

fall. Later, the question, "How did it come there?" arises, and the mystery is deepened by the suggestion from mamma, "I wonder if Santa Claus can have put it there," or the statement from another child, "Santa Claus brought it." The "I wonder" from mamma leaves her non-committed, and does no harm. The confident statement from the child is made in honest belief and does no harm. The roinance lives a year and Santa Claus is expected again. He is talked about as a mysterious, semi-earthly personage, of superhuman powers and universal love. Pictures show what he looks like, and his rubicund visage expresses the happiness he gets out of happiness-giving. But there are pictures of Jack Frost, too, and he is only the wind. Santa Claus brings the Christmas tree and Jack Frost the fairy lace upon the window pane. So the children say—and the adults join in the talk and lend themselves to the wonderful tale, but with an air of mystery that at the same time enhances it and leaves them free to accept and countenance any more likely theory they may subsequently offer.

If they are wise, they waive explanations, avoid saying, "Santa Claus is a man and looks like that," and so manage the whole question that the worst charge childhood can ever bring against them will be, "You knew it all the time!" To which reply can be made, "Yes, dear, but it wasn't time for you to know. Mamma wanted you to have your dream out, because it was a pleasant one. You enjoyed it, and so does baby brother. Do not spoil his dream. He will learn in time who old Boreas is, and what the pictures of Father Time with his scythe are meant to represent, and that the moisture is on the window-pane, and Jack Frost is only the cold that turns

it to ice crystals, and that Santa Claus is the happy myth that stands for the love of parents and friends at Christmas time. But it is too soon to teach him these things now. Let him find them out for himself by thinking, as you did, and then he will understand them better."

Thus the question, "Who is Santa Claus?" may introduce the whole noble subject of mythology and acquaint the child, through his own vivid experiences, with those of primitive man, who had a feebleness start in thought and less wealth of intelligent suggestion about him, and who, therefore, did not get on so fast. Thus, too, it may lead through higher speculations to the eventful question, "Who is God?" and to loftier conceptions than the concrete images cherished by those crude minds that gave to the Infinite all the limitations of personality,

It would have been cram to tell the child that Santa Claus was a man and came down the chimney. It would have been cram to explain the myth too early. Each day hath its own understanding. Hide not the facts, but leave the understanding to work upon them. The facts are that the gifts are there, and the air is burdened with festivity. Perhaps the jingle of sleigh-bells was heard in the night. Perhaps Santa Claus appeared in a dream. The children say he comes. The grown folks do not seem to know how the presents came unless he brought them. It is a mystery which the child himself is willing to prolong; a problem in which the scientific imagination, seeking realities, consents to be held in check by the romantic imagination, seeking poetic fictions. Let it remain until the understanding acquires strength to gently and lovingly dispose of it.

There is cram in the Kindergarten, the very cradle of the new education.