it is almost impossible to divest them of their traditional value, it would be better to discard them entirely. There is plenty of more valuable material which may be used in their place.

In making these adjustments in accordance with the practice in the Montessori school, the kindergarten would

lose nothing of its essential worth. There would still remain the beautiful ideal of the school as a miniature society, the games, the music, the story hour, nature-study and other material which is being used to such great advantage. What we should give up would be the excessive dominance of the teacher, the set programme of work, the morning talk and the gift lesson. What we should gain, would be freedom to study the children, in a natural environment, an opportunity to know each child better through personal conversation with him and a release from the trammels of tradition. In other words, in freeing the children, the teacher herself would become free to develop her own powers and personality, to grow as she should grow, to look forward and not back for her sanctions, and to depend upon herself to work out her own changing problems.

## CHAPTER IV

### GIFTS

SOME one has said that more controversies have been waged and more blood has been shed over names than over principles. I am always forcibly reminded of this in hearing or reading any discussion of the kindergarten or the kindergarten material. There seems to be an inevitable tendency to hark back to what Froebel planned, or did or said. Frankly it seems hardly worth while to spend so much time on such discussions. Does it make so very much difference what he said or did? Of course historically it is of very vital interest to consider what contributions each educator in turn made to the sum of educational thought. But in our daily work, the worth of the contribution far exceeds the prestige which may accrue to it from the glamour of any name. Not who first presented the material but of what value is the material is the vital point to be considered.

The kindergarten gifts have always rejoiced in the prestige which has been theirs because they were planned by Froebel. Curious as it may seem, this fact, for a time, rendered any intelligent criticism of this material almost impossible. Even to-day, although such discussion does take place and a very frank discussion it may be, yet each side is constantly quoting Froebel in support of its propositions. There seems to be an unexpressed fear that one may be accused of disloyalty to Froebel or of wandering

after strange gods. This seems to me a curious state of mind. What difference does it make what Froebel planned or intended to do with the gifts. In the last analysis they, like any other material, must be subjected to the same standards of efficiency and must survive or be discarded according as they measure up to these standards.

There is but one sacred thing in the kindergarten and that is the child. There is only one question to be asked in respect to the gifts. Do they or do they not contribute to the growth of the child intellectually and physically? If they do they are of value, if they do not, the sooner they are discarded the better.

The remark has been made that we need more study of the gifts for a better understanding of them. Perhaps we do, but I should advocate a more profound study of the child and when this is accomplished, our knowledge of the gifts, as well as of any other material, will be found to be surprisingly enlarged. If we look at the child through the gifts the task is difficult, but if we look at the gifts through the child, the gift study becomes simple. What I mean is that we know very little about the child, therefore it is waste of time to keep studying the gifts with a view to presenting them to the child. Rather let us devote all our energies to a study of the child and then we shall have no trouble in adapting the material to his needs.

We teachers of the kindergarten have been accused of conservatism, of liking to adhere to a tradition. There is some truth in the charge and nowhere is it more evident than in our discussion of the gifts. Even the fact that we cling to such a peculiar name smacks of tradition. We

should lose nothing by giving up the name and we should gain much. For any non-essential compromise which draws the kindergarten and the elementary school together is of inestimable value. The name is peculiar and emphasizes our differences rather than our resemblances. We are forced into an explanation and the one who explains is always at a disadvantage. Happy the day when we shall have discarded this relic of an outgrown past.

In thinking of the gifts I have tried to look at them as things in themselves, not at all as traditional material which has been handed down from a revered leader. This has been a difficult task for so much has been written about them from Froebel's day until now that, in spite of one's best effort, a bias in one direction or another is likely to arise.

In taking this view of the gifts I have assumed that children instinctively reach out for those things which will be a means of growth to them. They feel a need for material to work with which will enable them to satisfy their yearning for growth. For physical and mental growth is a natural law of being and the satisfaction of this natural yearning must necessarily be the first step in the educative process.

Evidences of this reaching out for material to exercise one's body and mind may be demonstrated at endless length. We all know the eagerness with which a teething child reaches out for something hard to bite on, or the persistence with which a baby kicks against an obstacle as a means of gaining strength. We see older children walking on copings or fences in their endeavor to gain balance. So it seems to me a safe generalization to make

that the playthings which children seek instinctively must necessarily be sought as a means of growth. If we find that there are certain things which all children delight in using, we must acknowledge that those things have universal validity in tending to foster the growth of the child. However these may be augmented from our larger experience, any material given to the child must be tested by this rule. How do the gifts measure up to the standard?

If we laid all the gifts before the child what is there which would meet his instinctive need? There are the balls in their bright colored dresses. Any child would reach for them and begin a game of ball. Through his instinctive interest in all things which move he would be attracted by their lively rolling and bouncing. With this simple interest there is no end to the things which can be done to strengthen the child physically and socially through playing with the balls. His shoulder muscles will be exercised, his arms and back developed, balance will come through posing to throw and keenness and accuracy of vision will be an outgrowth of the catching and tossing. There can be no doubt that as a means of growth the ball appeals to the child and is needed by him.

Also the child would immediately reach out for the cubes and bricks in their boxes. Instinctively he would wish to play with them, to pile them in all sorts of shapes, to build houses and barns, high towers and churches and to lay board walks. The boxes are but an added joy. What fun to pile the blocks in them and then turn them out again with a jolly noise! There is no end to the pleasures and profit to be derived from the building

gifts.

But what of the tablets, the sticks and the points? It has been my experience that children do not care for them; are not interested in them; do not reach for them as a means of satisfying their need for self-expression. I have seen children wish to pile the tablets or try to make them stand on end. But as this was not a legitimate use of the material, the teacher always interfered. I have never seen a child, who, if left to his own devices, would make pictures or patterns of this material. I have read of such children, people have told me about them, but I have never seen any of them attempt such a use of the material, although my work has been among many different races and classes. Even the students in my training class react in this way when the material is first presented to them. They begin to pile the tablets or try to stand the sticks on end or make a pile of the points. In some cases a suggestion even is not sufficient. A definite direction is necessary before the traditional work is done.

The second gift, the sphere, cube and cylinder, because of its solidity and size is attractive to an investigating mind. Although it has been called a difficult gift for the teacher to use, it offers no obstacles to a child's ingenuity, especially if more than one gift is used. It offers a splendid opportunity to make things resembling objects in daily use or buildings seen along the street. For in Earle Barnes' *Studies in Education*, he found that children are interested in things first from their use, and then from their movement. They never described any object by telling its color, form, size, material or structure. So it is very patent why the first and second gifts, and



especially the building gifts appeal to the child. Here is material which he can use and manipulate according to his own interests. For no child is content with a picture of a home unless there is a chimney with smoke coming from it, or better yet, people at the doors or windows. Coffee to them is something which mother drinks, or a picnic is some place where we take our lunch and eat it. So these gifts appeal because of their use, not because they have corners and edges, or because they represent stability or unity. Therefore to emphasize the color, form, size, material or structure of the gifts, is to impose on the children something which is not suitable for their present stage of development.

Dr. Barnes continues with the statement that we must approach the study of any object through its use, and that children cannot give elaborate description of things about them. Hence any approach to the gifts through mathematics, or the requirement of an elaborate description of any material from the material is hindering rather than helping the growth of the child.

Judging the gifts from a physiological standpoint objection may be made to them all.

In the form in which the first gift is presented at present, balls in woolen coverings, there is grave danger of disease germs lurking in them. Especially is this true, when the balls are used from year to year, rolled on the floor and handled by many children. In many cases they are not washed or cleaned in any way. How much better it would be if rubber balls were used which would not conceal germs so easily and which could be frequently washed.

The building gifts, valuable as they are, would be more valuable if used in a larger size. Of course this would mean that more space would be covered by each child and that some children might have to work on the floor. This would mean a break-up of the uniform monotony of work at the tables and in itself would be a good thing. In addition, the larger material would tend to exercise the large muscles of the children, which are so much in need of exercise.

Physiologically the tablets, the sticks, and the points are too great a strain on the child's nerves.\* "The fact that 'children love little blocks' and materials sufficiently small to throw the strain upon the small muscles of eye and hand is no excuse, when such an expert as Dr. Judd gives us this warning: 'One of the most noticeable facts about the child's diffuse movements is the fact that these movements are excessive, especially the movement of the finer muscles. Somewhere or other the false notion has entered into our pedagogy that the child's fine muscles do not develop until later than the large muscles. How can we believe such a false statement when we see a young infant clutching with its little fingers and exhibiting in this grip one of its strongest movements? How can one believe this dogma when he sees the boys and girls in the first grade doing all the work that they do with the fine muscles—literally overdoing this work in a very noticeable degree? The fact is, the finer muscles are in full operation very early in life. Indeed, they are the muscles which in diffuse movements are most apt to be called into

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\*The Kindergarten, pp. 290-292.

action. It requires a less powerful excitation from the nervous centers to set the fine muscles into action. They contract at the slightest stimulation. These are the muscles which always grow tense first in later life when the brain becomes over-excited. In emotional excitement, for example, it is the fine muscles of the face and hands that are first affected. This limitation in nature's provision for free movement is the first point at which the teacher's rational mode of developing the child must come in to supplement nature's provisions. The teacher should see to it that if diffusion tends to emphasize the small muscles, teaching should emphasize in due measure the large muscles. It is well to devise some other method of supplementing nature and calling the large muscles into play. Large arm exercises are the most available devices for attaining this end.' One of the best qualities of the Montessori material is that some of them are large. Dr. Burnham, in describing the ideal kindergarten of the future says, 'The kindergarten material is all large; fine work is not done.'"

Psychologists differ as to the prior appearance of the large or small muscles but they seem to be at agreement in pleading for an exercise of the large muscles, either because they develop first or because they do not develop first and so need to be exercised. Whichever way lies the truth, our duty is plain.

In every kindergarten there is found a gift lesson as part of the daily programme. If the teacher cannot find an appropriate exercise for this period, she blames herself, not the gifts. If the children are not interested in the material, she blames the children and not the gift.

Perhaps the training school is responsible for this attitude of mind. Students who spend three years in the study of the gifts cannot fail to be impressed with their great importance. If we changed the emphasis from this material to child psychology and hygiene our students might have a different mental attitude.

