

and seven years should be trained by providing them with occupations suitable to their individual powers and awakening minds. They gradually receive a knowledge of nature and of mankind and are carefully trained in heart and mind by judicious guidance, and not by constraint. The various occupations in which they engage are developed one from another in a natural order. Taken together they satisfy the demands of the child's nature in respect both of physical and mental culture, and their methodical application develops his various powers in accordance with nature's own laws. The series of objects technically called Gifts which Froebel devised for these occupations may be arranged under four heads in the following order:—1. Solids. 2. Surfaces. 3. Lines. 4. Points.

The child's course thus begins with wholes, then descends to the parts in planes or surfaces. From the planes it next descends to lines which are the edges or the boundaries of the surface, and lastly to points which are the smallest parts or ends of the lines. The process is then reversed. The child passes from the point to the line in such occupations as in sewing and drawing; from the line to the surface in weaving and interlacing of threads and slats, and to the solid in the modelling in clay. Thus by a different road he reaches his original starting point, and surveys the same truths from a higher plane.

Let us now enter a Kindergarten—one pervaded by Froebel's own spirit—to witness some of these occupations, with a view of ascertaining, if possible, the law underlying them.

First Gift.—Let us first turn our attention to the youngest children. They are engaged in their first occupation with the First Gift called "The Ball," which consists of six soft balls of the colours of the rainbow, three of the primary colours—red, yellow and blue; three of the secondary—green, orange, and violet. Out of the ball they are making endless amusement. They roll it, they toss it, they wheel it round and round. Holding it up by a string, they move it right and left, or round and round, etc. Now they make it spring up like the cat, now they make it fly like the bird. Now in its form and colour they see the fruit and flowers which they know.

Second Gift.—Here is another group of children with other playthings, consisting of a *hard ball*, a *cube*, and a *cylinder*. They first take the sphere, or hard ball, to which a string is attached in a small indented eyelet, and similar exercises are gone through with as with the soft ball. Unlike the soft ball, however, it makes, as the children perceive, a noise when it falls. The cylinder and cube differ in form from the ball, the cube much more than the cylinder, which forms the connecting link between them. They roll the ball in every direction, then can only roll the cylinder when lying on its side, the cube does not roll at all. Here the law of contrast is forced upon the children; they begin to learn what a thing is by learning what it is not. As they compare the cube with the ball they become conscious of the flat faces of the former, its sharp edges and corners. The cylinder has no corners, but it has flat ends and has edges.

Third Gift.—In the third occupation we see the children placing little cubes in a variety of forms. They make chairs, tables, houses, etc. In this occupation or play the cube is divided in every direction into eight smaller cubes,—the children are thus enabled to grasp the inner conditions as well as external appearances of things and have their natural craving or instinct satisfied by finding out what is inside things.

Fourth Gift.—Here we see the children's ingenuity exercised by devising various forms with longitudinal blocks. These are afterwards combined with the cubes of the preceding gift and thus various orders of buildings. This fourth gift is a divided cube also, but its parts are not cubes but parallelopoids, thus emphasising the three dimensions of space implied in the preceding gift.

Fifth Gift.—In the fifth occupation the children are engaged in architectural forms of great beauty and variety. The large cube of this gift is divided into a great number of cubes, and some of the smaller cubes are diagonally divided so as to introduce the triangular form. The children now begin to see that the preceding gifts contained the new elements but they failed to perceive them.

Sixth Gift.—The series of Solids is concluded in the sixth gift, which is also a cube but differing in its sub-divisions. Each of the gifts named, it will be seen, is logically derived from the preceding. The various exercises with them are fitted to impress their mutual relations, as we can only fully apprehend an object when its relation to universal law is apprehended, the children must have made great advances in clear, definite conceptions.

Thus far we have seen one great law running through these occupations—each step being derived from and embodying the preceding—the principle of "From the Simple to the Complex."

Froebel did not stop here, however. He arranged his subsequent gifts or occupations so that the child should pass logically from the solid to the surface, line, and point, the limit of the analysis. Here evidently another law determined his procedure,—“From the Concrete to the Abstract.”

But the course did not terminate at the point. A contrary process was adopted. The *solid* was built up from the *point*. This process gave the child the best possible means of embodying in visible form the impressions received through the former process. Herein is the embodiment of another principle: “Analysis before Synthesis.”

We have not yet, however, reached Froebel's root-idea. Something else underlies his procedure than what I have announced. Had I minutely described the exercises in connection with the gifts it would have been seen that they retained the best characteristics of childish play. Left as much as possible to his own spontaneity, the child is found shaping the playthings or materials to his fancy, as Wordsworth so happily describes:

“Behold the child among his new born blisses;
See at his feet some little plan or chart,
Some fragment of his dream of human life
Shaped by himself with newly-learned art
A wedding or a festival
A mourning or a funeral.”

Look at him making his blocks symbolical personages and objects of a story. Even with the eight cubes, five may be a flock of sheep, one a wolf which is seen in the distance, and one the shepherd's dog, which is to defend the sheep from the wolf; during all this time what fun! what interest! what absorption!

How did Froebel hit upon such attractive plans? With an intense sympathy for children he determined to study child nature in all its aspects, to try if it were possible to devise some scheme whereby the activities which they manifested in their play might be systematized, and made the means of the harmonious development of their physical, mental and moral nature.

He brought to his task a theoretical knowledge of Education, a knowledge of human nature as studied in books and among men. He now seeks to penetrate the secret springs of child-action. He takes his place among them; he observes them as they disport themselves in shout and frolic and song. Left to themselves, he sees those of similar ages mingling together. One group he finds here, another there, one group at this game, another at another game, but all bent on happiness, all in careless activity, intense earnestness, complete absorption. What, we may imagine him to say to himself, is evoking all these forces? Play. Play is the motive power. Play is the activity ending in happiness. Play is the birth-right of the true child. Where it is denied him—where the forces within him are denied expression through play, you have in the man the stunted limbs, the pigmy intellect, the moral coward, or