

That in using these gifts the child effects no transformation of material—he neither adds to, diminishes, nor modifies what is given him, but simply classifies, combines, and arranges the elements he receives.

We pass, now, from the Kindergarten gifts to the Kindergarten occupations, and, before I attempt to explain these, I wish to correct the generally prevalent idea that they are only mechanical employments, and that their purpose is simply to train the hand of the child, and to serve as a foil to the more intellectual exercises with the solid and plane geometric forms. The Kindergarten is not a school, where lessons are alternated with fancy work, and there is no broad distinction between gifts involving more or less intellectual effort, and occupations implying principally mechanical neatness of execution. The occupations of the Kindergarten are based upon the same general laws and regulated by the same general principles which apply to the gifts, and their effect upon the total harmonious development of the child is even more striking than the effect of the blocks, squares, triangles, and sticks, to which they are sometimes most injudiciously subordinated.

The true distinction between the gifts and occupations is, that while the former are derived by analysis from the solid, the latter are evolved by synthesis from the point, and while in the former the child simply makes different combinations of the definitely determined material, in the latter there is progressive modification and transformation of the material itself. Thus, from pricking where all kinds of harmonious figures are produced, by simply sticking holes in paper, we pass to the line in sewing and drawing—to the transition from the line to the surface in weaving and interlacing of paper—to the surface itself in the squares of paper used for folding and cutting—to the outlines of solids in paper-work—to the surface boundaries of solids in the cardboard modeling, and to the solid itself in the modeling in clay. Thus, by a different road, we have reached our original starting-point, or rather, having made a kind of spiral ascent, we are now surveying the same truths from a higher plane. A vital point of connection between the gifts and the occupations lies in the fact that the latter offer the child the best possible means of embodying in visible and permanent form the impressions received through the former. Thus in pricking, sewing, and drawing, the children, when told to invent almost invariably begin by reproducing the forms with which they have become familiar in their play with blocks and sticks—the same truth applies to their inventions in mats, paper-folding, and paper-cutting—and an intelligent teacher can judge absolutely of the effect of her work by the free productions of her scholars.

Thus far, we have considered the Kindergarten and gifts and occupations simply from the stand-point of their effect upon the intellectual development of the child. They have, however, an additional significance in the fact, taken together, they form a complete alphabet of work and exercise the hand in all the technical processes by which man converts raw material to his use. Ever since the days of Locke, thinkers and philanthropists have been trying to solve the problems of educating skilled laborers, and many have been the experiments of schools for the working classes, nearly all of which have failed, because built on a wrong foundation. The truth which FROEBEL plainly saw, was that the schools should strive, not to turn out good shoemakers, bookbinders, or watchmakers—not, in fact, to teach any special trade, but to give such preparatory training and practice as would make all technical processes simple. Upon this basis he organized the Kindergarten gifts and occupations, and, taken together, they represent every kind of technical activity.

from the mere agglomerating of raw material to the delicate processes of plastic art.

Thus FROEBEL's gifts have a threefold purpose and a threefold application. Based upon the unchangeable facts of form and relations of number, they work powerfully in a direction of a healthy development of the mind, by their countless beautiful combinations of color and form, the æsthetic nature is roused, and by the practical work they necessitate the senses are sharpened and the hand is trained. They appeal to the whole nature of the child, reaching at once his intellect, his emotions, and his physical activities, and contribute to produce a balanced development not attainable, I believe, by any other system. So much for the Kindergarten material. A few words now as to the manner in which this material is used.

The practical basis of the Kindergarten method is expressed in the formula "We learn through doing." It was a favorite saying of FROEBEL's that the world is sick with thinking and can only be cured by acting; and accordingly in the Kindergarten free activity is the essential thing. The children roll and throw their balls, build with their blocks and lay figures with their sticks; they fold, they sew, they weave, they model, and gradually the labor of the hand clears the thought of the mind, and by using objects as material for work their properties and powers are learned. In this lies the great difference between PESTALOZZI and FROEBEL; for while the object lessons of the former appeal directly to the powers of observation, the latter realized that children would never carefully and exhaustively observe any object with which they were not practically occupied. Children in the Kindergarten observe, because they are constantly trying to reproduce, and their failure to attain satisfactory results causes them to notice objects more and more carefully. Another excellent result of FROEBEL's demand that the child shall learn through doing, is that it effectually prevents that rapid acquisition of superficial knowledge which is the bane of the present age. It is true that the path of learning should be made pleasant; it is not true that it should be made so smooth that it may be trodden without effort. He who struggles up no Hill Difficulty will never reach the Palace Beautiful, and the plan of constantly removing obstacles, instead of encouraging pupils to surmount them, both enfeebles character and destroys the vitality of the mind.

In the Kindergarten the children work for what they get, but the steps by which they advance, are so gradual that whenever they make a faithful effort, they attain some result. Consequently, they gain faith in their own ability to surmount obstacles, and develop in mind and will, at the same time that they are constantly adding to their little store of ideas and experiences. Again, what they know they must know thoroughly, for the mind can only use and apply what it has perfectly assimilated, and the salient feature of FROEBEL's method is that it transforms every element of knowledge into an element of creation.

If the practical basis of the Kindergarten is expressed in the formula "We learn through doing," its intellectual basis is stated with equal definiteness in FROEBEL's so-called Doctrine of Opposites. No feature of FROEBEL's method is so difficult to explain as this, and yet it is the living link which connects the different parts of the system into a complete whole, and as applied practically in the Kindergarten, is as simple in its nature as it is fruitful in its results. It is based upon the logical law of the identity of contraries, a law which many philosophers have recognized as the necessary condition of thought. We cannot conceive anything without