Year by year as I teach the gifts, I observe the re-action of the students toward them. At first, it is one of passive attention. As we continue and the significance of the material is laid before them, they react to it as the suggestion is given them. It is a rare mind of eighteen which can resist the suggestion of a strong, enthusiastic personality. Hence when the gifts are taught with all the devotion and enthusiasm which is peculiarly a part of a kindergarten training teacher, there can be but one response—an equal enthusiasm on the part of the students.

More and more, year by year, I am allowing my students, when the material is presented to them, to discover its possibilities for themselves. Invariably, their response is the same as that of the children. They are attracted by and interested in the first six gifts and find great possibilities in them but need instruction in the use of the other three. What their final attitude toward those gifts is depends entirely upon the attitude which I assume. This result is not peculiar to any training school or any part of the country but can be duplicated anywhere. Students, who are the product of our present school system are only too open to suggestion.

In a re-vitalized kindergarten there would be no gifts as such and no gift period. The material, known as balls, and blocks in their convenient boxes, would be put on the

shelves where the children could get them and each child could procure the one which met his needs. For we are assuming a large degree of infallibility, when we dictate to the children which gift they are capable of using. The smaller children are doubtless not able to use the fifth and sixth gifts but there may be some who are. This we can not discover under our present regime of presenting the material to the children. Neither can we tell when a child is ready to advance from one gift to the next. The advance is always regulated by the supervisor or by the average child, whatever that may mean. There is no average child, therefore, there can be no average advance. Each child should be free to take the next step when he is prepared for it. Only in this way can we make sure that some children are not over-stimulated, while others are under-stimulated to growth. Used in this way, with no prestige attached to them, the gifts cannot fail to be a means of vital growth to the children.

## CHAPTER V

### HAND-WORK

**W**ITH our usual tenacity of holding on to a tradition we still call the handwork done in the kindergarten an occupation, or occupations. This, of course, differentiates us immediately from the rest of the school, although much of our occupation work is similar to the handwork done in the grades, yet the name calls always for an explanation. When we have explained that the work is practically the same as that used in the grades, we have only the excuse to offer for using a different name that we are following tradition. It seems to me that this is a weak argument for us who had always prided ourselves upon being in the van of educational advance. If that is our only defense, let us by all means change the name. For it is much better to cement in every possible way our connection with the rest of the school than it is to cling to a mere tradition. The only excuse for doing the latter is that we care more for a tradition which means estrangement than for an immaterial change which means union. We can well afford to give up a few meaningless terms when we have so much that is vital to offer to the rest of the school system.

What are the kindergarten occupations? We all know the traditional advance from a point to a solid, which, with the gifts, completes a mathematical round. I doubt

very much if anyone takes this round very seriously to-day. Pricking and pin work are seldom, if ever, used; drawing on a net work of lines has been superseded by freehand drawing; in a few instances the sewing cards have been replaced by real sewing and the paper mats by material of less perishable quality; the folding according to a school is supplemented by freehand folding; the clay is no longer confined to geometric forms. All of these changes must be considered an educational advance. With our growing knowledge of the development of a child's physical nature, we have come to realize the enormity of giving him a needle to use in making small holes in a paper and with our growing knowledge of his mental development, we are realizing how impossible it is for such handwork to appeal to a young child.

The objection to the sewing cards is similar and different as well. It is held that we have no right to give a child something and call it sewing, when it resembles only in the faintest degree real sewing. As the kindergarten should be the world in miniature, we have no sanction for calling work by names which will not hold valid in the world at large. The only kind of real sewing which the children can do is overcasting. This kind of work meets all the requirements set by the physical or mental or social needs of the child. It does not put any undue strain on him physically, it appeals to him mentally and is a connecting link with society for he sees the same kind of thing being done at home.

The same objection can be made to the weaving of paper mats, with the additional objection that the material is very easily torn and soiled. Weaving real carpet rugs

appeals at once to a child's love of the practical and to his love of beauty. For carpet rugs may be just as beautiful as paper mats. Both with the rugs and the overcasting of useful articles we are showing the children that beauty is not something to hang on the wall, to put in a drawer or to be used only on stated occasions. Beauty, to be of value, must be part of our daily lives. It is beauty of the commonplace, of the daily life in kitchen and bedroom which we need so badly. We need to beautify the commonest utensils, to make them lovely as well as useful. The results will be an increased respect for the humble things of life. Not that I expect baby minds to feel all this. The appeal to them is chiefly that of use, but if we can, little by little, associate the useful and the beautiful, not the useless and the beautiful, an apperceptive mass will develop and finally we shall be able to see the results in our homes, a much desired achievement.

There is no end to the possibilities of freehand drawing and of painting. Some one has said that a small child should draw every day. Whether this should be forced on him daily is debatable. Certainly he should be given the opportunity to draw every day, if he feels the need of expressing himself in that way. I remember one little girl in a Montessori school who did not wish to draw. She finally said that she did not care to come to school if she had to draw. When told that she need not do so unless she wished, she came in the room in her usual smiling fashion. This attitude of mind continued for about two weeks. Then, one morning, she rushed into the room, hastily took off her hat and coat and began to draw. She drew all that day and for the two or three days following.



This was true self-activity, which was allowed to express itself until it was satisfied. When that time came she was eager to go on with the other work. Of course such a thing could not have happened in a well-regulated kindergarten. As I have said elsewhere, self-activity with us must conform to the clock. A spell of self-activity reaching over three days would not be tolerated. But Anna May had learned the joy of self-expression through drawing, a knowledge which she never ceased to call on.

Drawing on the blackboard is splendid for little children as it gives an opportunity for the use of the big arm muscles. But if the blackboard is too high, the strain of holding up the arm is too great. This strain may be obviated by placing a long wooden stool under the board. Thus, not only relieving the strain, but also giving the children opportunity to practice balance. Large pieces of paper can be pinned on the walls, which will make a practical substitute. However, large pieces of paper, with crayons or charcoal, may be kept in an easily accessible place. Then the children may use the tables or the floors as a resting place for the paper. The chief point is to have the material easily accessible and to allow the children to use it freely.

Freehand folding offers a splendid opportunity for originality. Every year, in my training class, I am astonished at the work which is done by the students. There is no end to the pieces of furniture, houses and playthings which can be made. The problem of fastening them together has been met by using a mixture of mucilage and library paste. Given large sheets of Manila paper the children go to work with eagerness to fashion something according

to their own ideas. Perhaps, in the beginning, no ideas are forthcoming and a model will need to be furnished. But it will not be long before the children prefer to think things out for themselves. It is most interesting to watch the development of their initiative and to see their growth in power. This is true also in a training class. The students are usually much upset when asked for the first time to use their own designs. But, like the children, they soon begin to rejoice in the work and cannot do enough of it. Folding according to a school or according to prescribed directions is of little or no value. The paper given to the children is small in size, easily torn, and soiled. The objects made resemble, in a very slight degree, the name by which they are called, they are too small for use and they are not beautiful. So there is no object in making them. The reason presented for giving the children such work is that it teaches them precision and gives them the ability to follow directions. Both of these abilities are desirable to possess but it seems to me that the folding according to directions calls for more precision than the child is capable of using, and that the directions are so intricate that he is not able to follow them. I have seen twenty-five children sit at a table for half an hour and all they did was to fold the front edge of the paper on the back edge. Some children did it immediately and had to sit with folded hands as a reward. Others ruined two or three papers in vain attempts to produce the result desired and always failed. These children were scolded for their failure. The teacher did not seem to realize that the fault was not theirs. When all had made a trial the papers were collected and that was the end of

that experience. It was not clear to me that the children gained anything. It seemed but a beginning of the feeling that lessons are something to be gone through with; that the really vital things are waiting outside.

I wish to say again with emphasis that I appreciate fully the importance of doing things with precision and the value of being able to follow directions. But there are many other ways to impress these lessons in the kindergarten. In all of the freehand handwork, the child learns for himself that unless the ends meet or the fold is true, the desired end cannot be reached. The difference between doing this from self-knowledge for a desired and imagined end is vastly different from doing it from dictation with no end in view and no motive but a desire to please the teacher or a habit of obedience. He can learn precision from freehand work much better than from dictation.

The ability to follow directions is almost a lost art among adults as well as among children. In addition, it is the rare adult who can give adequate directions. In both cases it seems to me that the lack is due to an inability to think clearly. There are a few simple directions which must be given and followed in every school for young children. There are about as many as young minds can assimilate. We would much better leave minute and detailed directions to a later age.

Working in clay or sand has always appealed to the young imagination. Children have always delighted in making mud pies, and what is clay but a good substitute for mud. The trouble has been that we have so little clay and so many children that each child can have but a small portion. However, if the children did not all work

at once, there would be enough material to use in large quantities. Therefore, the children would be able to fashion many things of large size. This holds true, too, of the sand table. With one or two children working at the table many schemes could be worked out which it is impossible to accomplish with twenty or twenty-five children.

The so-called practical occupations are very, very charming. It appeals at once to one's idea of the fitness of things that children should make doll houses and furnish them, that they should make other toys and playthings of wood as well as of card-board. They are certainly working from inner-compulsion, with a definite aim in view; they are learning to be content with simple things and to beautify the commonplace; they are learning to depend upon themselves for any additions they may need to what has been given them; they are learning the joy of real achievement.

The only criticism which I might venture to make is that there is a danger that the teacher may dominate this handwork just as much as she does the traditional occupations. If the practical handwork is simply the result of dictation, there is very little advantage gained over that now commonly used. Of course, there is the added advantage of interest which is enormous. But to be fully educative there should be interest plus freedom in design and action. Models might be placed in the room, as, for example, a fully equipped doll's house, and the children given liberty to copy it. No help should be given by the teacher unless it be asked and then only by suggestion.

It has been proved over and over again that we learn

nothing unless we are interested in it. It matters not that we spend days, weeks and months in a class room, or that we fill pages of a note-book. We have not learned it unless it has become a part of ourselves and can be used. So with small children, they learn only when they are interested. At the kindergarten age, they are interested in the use of things. Therefore, they will learn lessons of precision, of perseverance, of neatness from the practical handwork which could not be learned from the uninteresting traditional material.

Children of this age are not interested in beauty as such. But we can provide beautiful things for them to work with and thus make an unconscious appeal which time and repetition will strengthen. But direct training in beauty of form or color should be left to a later stage in the child's development.

The criticism of the practical handwork has been that it is too materialistic and that it does not proceed in orderly sequence.

