

world, with objects sensible to the feeling and to the sight. Henceforward he shall be made to handle abstract ideas and a variety of things which speak of nothing to his experience and judgement.

We begin by teaching him to read, and for a length of time keep him to the combination of letters and sounds, which bear no intelligence to him. Later we teach him how to trace isolated letters and words which no more than the first can satisfy his desire of knowledge. In the mean time we teach him the recital of prayers and answers from a catechism of which he understands but few words. Sometimes a few principles of numeration are added, that is to say, that we make him commit to memory a series of figures and perhaps the multiplication table, which he repeats like a parrot, without knowing anything of its meaning, for he is not taught the relation of these numbers with the quantities expressed.

These are the occupations invariably given to a child during the first two years of his sojourn at school.

We ask what is there here likely to give him a taste for instruction, or to render that sojourn agreeable and attractive to him? We do not see any thing whatever. For whole months he is made to go over the same task every day. He gets tired of ever doing the same thing, the monotony of these exercises besides the weariness that they engender, occasion them to fill up an almost immeasurable space of time, for the reason that being performed with a distracted and inattentive mind but little progress is made, whereas with proper application they would have been mastered in a fourth of the same time. To the state of weariness engendered by the absence of all variety is to be added what may appear the uselessness of the things taught.

After the lessons already described they are under a mistaken idea, taught abstract multiplication to which is due their want of understanding their object, then follows a dry fastidious study of grammar, which, very much to the child's own dissatisfaction fills up a great portion of his time as he not even catches the shadow of a reason for it.

Now, a knowledge of these various branches of instruction is no doubt essential to children but how much more profitably applied would they prove were they addressed to their understanding, by more winning means. By following the latter method, they would prove a source of development to his bodily health as well as to his mind. Children do not foresee and calculate upon these results. Even the aged often overlook these advantages, therefore, why not children who do not even entertain any thought of the end and object of their studious labors and the reason is simple, it is because they are things pertaining to the future and which therefore do not touch the present.

Let us make abnegation of ourselves and cease to imagine as we are too often apt to do, that the children are objects expressly created for the school and for that master, whereas it is we, who are appointed there to serve them.

In this abnegation let us forget our own habits, tastes and acquirements to take the child's side of the question, and ask ourselves, in what point can children feel a liking or free inclination for their lessons?

We teach them reading, but for a very long time the lesson is to them but the sight of letters and hard syllables; when able to read with fluency and care, time is still continues a painful and laborious task, for the most part we teach them how to read without accompanying the lesson with the slightest explanation. We teach writing, but they have nothing to write about, for they have no ideas to express. We teach them grammar, while they see nothing but a numberless amount of strange terms, the most singular and the most useless, for they have no conception of their application to the uses of the world, where they have never heard of anything of the kind.

We stop here, as we do not wish to offer a repetition of

what we have already frequently advanced. Nevertheless we are most desirous to convince our readers how much this style of teaching is erroneous and how unfit to fix the interest of a child. Now since the subjects taught in schools are in themselves little likely to interest the young mind, do let us endeavor to render them more agreeable by our mode of teaching. If we have any desire of avoiding the continually running foul of a repugnance which constitutes so powerful an obstacle to the maintenance of good discipline.

To recapitulate, what is there in the form of instruction that can compensate for the aridity and dryness of the subject. What are the lessons given that can possibly amuse a child. We call their attention to abstract notions, fill their heads with principles, rules and state definitions; make them learn page upon page without familiarizing the subject by any kind of explanation; with these pages so committed to memory we make them participate in theories far above their years and which we leave, like every thing else, in the dark corner of their memories, that is to say unexplained. We expose over and over again, rules, without ever teaching their application, and yet, of what use is the instruction taught in schools if left unapplied?

Our lessons which are always dogmatical, are arid and uninteresting, our style of language, dry as our books and equally barren of all interest. To lessons which are repeated daily and without any variety whatever to enliven them, we add duties of the same stamp whose monotony soon fills to satiety.

We ask pardon of School-masters for addressing them in this manner; we too fully understand all the difficulties that they have to contend with, and have too sincere a desire to see them diminished, indeed removed, to be suspected of any idle severity of language. Sincerity alone is our guide, while the interest of their scholars, the prosperity of their schools and their own interest, lead us on and force us to offer these remarks. We again repeat it, let masters reflect seriously and question their own hearts, let them above all take the child's place and confess how impossible it is for these poor beings to have any taste, inclination or attraction for their tasks, and therefore, whether it is possible for them to come gladly into class, and remain there with any degree of pleasure.

Now if children find nothing pleasant in following the class, if they feel no taste for the lesson given in it, how can they be kept there in an orderly, silent and attentive disposition? To manage this there would be but one method which is to keep them in constant dread of punishment. But we have already declared and proved the impotency of this alternative; besides, the admission of school-masters themselves confirms the opinion. They all complain of the uselessness of the disciplinary measures that have hitherto been used.

But one method is left, that of inspiring our pupils with a pleasing regard, and attraction for school. Let us make the attempt boldly and resolutely. Let us for the future shed over our teachings pleasing variety and let them be administered with amability of manner, let us redeem the aridity of the lesson by the pleasantness of form, let us with our pupils merge the master into the kind parent who seeks to smooth the obstructions lying in his path; let us put gaiety and playfulness even in the disposal of the lessons; let them be an uninterrupted succession of entertainments and familiar conversations rather than a course of lectures where each one repeats sentences by rote. Let our instructions become a sort of pleasant chat during which we shall provoke questions from the children and waken up ideas in their minds, or by frequent calls upon our little auditors become masters of their various modes of thinking and capacity of opinion; or taking their answers as a guide to the proposing of new questions, be enabled to make use of