

to each other, to help each other. One thing more I must mention which children do learn in the kindergarten, and which comprises all their infantine accomplishments—they learn to play together, an accomplishment of the greatest moral importance to children of all ages. Play is the normal occupation of children. Sending their children to school was called by the practical Romans to send them to play. Play is work without a practical object—work with the instinctive purpose of bringing into action the innate powers of the mind. It is so natural, that we find it even in young animals. In children, however, it takes at once an intellectual turn under the guidance of the parents, and is the best preparation for, or rather the beginning of, mental culture. So, the only positive result that can be expected from the kindergarten is play.

Now the kindergarten has not only to supply proper materials and opportunities to the innate mental powers which, like leaves and blossoms in the bud, press forward and impel children to activity with so much the more energy, the better they are supplied. It has also to preserve the children from the harm of civilization, which furnishes poison as well as food, temptation, as well as salvation; and children must be kept from this trial till their mental powers have grown equal to its dangers. Much of the invisible success of the kindergarten, therefore, is negative, and consists in preventing harm. Its positive success, again, is so simple that it cannot be expected to attract more notice than, for instance, fresh air, pure water, or the merit of a physician who keeps a family in good health.

It is, therefore, in the primary school classes that the kindergarten system can first prove its advantages by successful results. The principles of the developing system, also, can be better explained and understood in their application to primary school education. It is a law of human nature, or of the human mind, that our knowledge begins, and must begin, with concrete things, with the objects around us, most of which are the most complicated productions of nature and culture. Thinking in abstractions requires matured powers of the intellect. Primary instruction is to lead children gradually and eventually to abstract thinking, not to begin with it. To force children, nevertheless, in so-called elementary schools, to learn rules, dates, names for abstractions, and for things which they cannot yet realize in their