There is much truth in the stricture that no orderly progression has been worked out for this handwork. There has not yet been made that nice adjustment from the simple to the complex which prevails in the Froebelian occupations. But if we discard the setting of prescribed tasks this matter will adjust itself. Each child will then pick out the material which is suited to his needs. We need have no fear that we are demanding too much from him or that the material is not difficult enough to produce growth. Children delight in surmounting difficulties and are better judges than we of what will give them this opportunity. We shall get better results when we

provide the material and allow the children to make their own choice.

There is no end to the handwork which may be used in the kindergarten. The difficulty is to find just what is suitable. This can be done only by experiment. Fortunately, there is a large body of material which has been tested and found to appeal to the interest of children, as well as to have real educative value. This is the Montessori material. The simplicity of the material, the opportunity it gives for endless repetition make a strong appeal to the younger children.

Dr. Hall suggests that "among other things it would be quite germane to an ideal kindergarten to have a stone and woodyard, where many stones of as diverse kinds, shapes, color, qualities, etc., as possible should be accumulated, including a load of smooth, variegated pebbles from the beach; and from these up to sizes that the children would have to exert themselves to lift or even roll. There should be a level space for them to pile them into tiny cairns, barrows, cromlecks, make alignments, playhouses, etc. There should be also a generous collection of small boards, large wooden blocks, slats, etc., etc., not entirely without slivers. Here children might indulge their primitive instincts to construct, with material heavy enough to exercise the larger muscles. They could assort them by size, color, shape, smoothness of feel, etc. It would be well also if there were characteristic bits of ore and minerals, marble, glass without too sharp edges; and even coal, and a few of the more common or easily obtainable fossils and arrowheads. To realize what stones mean to the material child, read Acker. That tells the story. He

shows, too, what strings, points, edges, clubs, etc., have meant for the race and mean to-day for children. The children might occasionally be shown the many clever things that can be done, and not too much protected so that there would never be any bruises or petty accidents. Thus the propensity to build, classify, exercise the aesthetic taste, work, develop the strong muscles, learn something about minerals, mines, rocks, mountains could be guided and developed by talks and model exercises. Some stones could be named and tales of the Mythic and Stone Age, and some rudiments of what will later become interest in lithology could be developed by lessons from the rocks. Such a stone and woodyard in a school could teach many invaluable lessons and stimulate tendencies. For the older children, there could be joined frame-work, boards, and other material to be put together without nails into houses large enough for the children to get into and enjoy, and then taken down and reconstructed. There should, of course, also be bricks for building as well as stones.

“Snow in its season is as valuable for constructive play as sand or clay, is more plastic, and young children should be insured a good deal of experience with molding snow-balls and various other figures, making snow men, forts, imprinting their own figure in it, making pictures and letters, mapping out cart wheels, and other patterns for games, digging and tunneling in drifts, rolling and leaping in it, etc. Snow has pedagogic possibilities that are not yet realized. The kind of play it prompts is under the very best conditions, for the ground is padded and cushioned and so incites to new motor activities. The analysis of snow air shows it to be the purest from germs,

most prophylactic and stimulating while the cold adds its wondrous tonic, sending the blood inward to stimulate all the vital organs, and then by reaction bringing it to the surface again in the most healthful way. Then a snow field is on the whole a better environment for play, and a surer tonic kind of play than even a grassy lawn. Like those with wood and stone, snow plays are a rich, rank soil as yet but little cultivated by the programmists."

Although picture books may not properly be classed as handwork, yet there is every reason why they should form a part of the school equipment. Especially in our poor kindergartens, where the children see few if any pictures, are they needed. But in these days of bridge whist and daily matinees, there are few children who would not welcome this addition to their environment.

From year to year, as we study the children more closely, we should be able to evolve better handwork, more and more suitable to the children's needs. And when this material is put within reach of the children, and each child is allowed freedom to choose what appeals to his need at the time, we shall have indeed a revitalized kindergarten.



## CHAPTER VI

### MUSIC

**N**O one can estimate the harm which is being done every day in our kindergartens by the careless, slipshod playing of vulgar music. The constant bang, bang, bang; thump, thump, thump, for half the morning, cannot fail to cheapen and vulgarize the small individuals subjected to it. Of course, in many kindergartens the best music is played and played well. But it has been my experience, both in observing the work and in talking with teachers from all parts of the country, that few teachers realize the responsibility which devolves upon them in regard to the music which is played and the manner in which it is interpreted. Music is thought of in terms of the action which accompanies it, not as a thing in itself. In a sense this is a right view point, for any impression, such as music, can be estimated only by the expression produced. But it is not of this expression the teacher is heedful. She limits her attention to the physical manifestation produced by the music, such as skipping and dancing. She fails to realize that the nervousness or irritability shown at a handwork lesson, the desire to push and crowd at the games, may be the direct result either of the quality or the quantity of the music played. Our failure to grasp the significance of this is leading us daily to miss an opportunity to make use of one of the most potent educative factors at hand.

From the time of primitive man until to-day music has been a vital method of self-expression. When primitive man had conquered his environment to such a degree that he had some leisure time, he passed that time in acting over again the activities which had occupied him during the day. From the living out in play the work which took so much of his time came the dance. The whole world of folk dances is filled with such dances viz., the shoemaker's dance, the harvest dance, washday dance. But bodily movement alone was not sufficient to satisfy his craving for self-expression. He began to make sounds to accompany his movements. Naturally these sounds resembled the sounds which he heard in nature—the swishing of the waves, the sighing of the wind or the tossing of the branches of the trees. In other words music was distinctively objective. It represented objects in nature external to the musician. By degrees, as the race advanced in civilization, music became more and more subjective until to-day it is almost entirely so. So-called programme music which appears at rare intervals on a concert programme, is the last vestige of objective music. To-day music expresses emotion. Hence it is one of the chief means for self-expression not only for the trained musician but also for the man in the street. The church service would fail of much of its power if divested of congregational singing.

This fact, that music is the expression of the emotional life will, I believe, be acknowledged by all. But the corollary which follows from it is not usually deduced. If music is an expression of emotion then we should be very careful what emotion is expressed. For emotions are

as contagious as the measles. Given one individual in an excessive emotional state and the result will undoubtedly be that all who come in contact with him will catch a part of his emotion. We see this in the power of the reformer, in the effect which an orator has on his audience. We all know the joyous effect of meeting a genuinely happy person or the deadening effect of the chronically morbid. Emotions react not only on the person experiencing the emotion but also on the individuals who come in contact with him. Every day we experience this although quite unconsciously. A large part of our emotional life is dependent on the emotional state of those with whom we come in contact. But that emotion expressed in music has the same effect is not so generally acknowledged although we all act upon the knowledge. We have the band play to quiet a disorder, or the military leader uses it as an inspiration to make the men forget the fatigue of the march or to inspire them to the battle. Evangelists know it and use hymns as one of the most potent factors in arousing congregations. The Salvation Army knows it and makes the appeal which will reach the class of people it is working for. We all know the difference in our feelings after we have listened to the Messiah or sat through the performance of a musical comedy.

All music is not good to listen to. It is not only rag-time and the cheap songs of the Vaudeville stage which are pernicious in their influence. There are works of art which are just as dangerous in their influence as any piece of literature which we keep so carefully from our young people. The Venusberg music from Tannhauser has been called the wickedest music which was ever writ-

ten. The much played Barcarolle from the Tales of Hoffman is sensuous in the extreme. Such compositions should not be played to young people, for music can debase as well as uplift.

If music, then, is an expression of an emotional state and if any such expression must necessarily have a marked effect, it follows that we must be very critical of the music which we present to kindergarten children. For children of their age are very susceptible to suggestion. Their emotional life is much higher developed than their intellectual, hence any appeal to the emotions makes a much deeper impression than one to the intellect.

None but the very best music, best in composition, best in execution and best in emotional reaction should ever be tolerated for one instant. To accomplish this result we must, of course, go back to the training school. The music in a kindergarten can never reach any grade higher than the standard set by the teacher. Until the teacher knows and insists on the right kind of music, we must wait. The teacher is the product of her training school, so any reform must start there.

Our courses in music must be strengthened. Three years of consecutive work at some instrument, preferably the violin, together with regular classes in the appreciation of music, would make for a revolution in our kindergartens. If the objection is made that there is not time for such an enlargement, we might reply that enough time might very profitably be cut off from the periods assigned to the study of the gifts. However, such an objection is merely begging the question. If we realize the importance of the task we will find time to accomplish it.

If a teacher has been so unfortunate that she has missed adequate training in music, a phonograph would be a very adequate substitute. In fact, no matter how well the teacher may play, the phonograph is an indispensable adjunct to her own playing. It gives a larger repertoire of instruments, as well as a larger range of interpretation. Instead of the limitations of one performer on one instrument the opportunity is given of many different interpretations on many different instruments. Of course, there is the same danger here that cheap or vulgar music may be used. Not all phonograph records are good—many of them are just as demoralizing as any piano compositions. The trained taste of the teacher must safe-guard its use as it would that of any other music.

The teacher cannot lead her children to love the best in music unless she cares for it herself. Therefore, in addition to the training she has received in her normal course, she should lose no opportunity of hearing good music. If she is fortunate enough to have a phonograph in the school, she should play it for her own benefit as much as for the benefit of the children.

Music in the kindergarten then divides itself into two parts—one, the music which is played to the children; the other, the music which the children themselves produce. We have yet to discuss just what music the children shall sing, and when and how.

In the beginning of the kindergarten movement there was a great dearth of songs appropriate for use with children. Great credit is due Miss Patty Hill and her sister, Miss Poulson, Miss Eleanor Smith and the other pioneers of the movement for the splendid work which they did in

providing songs about things of interest to children. But we know more of child nature now than was known then, and we know that children of from four to six years of age are not capable of the sustained attention which is required to learn songs of two or three stanzas. So the songs of more than one stanza must go. For it is perfectly patent to any thoughtful observer that children in the kindergartens do not sing. I began to notice this while I was still in the training school. Never have I seen or heard a group of kindergarten children who could begin and carry to a conclusion a song of even two stanzas. Aided by the teacher, the whole group begins to sing. They may finish the first stanza and begin the second bolstered by the teacher's voice, but only a few are ever able to finish the song. It would be a brave and rare teacher who would venture to take away the support of both teacher and piano.

This situation typifies the fatuity of so much of our work in the kindergarten. We all know that the children do not sing freely and spontaneously; we know that many of them come to us as monotones and leave us as monotones; we know that it is a rare occurrence to find a child who can sing alone or who has any desire to do so. Yet singing should be just as much a commonplace of expression as talking, especially with little children.

"At the age when the average child enters the kindergarten or first grade, he is in the same physical, mental, and creative state, in relation to his voice, as the artist, who, the studio training completed, stands upon the threshold of a career. Each has arrived at the place where he knows that his voice belongs to himself, and that he

can do anything he desires with it. The child has already tested numberless times its persuasive, imitative and deceptive powers. Instinctively, and quite unconsciously, he has come to know his voice as the medium through which he touches the world about him, and its myriad colors express his varying emotional states with mirror-like fidelity, revealing anger, joy, hope, desire, pity, love. When certain emotional states are deepest, he sings with absolute sincerity of emotional expression.

“The artist, through training, has come back to nature; and at the moment of the debut, whatever else may be lacking, one may count with surety upon this one asset—the ability to reveal through the singing voice, the dominant feeling of the thing sung. This art is called by various names: tone color, style, individuality, or (that much-abused term) temperament. Again, the child has, and the artist must have, either through natural gift or much study, power to surrender body, mind, and spirit to his individual feeling for the tone color, a true instinct for sincerity of expression. Rare indeed is the child who can be induced to express the artificial, or any mood, foreign to his personal feeling of the moment. Here again we have style, temperament, individuality.

“The child has quite naturally what few artists ever acquire, the gift of gifts, the art of arts, viz., the ability to play with the voice and an irresistible desire to exercise this power. This is the period when the school steps in, claiming the child for a part of each day, imposing upon him its more or less formal routine and methods.

“The two influences which are of supreme moment in the child’s life at this period are the influence of formal

expression through speech, and that of the formal educative process.

“Recognizing this, the problem of the kindergarten and first grade becomes apparent. The child should be kept, as far as possible, within the influences which foster the feelings, and suggest their spontaneous expression through activity.

“In the last analysis, the end sought in teaching every subject is the development of the individuality of the child. Singing serves this end better than any other subject in the program of the kindergarten or first grade, for in the song life of the child, his individuality is most fully revealed. Through the song he expresses imitative, interpretative, and creative power. Here then is our claim for music as a basic subject, the basic subject even, of the primary grade. Properly taught, it leads out to the teaching of all the other subjects. Reading is so closely allied to it that the correlation is arousing the interest of the more conservative educators, while advanced thinkers accept with high faith the very obvious conclusions of this correlation.

“Consider briefly the significance of this correlation. The first difficulty to be overcome in learning to read is the purely physical one of gaining command of the voice. The child has at first no correlated ear training, no power to hear the sound of his own voice and to relate it to other sounds. Rhythm and melody are vital agents in this ear training. The voice attuned through song will come more freely, naturally, and musically when used in speech.

“Relating the reading lesson to the song is sure to



eliminate such inanities as are commonly found in the reading texts supplied to children; and this is a matter of vital importance. Granted our art standard as the true test of efficiency in our teaching, we must give the child some quickening impulse in the material provided, something that will kindle the imagination, arouse the feelings, and provoke spontaneous expression.

“We must set for ourselves a very high aim, that of bringing the child into consciousness of his voice and of speech as a great mystery which is to be treated with respect and used advisedly that it may arouse pleasure and appreciation in the hearer. There should be no such use of the voice except as it is called into play by imagination and feeling, to arouse, which there must be a text which will stimulate the imagination and stir the emotions. ‘I see the pretty maple leaf’ may be rendered with every shade of mimicry of the teacher’s inflections, but to the child it will be entirely lacking in either sincerity or interest. No sane and normal child will find anything but boredom in ‘Ned can run,’ ‘I see a dog,’ ‘I can fly’—typical exercises from a first grade primer.

“Learning to read consists not so much in acquiring a vocabulary (though that will come inevitably), as in giving pleasure by the frank dramatic expression of sincere feeling aroused in the reader by the picture he conceives, and which he is trying to convey to his hearer. Reading is, or should be, a work of art, a true dramatic expression, not a mere word pronouncing performance. From this point of view, it becomes intensive rather than extensive; and facility, which ‘grows by what it feeds on,’ becomes an unconscious process which may be left

to time if the spirit of the child be once fully aroused. How many of us credit our ability to read to the instruction received at school? Very few, if we are frank with ourselves, will own any relation between the set paragraphs of the reading lesson and the world-wide wonderland of books into which fancy or curiosity led us, or into which we simply drifted unguided, unstimulated, save by the inner desire to know.

“No. It is the province of the school to keep the wonder alive in the child. To bring him into relation with such books as will feed his fancy, stimulate his curiosity, arouse his desire to go further, and to give pleasure by sharing—that is, by reading aloud, thus re-creating the image for another. This will all lead, quite unconsciously, to a cultured use of speech. Beauty of enunciation will come spontaneously; just as he chooses with delicacy and precision the placing of flowers in a vase which he is to bestow on one he loves, so will the child with the same rare taste, choose his intonations, dwelling with fine discrimination upon the tones which are to convey his vocal pictures. In this his sincerity is unerring.

“Now, the training in phonics, which has this end in view, should all be from the tonal side. The attitude of the teacher toward phonics should be that of the art student toward diction; and here again it is intensive rather than extensive: not how many high notes one can sing, nor how many words one can pronounce; rather how much beauty in a high note, how much charm in a single word that may linger on the tongue, giving rare pleasure to the one who utters it, as well as conveying

a picture to the hearer. The miracle of speech should be kept a miracle.

“To serve this end, the correlation of music with reading is the strongest agent, for in the rhythm of the song, the voice is sustained without conscious effort; through the melody of the song the picture is fixed indelibly in the imagination and memory, and in the joyous repetition of a favorite song comes all the drill necessary to fix the vocabulary without any of the drudgery so hateful to childhood.

“Something there is in rhythm and melody which goes with play. The lilt of the song gets into the joints of the child, as the spirit of the song insinuates itself into his mind, destroying the self consciousness which appears with any effort to make a formal game. The song is inevitably accompanied by dramatic action.

“Here is the teacher’s opportunity for phonic drill, for children will accept the sharply defined accents and phrases of the song. Here is breath control gained quite unconsciously by the child. Here is precision of utterance, and in the big imitative sounds, the finest vocal drill.

“Take the sound of the bees for breath control. Follow this with imitative sounds in nature. The wind as it whistles, or hums, or sighs. The sound of it in the big bending pine, or in the rustling poplar tree. The splash of the waves on the shore—the swish of the big wave. The hum of the electric fan. The play of voices in the echo. The whole field of acoustics becomes a real Aladdin’s chamber of fancy to the child, who, pleased with the infinite imitative power of his own voice, goes

from one exercise to another, quite unconscious that he is strengthening the voice, gaining breath control, opening and purifying the nasal passage, destroying incipient adenoids, clarifying the vision both of the eye and of the mind by sending greater blood supply to the brain, and loosing that greatest organ of all, the voice, from its bondage of tense self-conscious muscles.

"The repertoire of songs for this field of work covers all the interests and experience of normal childhood. It includes the bugle (with marching and military bearing of course; the suggestion is irresistible to childhood); the steam engine; saw mill; scissors grinder; Indian call, or warwhoop; fiddle; top; bell (both the large bell that swings in the belfry and the little bell that stands on the teacher's desk); the sea shell; and the pure vibrating sound made by running the finger about the moistened rim of a tumbler.

"Singing, so taught that it would express the life of the child in song could be a basic subject in the curriculum of the kindergarten, and first and second grade schools; and through it we might give to the home and to the country something worth while to the child in personal development and to singing as an art."\*

If music with nature study is to be the basic study in the kindergarten we must understand what music is. We have seen that it is a mode of self-expression for one thing, but this does not explain what it is. There are many things which go to make up music but of them all the thing which concerns us is rhythm. For music is an

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\*The Life of the Child in Song and Speech. Alys E. Bentley.

outgrowth of rhythm, not rhythm of music. Of just what rhythm consists it is easy to feel and hard to tell. Glyn, in his *Rhythmic Conception of Music*, has defined it as "the periodic quality, undulating and pulsating, of all music." Wallaschek, in *Primitive Music*, says, "Rhythm, taken in a general sense, to include 'keeping in time' is the essence of music, in its simplest form as well as in the most elaborated fugues of modern composers," and again, "Men do not come to music by way of tones but they come to tones and tunes by way of rhythmical impulse." Glyn says also that "Time outlines precede pitch outlines because they are easier to grasp."

From these quotations it may be seen that rhythm is time and yet more than time and that it is the precursor of music taken in the sense we use it. Such was the case with primitive man who began with rhythmic gestures and bodily movements, to act over again his usual occupations. From these movements came music and to-day the same truth holds that a sense of rhythm comes from bodily movement and a sense of music from rhythm.

Children are instinctively rhythmic. From birth they feel the rhythm of the breath, the beat of the heart; when they begin to walk, they can feel the rhythm of their step or of the swinging of their arms. They hear the rhythm in nature, the sound of the waterfall, the swish of the waves on the beach or artificial sounds, as the thump, thump, thump of the drum or the honk, honk, honk of the automobile horn. It is upon this instinct that we must build and lead the children on into the wonderful world of music.

The rhythmic sense can best be developed through

bodily movement and this is our especial opportunity in the kindergarten. By doing this we shall accomplish two results, we shall lead the child from a crude sense of rhythmic to the beginning of a love of music as well as develop his body and give him control over it.

Instead of beginning in the fall to sing songs, taking it for granted that all children can sing, a better plain and one based on good psychology would be to begin with some simple bodily movements. All children are interested in animals and delight in imitating them. Through such imitation we have at hand a wonderful opportunity for bodily movement based on rhythm. Take for example the slow swing of the bear or the waddling of the duck; the jump of the kangaroo or the galloping of horses; any of these appeal to children and through them they learn a tremendous amount of bodily control, a sense of rhythm and they have a good time. As one little girl said to me, after such a lesson, "Oh, don't you just love rhythms?" To another child of three and a half years, the waddling ducks were so real that when she was asked if they looked like ducks, she replied, "They are ducks." Children will play these little movements over and over again, not because they are entranced with being a bear or a kangaroo but because it feels good to do it. A child is constantly seeking balance, instinctively he does all kinds of things with this end in view. In school where the children are free to do it, one can see them at odd times during the day practising being a frog or a butterfly. They appreciate their physical needs and take opportunity to satisfy them.

Such simple exercises would naturally be followed by

more difficult ones, until by spring the children would be ready to take up some simple four line songs. But one must imagine that the children have not been singing before this. Naturally and spontaneously they hum the tunes appropriate to the exercise or they sing some words to go with it.

“The kangaroo can jump  
The kangaroo can bound,  
Jump, bound  
He never makes a sound.”

They sing alone, they delight in singing and they sing at home. They are just as likely to sing a request as to say it. If they wish a good-bye or a good-morning song, they make one up. They realize intuitively that singing is just another way of expressing one's desires or thoughts. Miss Bentley tells a story of being in a kindergarten one day when the teacher asked for some new good-bye songs. Miss Bentley suggested that the children might make up their own songs, so each child sang his good-bye instead of saying it. Instead of one good-bye song the teacher had twenty-five. This is a very good example of our need to appreciate the talents latent in the children.

With the spring the children should be eager for some little songs, like those in Mother Goose. But long sophisticated songs, such as are at the present time sung in the kindergarten, are quite valueless at this stage of the child's development and should be postponed until later years.

To sum up the chapter—music in the kindergarten is of two kinds, the music played to the children and the

music sung by the children. The first should be only of the very best quality and very well played; the second, should be the result of rhythmic feeling based on bodily movement and no songs should be given until spring and then only simple ones as the need of the children require.



## CHAPTER VII

### GAMES

**U**NLIKE the Montessori School, the kindergarten has a set time for games. This divergence may be due to the different idea of liberty practised in the two schools, or it may be due to the fact that one school has no set program while the other has. But, doubtless, the justification for kindergarten games lies in the conception of the school as a miniature society and as such should include the activities which go on in the outside world. The game period has been a time when such activities could be worked out. So much time has been spent on games typifying the blacksmith, the carpenter, the knights, games of nature, such as birds, leaves, and caterpillar. From such play the child was supposed to gain a feeling of oneness with man and nature. And undoubtedly in many cases he did.

Aside from this traditional material, games may be played for four reasons—physical, aesthetic, pleasurable, and moral reasons. Whichever aim is prominent on any day, will color the games. Although all the aims must necessarily be considered, if the children are to receive proper training.

The game period should be a time when the teacher has opportunity to watch the physical condition of the children. Although this may be done at any time, the game period is especially important as movements are

brought into play which are not used at other times. In running and throwing, in jumping and walking, the child's physical needs are thrown in a stronger light than they are when he is working at the tables. The watchful teacher can detect what is lacking in each child, what are his especial weaknesses and can plan means to strengthen them. But this she cannot do if she must lead all the games and if she must watch the clock. She can be free to do her part only as the children are free.

If games are played for physical development, there are many things which must be considered. The teacher should have a general knowledge of what games are physically educative and how they re-act on the body. She should know which movements produce certain results, which movements are harmful and which are beneficial. She should have a good working knowledge of biology, physiology and hygiene, as well as some knowledge of the relative measurements of young children and their relation to growth.

If children are to profit physically by games, they must be played in the open air. At first blush, this suggestion may sound impossible of achievement. But it is not so difficult if the desire is there. Every school has a playground no matter how small. It would be an easy matter to choose some time for the games when the rest of the school is occupied indoors. The space would be larger than the ring in the kindergarten room in breadth and length and the sky is a wonderful substitute for the ceiling. It is not only a physical feeling that one gets from playing out-of-doors. It is, also, a mental attitude which changes the character of the games entirely. After all it

is the mental idea or desire back of the physical manifestations of the games which determines how much benefit is derived from them. If they are played with a will, with an absorbed attention, the gain is not only physical good but spiritual as well. But unless one has herself played out-of-doors and felt the wideness of the universe as her own, it is difficult to realize the importance of out-of-door play. There is a certain healthful, spiritual uplift which comes from contact with the earth. Anyone who has romped and played out-of-doors, perhaps by the seashore or in the mountains, shoes and stockings discarded, can appreciate just what it means to play under the sky instead of in a walled room. To those who have not had this experience no adequate idea of the result to be obtained can be had. So that it will be difficult to make them realize that the result more than compensates for the trouble involved. The small dimensions of a school yard will hardly give the same feeling of uplifts, especially as public opinion would probably insist that the children keep on their shoes and stockings. But the open air is much, much to be preferred to a close school room. For it has been my observation that the windows in a kindergarten room are not opened when the games begin. Perhaps one or two are but there is always danger of a draft. The dust from the floor rises in fine clouds and vitiates the air which the children have to breathe for the rest of the morning. If the windows are opened the room is made cold and not the proper place for children to sit in. Perhaps some of the children do not wish to play games that morning. They need a comfortable, warm room where they may continue their work.

For all children should not be required to take part in the games. It may be that some child is too occupied with a bit of work to leave it and we should only be interfering with his free development if we compelled him to drop an uncompleted task and take up another at our dictation. By so doing we are teaching him habits of inattention and lack of concentration which will work against him in the future. Also there may be a physical reason why the child does not wish to play and an insistence on obedience would only work injury to him.

Work out-of-doors would necessitate leaving the piano behind. Therefore the children would be freed from the nervous strain of the incessant strum, strum, of that mechanical instrument. If they played singing games they would be real singing games and not games played on the piano and sung by the teacher. For when the piano is used the tendency is to rest on it and not to sing. But when the full responsibility is thrown on the children, they respond and make the game their own.

Children feel at home out-of-doors. They are in an accustomed situation and quickly dominate it. In a very real sense they play the games, they are the originators of games, they choose and plan the games and the teacher has opportunity to study them. For there is no place where individual differences display themselves so freely as in out-of-door games.

It is sometimes contended that the gain derived from out-of-door games is not commensurate with the trouble experienced in putting on caps and coats and marching out-of-doors. But if we adopt the Montessori principle of allowing and encouraging the children to help them-

selves, this disadvantage becomes a gain. For in putting on and taking off their outer garments the children gain valuable lessons in self-reliance. It means very much to a young child to be able to leave a room, to go down stairs steadily and quietly and to drop one task and take up another.

If the children are free to manage their own games, there will be opportunity for freedom of choice in play. If a child does not care to play, he need not; if he is tired of standing he may sit down; or he may return to another task if he wishes. In other words, he will not be held to a task when physically or mentally he is tired out. Doubtless a skillful teacher can tell when the children are tired but her attention is so occupied with keeping things going or filling in the time that many weary children must necessarily escape her attention. Also many children must be harmed before she acquires sufficient experience to tell how much endurance the children have. And in the present state of kindergarten procedure, no child is ever excused from the games. They are all held to the same standard of physical endurance, when undoubtedly many children are on certain days not able to measure up to the standard, and on every day, certain young children should not be held to the same requirements as the other ones. Individual differences need to be respected in physical games just as much as in any other activity in the kindergarten. But this cannot be done while we have a game period to which all children must conform. It can be done if we have a game period, in which the children may participate or not as they wish.

Kindergarten games are, as a rule, too complex. They

are so complex in fact that the children cannot play them without directions and for this or other reasons they are never played at home. Perhaps it is an advantage to have complex games dealing with typical life activities. But such activities cannot mean much to the child unless he is filled with a desire to repeat them in his play. If this is the case, then he will have no difficulty in working out the game for himself. When he does this, he has been truly self-active and has really entered into the life of the experience. After such a spontaneous expression at school, he will be very likely to repeat the experience at home and will thus add, bit by bit, to the games available for use at home and in the street.

The fact that these games do not function at home is a proof that they do not function at school. They are simply imposed on the children. Even simple games, such as puss-in-corner, are so directed by the teacher that it is doubtful if the children ever really sense the possibilities of the game. There is a real need for more wholesome games for children to play at home and the kindergarten should meet the need.

Another reason for playing games may be found in the development of the aesthetic instinct. To this point of view rhythms lend themselves most successfully. For rhythms are not only the foundation of music work, they are also a means of physical development. Through rhythmic exercises the children learn to adjust and to correlate their muscular organisms. They learn to control their bodies as one member, they learn to adjust each part in its relation to the other parts and best of all they learn to make the body serve the mind. However, this

end cannot be achieved by the practice of what is known as rhythms in the ordinary kindergarten parlance. Usually in the kindergarten the children march around the room and do whatever the piano tells them to do. This exercise consists chiefly of running, hopping, jumping, walking, etc. In a few kindergartens it is different. But no attempt is made to correlate all the various parts of the body in the movement. The back and head are held stiff while the arms or legs are moved, or the arms are stiffened while the legs are moved. So there can be little of value in such piece-meal exercise. Rhythmic exercise to be of value must take in the whole body. It must be a wave of movement which includes every part of the body. There is no value in isolating one part and exercising it, for of what value are strong arms or legs if the back is weak or of a strong back if the legs are not equally developed. Our bodies are one and must be used as one, therefore any exercise which tends to isolate one part is not making for the best development of the body. What is necessary for a proper use of the body, is correlation among the members, so that each part will contribute to the facility of every other part and there will be no inharmonious movement of jarring activity.

The necessity for such harmony and repose in movement is most apparent in our busy American life. We all live at a tension and too many of us break down from over-worked nerves. We do not know how to relax, as can be plainly seen in the tired expression on our faces in the street cars and trains. Especially is this true in schools and and especially do women teachers break down. There must be something fundamentally wrong with any

profession which requires so much time for recuperation. Naturally this high tension on the part of the teacher is carried over to the pupils and they are started in their life's journey keyed up to the high pitch of nervous excitement. A large part of this over-stimulation comes from a lack of co-ordination of the muscular organism. The body does not work as a whole. There is no relation among the different parts, consequently there is a constant jarring and shock first to one part of the system and then to another. This is evinced by the quick, jerky way in which many teachers handle the material in the kindergarten. Too many times one sees the teacher seize quickly the material from the child's hands and make some necessary adjustment. Or she pulls a child into line or jerks a chair in place, showing very plainly her own lack of repose and suggesting such a condition to the children. Although the kindergarten teacher cares for the material quite as much as the Montessori teacher, yet she has, in many cases, lost the gentle touch in handling it which is so peculiarly a part of the Montessori method.

Absolute correlation of movement and repose of manner are especially necessary in the kindergarten if more freedom is to be granted the children. Freedom can only be controlled by one who is controlled herself, quiet in liberty can only be assured through one who herself gives the suggestion of quiet and repose. Therefore training in correlated movement is as necessary for the teacher as it is for the student.

Dramatic playing or the living over in play of one's experience in life is as old as primitive man. From it came the folk dance and many primitive festivals. We



see the survival of the instinct in the child's desire to live over again his own simple experiences. Since these experiences are so simple and limited, the games in which he portrays them must be simple and crude. Any attempt at elaborate representations of experiences foreign to the child's experience can only be an imposition from without and therefore cannot be truly educative.

That the child's own experience is very limited is apparent. But this experience can be enlarged through stories and excursions and the material thus given may be used to advantage in working out the dramatic game. If the experience is vivid enough the child will be able to work it out from his own ideas. If the teacher's constant direction is necessary, the game can have no value for him. For such plays are useful simply as a means of self-expression. This they cannot be if the teacher plans each phase of the game and assigns each part.

Such attempts at portrayal of experience of various kinds must necessarily be crude, for childish thought is crude. It is the unadorned, bold things which appeal to the childish imagination. Just as the savage cares for blatant colors and undifferentiated sounds, so does the child long for those things. And when left to his own volition he will reproduce his experiences in just such crude form.

Games should be played for the mere joy in playing them. This is a legitimate cause for doing any thing. Pure fun and laughter are so stimulating, have such a tonic effect on the system, that anything which produces them is worth while. Also the more fun there is associated with the kindergarten games, the more chance there

will be for their reproduction at home and the problem of "what shall we play" will be nearer solution.

Games furnish splendid opportunity for moral training for the children and a great opportunity for the teacher to gain an additional insight into the child's character. Here, as on a battle field, is shown the good general, the trusty soldier, the willing follower. In standing aside, the teacher can judge which child needs encouragement, which one needs restraint and can portion out to each one the amount of responsibility needed for his growth.

It sounds like a contradiction to say that the teacher must stand back and yet at the same time interfere. Yet such a contradiction is demanded of every kindergarten teacher. Her task is similar to that laid down by St. Paul—"Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Truly it is her portion to be as wise as a serpent in not allowing any anti-social act, in so adjusting the various personalities in the school that each one will help not hinder the others, and yet, at the same time, making herself so inconspicuous that she will not harm or thwart any budding individuality. This is a task fit for a magician and will require all the personality and ingenuity of which the teacher is capable.

Games are in the kindergarten and are there to stay. For, however much the Montessori method may modify the kindergarten, it can hardly be the part of wisdom to dispense with such a valuable part of the programme. For when administered properly games cannot fail to be of benefit to the children, physically, aesthetically and morally as well as being a great source of pleasure.

## CHAPTER VIII

### STORIES

**I**T seems hardly necessary to attempt to justify the use of stories and poems in the kindergarten. For it is a matter of common knowledge that all children like stories and that poetry, which is based on rhythm, appeals to them instinctively. Especially in this day of bridge parties and automobiles, is the necessity for story-telling laid on the kindergarten teacher. For the children of the rising generation are being cheated of their birth-right. In very few homes, either rich or poor is there a story hour and we must make up the deficiency. For the heritage of story and myth is the right of every child.

Children are fancy full. Childhood is an age of dreaming. It is the time for decking out the world, as yet unknown, with gay colors of imagination. Children live in a world which is, as yet, unknown, surrounded by people whose actions and thoughts are not to be understood. Hence there grows up in the child's mind a feeling of mystery, a groping about for hidden reasons and explanations.

At first, a child is constantly asking what and, in this way he learns the names of things and becomes acquainted with the physical world. Later his word is why. In this way, he shows his need and his desire to find out what produces these effects—the cause back of the phenomena.

“What makes the wheels go round?” “What makes it snow?” Here the story steps in and seems to give an explanation of the world more in accordance with this feeling of profound wonder and mystery. Just as in the childhood of the world nothing seemed more to characterize the races then existing than the myth, which by an overflow of fancy seeks to hide the meagreness of knowledge. So the child delights in fairy tales because they sport with the fixed conditions of actuality and present to him a picture of living power over nature and circumstances.

However, children vary in the power and range of their imagination. Some are very matter of fact and rather resent having the world of make-believe thrust upon them. Others live in a state of perpetual dreaming and wake only with a start to the reality which confronts them. We all know the types—A.—the child who sees in a fork and spoon simply implements to help satisfy its appetite.—B.—the child who sees in these same implements the likeness to a lady with flowing skirts or the long dress of a baby. Strange as it may seem, Ruskin was a matter-of-fact child incapable of acting a part or telling a tale. This, in spite of his poetic writings and the fact that he was a great observer of nature.

These are the extremes, the average child comes midway between and is a matter-of-fact observer and yet a dreamer, passing from one state to another as his moods vary. But even with the usual child the age makes some difference in his imaginings. The age of three and a half is especially fanciful.

Not only do children differ in their power of imagining but they differ in the kind. Some are visualizers, some

live in a world of sound, others in a world of movement—this last is especially true of active, lively children. There are other differences of children which turn on temperament, tone of feeling and preponderant direction of the emotions.

To take up the last point the kindergarten must be closely bound up with the emotions. For some children like to brood on gloomy, terrifying stories while others rejoice in bright, happy thoughts; some are poetic, others are scientific or practical. However, as yet we know very little of what state the mind is really in when children make-believe. Childish thought is probably like that of primitive folk. It is saturated with myths, vigorous phantasy holding the hand of reason and showing him which way he should take.

In the moral life, this exposes him to deception by others as well as to self-deception, which may result in falsehood. On the other hand, it may be used to form moral habits, through suggestion. The power of suggestion is apparent in every day life. We, all of us, reflect the ideals of those with whom we are constantly associated. If thrown with people of coarse nature and low ideals, we tend to lower our standards. But, if our associates are idealists of high type, we tend to raise ourselves to their level—so with children. In working with children in the theatre of the Education Alliance in New York, it was found that the children tended to act in their own lives the parts which were held up as models in the plays acted. For example, the good princess in a fairy play would have a noticeable effect on the child as well as on those who saw the play. The effect is just as real to

children to whom stories are read. The characters seem like real friends, the incidents as all too probable and the examples worthy of emulation. Hence there is no end to the probabilities of worthy suggestion through stories, suggestion which savors not at all of the mawkish or the sentimental; which does not point a moral; but which leaves the leaven of the story to work out its own results.

On the other hand, imagination is bound up with sense-perception. Children explain things by the law of analogy. In psychologic terms this law is "To any situation for which neither nature nor nurture provides a response the response will be that which they provide for the situation most like it; or, any situation which has by nature and nurture no connections will connect with that response which the situation most like it would connect with."\* For example, what will a chicken do when it for the first time sees a piece of yarn? What will a student unlearned in zoology do who is asked to name the picture of an Amphioxus?

"There being no response provided for that particular situation by inborn constitution or previous experience, the individual will respond as he would to some situation like it, to which instinct or training has provided a response. The chicken will respond to the yarn as he would instinctively to a worm, will seize it, run away and begin to swallow it. The student will call the picture Amphioxus a worm, though it is not, because experience has connected the word worm with long, legless, furless things."\*

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\*Thorndike—Elements of Psychology.

The world is such a curious, puzzling place, with so many things in it which cannot be explained either by nature or nurture that the child is forced to explain them by means of the small knowledge which he has gained through sense-perception. It follows that whatever we do to enlarge the scope of his sense perception will figure largely in the development of his imagination. Therefore stories in the kindergarten are not isolated from the rest of the curriculum but are intimately related and bound up with all the other activities, especially the handwork. Not only do children explain things by the law of analogy, but they have a strong tendency to personify inanimate things. They see things not as dead and inert but as alive and conscious. As a child, who was learning his letters, made two facing each other, FF. He explained this by saying that the letters were talking to each other. Children very often have the feeling that, after all the people in the house have gone to bed, the furniture and bric-a-brac begin to talk together. It is this feeling which Eugene Field has expressed so well in his duel between the gingham dog and the calico cat.

This personalizing element in a child's imagination leads naturally to an attitude of sympathy towards inanimate things. Of course, if they are alive they must have feelings and, as the only emotions we know are our own, naturally the child endows inanimate things with emotional responses similar to his own. Jean Ingelo reports that she felt sorry for the stones on the driveway and moved them about so that they might not weary of one place. Another child brought some autumn leaves to his mother because she was sorry that they were dead. Probably

she did not really look upon the leaves as alive. She saw only the fact that the leaves had fallen and filled in the rest with her imagination. Such manifestations are due, doubtless, to a lack of ability to think and also to a lack of force for mental control.

Another way by which the child combines and transforms objects is by association. For example, we read into words the characteristics which are peculiar to the animal whose name is used. In this way, crocodile might look hard and lanky; cow might look big and soft; wheat might look yellow and wavy. Hence certain colors or sounds may take on repulsive or attractive features.

This fact, that the imagination is related to sense perception, leads children to the habit of projecting fancies and giving them a place and a name. Hence the idea receives a certain fixity and solidity. The fancy may start from the world—from a desire to fill in unknown places as holes or the roads, or it may start from a desire to express a fancy which is in the mind—to embody in form what is nebulous fancy.

From the preceding discussion of the imagination, it will be inferred that, since stories appeal to the imagination it is not possible to introduce stories to children until they have acquired a knowledge of language and until they can associate words with ideas. It takes some growth toward maturity before children are capable of realizing that what is being spoken tallies with the ideas in their minds. In the beginning words are not so vivid as pictures to children. Pictures in color appeal especially to the young child for here he has an opportunity to see portrayed the people and objects to which he is accustomed



without the premediation of perplexing words. Familiar and cherished pictures come to appear as alive to children. They name the children in them and make up family relationships, very often according to their own family lives. Later words, too, become alive to children. They take on meaning and characteristics until they may be called "winged words." Perhaps, in early years, words may be objective. They may call up vivid images which may be intensified by a feeling of reverence for the speaker. But, very often, these images are the child's own. He builds up his own image of the story and resents any interference from without. We often spoil the story by too much explanation. A story is told of a mother who said to her child that she feared he could not understand the story. His reply was that he could understand very well, if she would not explain so much. We must all sympathize with this attitude, it seems to me. For, do we not all resent, what Dr. Crothers calls "the foot-notes barking like little dogs at the foot of the page." And our sympathy goes out to the old lady who could have understood her Bible if it had not been for the commentaries. We, as adults, suffer so much from too much explanation that surely we can enter into the feelings of little children who are so much more at the mercy of the explainer.

It may be for this reason, that children objectify words, or it may be from a sense of rhythm or it may be because of both, that children delight in the repetition of the same words. In fact, we have taken advantage of this tendency, to such an extent that sometimes there is nothing back of the mere repetition. Percival Chubb

gives the Arabella and Arminta stories as an example of the excess to which such repetition may be carried until it verges on monotony and absurdity.

We may now ask ourselves what is the value of story-telling to children in the kindergarten? A few of these values have been indicated in the preceding pages.

Stories make an appeal to the imagination and, as the imagination is closely related to sense-perception, stories serve to interpret the child's own experience to him. Stories of every day life make vivid and explain to him things which are obscure or mysterious in his environment. They interpret his environment to him and explain, in a way, what the meaning of life is.

The telling of stories gives, also, an opportunity to inculcate high ideals, to take the common things of life and put them on an ideal basis; to show the right motive which should underlie the events of every day life. This point has been discussed under the topic, suggestion. It is through suggesting high ideals, not by driving home a moral, that such a result can be accomplished.

Another legitimate use of stories is to give training in the right sense of humor. That we need such training need scarcely be demonstrated. One has only to recall the vulgarity of the vaudeville stage or the crudity of the colored supplement to the Sunday papers to realize that some training along this line is necessary. But our best efforts in the kindergarten will be little less than neutral, unless we do something to improve the supplement and the stage. For, whatever we may inculcate during the week will be largely nullified by the parents' example on Sunday. There is a great opportunity right here for us

to combine with some woman's club to raise the standard of the colored supplement. Undoubtedly it appeals to the child's instinctive love for color and action; it gives him great pleasure and could be made a source of profit as well as amusement. And along with the colored supplement as it now exists, should be discarded all stories that deal with coarse fun and ill-timed jests. A right-sense of humor is one of the best assets that one can have to make life bright and hopeful for oneself and for others. Little children are naturally endowed with a love of fun and frolic. We have the opportunity to enrich their lives by cultivating this trait and keeping it in legitimate lines.

Stories should be good literature for their purpose should be to serve as an introduction to and a foundation for a love of the best in literature. Professor Chubb makes the suggestion that in selecting stories "it must be borne in mind that the child is a denizen of two worlds, —the so-called real world of his prosaic elders, and the more vitally real world of fairy land, wonderland, make-believe, through-the-looking-glass, or what you will. He is trying to find himself, and must be helped to find himself, in these two worlds; the imperious, unyielding, law-ridden, yet fascinating and wonderful world of fact; the ideal, play-world of art. He has both something of the curiosity and scepticism of the scientist and the creative, imaginative impulse of the artist. He makes his own world of fancy; and although he recognizes more and more that it is not a real, but a make-believe palace of pleasure, he remains in it because it allows him scope for his powers.

\* \* \* In one sense the world of make-believe is as

real, indeed more real, than its sister world. The world peopled by Jack, Crusoe, Alice, Mowgli, is as real as is the world peopled for us grown-ups by Romeo and Juliet, Roselind, Prospero, Miranda, Colombe. It must be used so as to develop the ethical and aesthetic content implied in the relations established between the people who inhabit it.

"It is a mistake, often made, to press one world upon the child at the expense of the other. The realists spend their energies almost exclusively upon the attempt to relate the child to the actual world about him. Undoubtedly, as already stated, he is greatly interested in that world. Nevertheless, it is to begin with, a shadow world that pales before the dramatic reality of his world of make-believe. His heart is not in it, his imagination is not in it, as they are in his world apart; he generally concerns himself with it as the home of fairy power, investing its objects, its animals, and living things with the humanized, fairy life of his creative, idealizing fancy. We may do better justice to this world of make-believe if we recognize it as the art world of his elders, that world, of "feigned history," to use Bacon's words, wherever his mind finds "some shadow of satisfaction in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it;" a world that "doth raise and erect the mind of submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind; whereas reason doth buckle and bow the mind into the nature of things." Not therefore to cancel this real world of poetry, but to establish it in right and consistent relation to the other real world of science, must be our educational aim."\*

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\*Percival Chubb. *The Teaching of English.*

The form in which even the simplest stories are told to children should be of the best. That the English should be good is so apparent that we need not insist upon it. "But there is some reason for insisting that it be appropriate. This does not mean that it shall be monosyllabic; but that it shall be ideal children's speech, tending toward the graphic, concrete, imaginative. Let it be suggestive, as primitive speech is, by trope and figure. The child is a symbolist in language as in other things. His world is a picture-world, and, to reach him, language must start pictures, just as Homer's epithets start the pictures of his gods and heroes, Apollo the Far-darter, fleet-footed Achilles, ox-eyed Hero, horse-taming Diomedes, Hector of the Gleaming helm."\*

Stories makes such an appeal to children that they delight in living them over. This enables them to clarify their own ideas and leads to more accurate thinking as well as to an enlargement of their experiences. However, "not every story told to the child is suitable for reproduction. The story with well-defined beginning, middle, and end is obviously the best to begin with. If the parts are logically connected, one part will call for and suggest the next. Different types of stories will call for different treatment. Jack o' the Beanstalk, for instance, is a series of episodes, with no inevitable sequence; and therefore the teacher may well help freely in recalling the order. In Cinderella, on the other hand, the events must happen in a certain order, and that the child will discover for himself, if he has grasped the story in its

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\*Chubb. The Teaching of English.

unity. The story of Cinderella suggests also another line of development, the filling-in process—as the child's powers expand, descriptive touches may be added in the interest of dramatic realization—added by the teacher, as she repeats the story, to keep pace with the child's growing capabilities. Detail is a weariness to the child at first; and upon no score are book stories to be so frequently criticised as upon this, that they halt too much over uneventful detail. We are too literal; not suggestive enough. All the great masters are tersely suggestive. The child is rightly bored by a great deal of our "fine" talking and writing.

And finally, one perfectly legitimate use of stories is for the sake of the pure pleasure which we derive from them. The person who loves reading has within him a resource of pleasure which will stand him in good stead whatever his need. There is no saner, cheaper form of amusement; there is no greater refuge in misfortune; there is no better way to broaden one's horizon. So we cannot begin too soon to show children that there is great pleasure in literature, that books and stories mean having a good time.

All that has been said of stories may apply equally as well to poems, with this addition, that poetry is so closely connected with music through rhythm that in teaching the children good poetry, we are appealing to an instinct for rhythm and laying the foundation for music.

We need more poetry and more stories in the kindergarten. In many, many homes, the mothers are too busy working, in many cases away from the home, to have the time to feed a child's soul in this way. In these cases,

as well as with mothers in more comfortable homes, the need for such culture is not felt, or life is too full to stop for it or the material available is not known. As it would not be excessive for a mother to tell a child a story every day, so it is not excessive for four stories to be told in the kindergarten during the week, with one day for the retelling of stories by the children. By keeping the group small and presenting only the best material to the children the advantages to be derived from this change in the programme would be enormous.

## CHAPTER IX

### NATURE STUDY

**T**HE very name kindergarten; garden of children, suggests an entirely new conception of what education should be. "It suggests a new setting for childhood, its rescue from an artificial to a pristine state, at a time when fit environment is not only the best background for, but by far the most potent and central of, all the influences of education. Perhaps sometime when the reaction from the present urban and suburban conditions is complete and all schools are in the country (as increasing transportation facilities—trolleys, autos, and, perhaps before we know it, flying machines—may make practical), and when the school-garden movement shall have done its perfect work, our near posterity, if not we, may realize this entrancing ideal of the reunion of the heart of childhood with the heart of nature. One need not be a bucolic poet, a landscape gardener, a horticulturist, or even a trained agriculturist to revel in imaginings of what a scenic farm school the great all-mother nature has made possible for the early stages of human life. Would that pedagogues were occasionally inclined to see visions and dream dreams, instead of being, as a class the most conservative, prosaic and plodding, if not just now, under the dominion of modern modes of supervision in this country, the most servile, of all half-skilled laborers. Walks, beds, bath-



houses, nurseries, lawns, playgrounds, shade, brooks, ponds, fertilizing, seed time and harvest, moisture and drought, grafting, budding, cross-fertilization by insects, the lessons of the soil, play in stone fields and snow and ice, tree setting, with arbor-day functions, cutting and lumbering, sugaring, all the impressive lessons of the procession of the seasons with carefully chosen animal and bird life which means so much to children, learning and being taught on foot and out of doors and from objects, not from words or even pictures—such is nature's pedagogy. Of nearly every item of her curriculum we rob the child during his most impressionable years when the soul is most plastic to her influences, shut children indoors, teach them in doors for years the attenuated and desiccated three R's, that they may learn to con books and newspapers and, above all, to figure. We pay a terrible price for their education. We often succeed in immunizing the child from experiences natural to his age. We rear him in ignorance of and isolate him from contact with the great influences that have made man man. Thus, with all our precautions, we take wizened souls in wizened bodies by kidnapping the child from his only true and real home which God has decreed and nature has prepared for him."\*

Dr. Hall has painted a most entrancing picture of what a kindergarten should be. What a pleasure it will be when we can attain this ideal. But, in the meantime, is there not something which we can do, even we in the city, to help toward the accomplishment of this ideal?

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\*G. Stanley Hall. Educational Problems, pp. 3-4.

The easiest thing to do, of course, is to stay just where we are but to keep all the windows in the room open all the time. This would necessitate a change in the clothing of the children and some conference with the parents. But it could be accomplished in all probability because no expense would be attached to it.

Or the children might be taken out-of-doors for half the morning. There is almost always a school yard where games could be played, or perhaps a small park near, where not only games could be played, but observations of nature could be made as well.

Very many buildings have flat roofs, which might be used for a kindergarten. This, of course, would entail some expense and so might meet with great opposition. But we can at least make the attempt and perhaps in years to come, gain our point.

In such an open-air schoolroom the children would gain a familiarity with the expanse of the sky, with the brilliancy of the sunlight, with the picturesqueness of the clouds, with the nature of the wind, with the fascination of rain and snow. An acquaintance with these most needed things for the expansion of the soul is denied to most city children living between tall buildings in a narrow street. No amount of talk or wealth of pictures can ever give him any adequate idea of just what it means to be one with the elements. Even a country child may miss some of this, if kept too close within walls.

If none of these things are possible, if we must continue to remain indoors, then we must bring nature indoors. If there is no place outside for the children to make gardens, at least they might be allowed to have gardens

inside. Each child could be furnished with a cigar box and some seeds and would find in caring for even this little plot, pleasure and profit.

Throughout the year, there are various wild flowers and leaves which can be brought in from time to time. In the spring and fall, there is no end to the possibilities along this line. But even in the winter months, the woods are full of berries and leaves which would keep nature constantly before the children.

The keeping of live animals in the room is always a problem. It is a question whether it is even right to cage an animal. This doubt may be reduced to a minimum in the case of many animals and the benefit to the children may counter-balance the objection. But there are animals which may run at large, such as a cat or dog, that might be kept in the kindergarten. Such a lively addition to the school might break up the quiet decorum which now pervades the kindergarten. But that would be one more reason for having an animal to run at large. It would certainly break-up the feeling of constraint and make the place more home like.

In caring for the garden, no matter how small, and for whatever animal may be selected to share the life of the school with the children, the children gain an insight into the care which is bestowed upon them. They are so dependent that, of necessity, much must be done for them. In accepting so much, there is always the danger that attention to oneself may be exacted as one's due with no implied obligation of service in return. Even small services exacted and rendered willingly by small people cannot give them the sense of responsibility which is needed

for character building. But this feeling can be gained by caring for plants and animals. It is easily seen that if not cared for they will die and each child will readily feel that he was responsible. In this way, a feeling of responsibility and of judgment is awakened and quickened, which must be productive of good in life.

But no adequate nature work can be done in the kindergarten unless we change our viewpoint. As long as our insistence is on gifts and occupations and morning talks and the Mother Play, we will not be able to give the child the background of nature which he so sorely needs. For "the child of to-day has few opportunities to adapt himself to nature, as civilization steps in and makes this adaptation for him.

"As the race came to nature consciousness through first-hand contact with nature in its relation to human needs, whether domestic, industrial, aesthetic, or religious, so the child must come to consciousness of needs in his life which nature alone can supply.

"Nature subjects must be selected in relation to human needs, through direct contact with it, through the method of experiment. Little children need nature experience and nature wonder and *nature play* as a basis for later *nature study* and *nature work*.

"If this principle is applied in practice, it rubs out of the programme and course of study much of the unrelated nature work now being used in the kindergarten and primary school. The central interest in child life is not what nature is doing, but what man is doing."\*

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\*The Kindergarten, p. 279.

The teacher can only teach what she knows and what she believes. So any permanent reform in our nature work must start where all reforms must start—in the training school. Here the student must be given adequate studies of nature, studies which will give her a scientific grasp of the subject, as well as a love for all nature and a desire to be with nature for her own welfare as well as to take the children to it. “She must know something of the love of beasts, birds, flowers and trees. Her nature should be breezy with out of doors and bring the spirit of nature in and take the child to it. The ideal test of her work would be what she could do with a band of children in such an environment as I have described above or in a day spent in rambles over and gambols through gardens and groves, by water, amidst the fall of leaves, or among the most edifying flora and fauna. The ideal kindergartener should know and feel and love nature and stand in heart-to-heart relations with her, and be able to expose the child to all of the influences to which it is susceptible. This should be first and foremost and the more special indoor work should be developed on this basis. She should seek health in all its new loftier meanings and strive to reproduce and keep alive in herself the first thoughts and experiences of the race, and impact them to the children in their most receptive periods.

“Thus, I would greatly enlarge the scope of nature study in kindergarten training schools. Our forebears for countless ages knew no other teacher than nature, and to all the notes and harmonies in her magnificent symphony, the soul is attuned in childhood, and if the chords are not smitten betimes, there is grave loss. I would

not entirely exclude the gifts and occupations, but they should be once for all completely sub-ordinated and relegated to a very small place in the kindergarten as compared to nature work. The latter should be of a unique and not yet quite adequately appreciated kind. Popular Science and work of the naturalist afield may nourish the kindergartner's soul but, what is more central in her needs, I have attempted elsewhere to describe (cf. *My Adolescence*, chapter XII, *Adolescent Feelings Toward Nature and a New Education in Science*). The great themes and categories here are: sky, stars, sun, moon, clouds, thunder, water in its various forms—sea and shore, lake and river—wind, fire, mists, and their most marvelous instincts, such as cross-fertilization, their modes of producing and rearing their young, etc., plants and animal types, and highest of all, primitive men and children, popularizing results of anthropology. These should be felt and told of, sometimes in a more or less mystic way, so as to stir the ancestral reverberations which bring a regenerative vital touch between the child soul and that of the race, which once and somewhere worshipped all these objects, making them of supreme value and of most vital interest. On such themes and their manifestations in myth and story, the kindergartner should nourish her soul and recognize that, to nothing that vitally stirs her, will the child's soul be unresponsive. Something like this is the religious background out of which all human culture grew, for religion, science, art, and literature came forth out of the heart of nature. This is the all-conditioning, all-impelling interest that motivates every form of education that is truly vital. This, too, normalizes as

well as elevates, broadens and enriches the emotional life of young womanhood as nothing else can, and keeps sentiment safeguarded against relapse to sentimentality. Just as only the woman's soul knows what flowers really mean, so she is better fitted than man to give the most sound, human response to nature's primitive teaching, which fit her heart as nothing that our academic curriculum offers can do.

"In fine, I would have all kindergartners trained chiefly in this type of nature study, focusing in the study of childhood. We need not entirely exclude the quaint philosophy of Froebel, and his pedagogical technic, for these, especially the former, are not entirely without value for the ideal education of young womanhood toward which the world is now groping. But, if anything is now plain in this obscure field, it is that nature must be chiefly stressed as the source of all other intellectual and moral interests. Child-study, as it has now taken form, promises to be the best logical, genetic and pedagogical form of all the sciences that deal with life. When we reduce human institutions—home, school, state, church—to their ultimate *raison d'etre*, we find that their value is always measured by their service in bringing the successive generations to birth and to the best and highest maturity possible. The child is the focus of interest for every kind of social and humanistic study. Thus, we reach the dual goal of culture—nature and the child, or the child fitly set in its paradise. These are the cores of the best education which has or ever can be devised for young women and this, as I believe, conservative kindergarten wiseacres to the contrary notwithstanding, is, if we in-

terpret his letter by his spirit, precisely "according to Froebel," who in the practical realization of his ideas fell far below them, as, indeed, most of us do."\*

Although Dr. Hall has pointed out a more or less ideal condition, yet we can, by taking thought, approximate it. It would manifest a change of emphasis in our programme and a different viewpoint. When these are present, we could, with determination, accomplish the rest.

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\*G. Stanley Hall. Educational Reforms, pp. 8-10.



## CONCLUSION

If the history of education teaches anything, it shows that no one system of education can long survive and meet the views of changing social conditions, unless it, too, changes and conforms in some measure to the differences found in life. This, for many years, the kindergarten refused to do. To-day, in spite of some lingering opposition, it is doing and making slow but effective changes to meet the demands made on it by contemporary educational movements. The latest of these is the Montessori method which is especially designed for children of kindergarten age.

It seems obvious that there can be no antagonism between two agencies which are both working for the good of the young child and which are both seeking the truth. But there will necessarily be antagonism and misunderstanding if instead of truth each side is seeking, not self-aggrandizement, but glory for a leader. Neither side can gain much in mutual understanding or further the interest of the child, of whom we talk so much, as long as one side talks of "loyalty to Froebel," and the other side insists upon personal contact with a leader as a measure of orthodoxy. Such a point of view will never work for harmony and will hinder, not help, the cause for which we are all working.

It is not "who said it" which makes a principle valid but "is it true." So let us all pray for the time when, with open minds, we may seek the truth and not any one

system of education.

Therefore it is the part of wisdom for us in the kindergarten work to scrutinize this new system from across the water and find what truth there is in it that we may make it our own.

It may seem that, in my endeavor to suggest remedies for certain evils which I feel prevail in the kindergarten, I have been too severe in my criticism. Also it may appear that I consider the Montessori method flawless. Such is far from being the case but as I am chiefly interested in the kindergarten I have limited myself to suggestions of certain changes which I feel would benefit that stage of education. As my purpose has not been to modify the Montessori school by kindergarten influence but to effect certain changes in the kindergarten through the influence of Dr. Montessori's methods, I have not attempted any strictures on her school.

It has been my purpose in writing this short treatise to show that the kindergarten stands in need of a change of method and procedure. And I feel that such a change can be very well made by adopting into the kindergarten Dr. Montessori's two fundamental principles of liberty and education founded on the spontaneous activities of the child. It is only begging the question to say that the kindergarten has always stood for just such principles. In theory it has but we have never worked them out to their logical conclusion as has been done in the Montessori school.

That these principles are good we cannot deny for they are our principles and we have been advocating them for many years. But we have not much faith in them

unless we are willing to put them to the test. So I am not pleading for less faith in the principles of Froebel but for more faith. For such confidence in the integrity of the principles laid down by him that we are willing to put them into practice. This we have never been willing to do except in a modified way. If, in so doing, we must give up some of Froebel's practices what have we lost? The principle is the vital point. As long as we adhere to that, we must be loyal Froebelians, if there is any comfort in that.

The various changes which are being made in the kindergarten are slight changes in method. But the general procedure has not been changed. I am pleading for a general reversal of procedure, a complete change in method and an addition to the material, as well as the discarding of much of the old material.

I am pleading for radical changes in the training-school that the teachers we send out may be open-minded to meet new demands made on them and to test all principles on their merits. We need teachers who are not wedded to any one system of thought but who are keen seekers of the truth. We need young women who are not adherents of any party or creed but who are willing to accept right principles wherever they may be found.

Also we need a changed curriculum in our training-schools that we may turn out teachers who are capable of bringing the kindergarten into line with the best educational thought. We need more emphasis laid on music, dancing, physiology and hygiene, nature study, with no less time spent on psychology, child study and the history of education. To avoid over-crowding the curriculum,

the time for training might very well be extended to three years and less time spent on the manipulation of material.

The kindergarten is such a wonderful expression of the highest ideals of education, the kindergarten teacher stands for all that is highest in such ideals, that I am keen to see taken over such a vital offering as has just been made to education and thus enlarge the already useful sphere of the kindergarten.

Such changes take time and involve the education not only of the teacher but of the parents and the public as well. We have never failed to meet such demands as have been laid on us in the past; we have spared no effort to educate people to our faith. So I feel that when we are once convinced of the desirability of such changes as I have suggested, we will not stand back but will push on until the educational world is forced to concede the intrinsic value of our viewpoint.



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