

KINDERGARTEN AND ART.

The Theory of the Child's Education.

My subject deals with but one phase of the Kindergarten idea—its relationship to Art. I mean, in the first place, Art in its broadest and most general sense, simply as human production, from the first rude attempts of men, when they built a mound, or a hut, down to the palaces, ships, steam engines, and all the splendid productions made possible to day by the achievements of Science.

In the organization of the Kindergarten system, Froebel had three unerring guides:

1. The manifestations of the child.
2. The course of nature.
3. The records of history.

And he recognized that these three are really one; that race development as recorded in history and individual development are mutually interpretive, and that these two find their explanation again in the processes of nature. "The law of all things is one," writes Froebel, "for God is the law."

1. The child in his actions is certainly indicating, instinctively but truly, his educational needs. Any observer of childhood will recognize at once, in the gifts and occupations of the Kindergarten, the same material used by children in their undirected play. 2. Just as truly, we may learn from stone and star, from flower and tree, the laws of life, and therefore educational laws. Froebel tells us of the star shaped flower that taught him; he saw it first in his childhood and it seemed to be trying to tell him something, but he could not understand; years later he saw the same flower blooming upon a bush, and in his manhood he saw it again as a tree. Then he understood the meaning of his yearning gaze into the star shaped flower; as the little flower held all the condition of the perfected tree, so "whatever unfolds, whether flower or child, manifests in its first appearance the conditions of its whole existence."

"If you agree with me," writes Emerson, "or if Locke and Montaigne agree with me, I may still be wrong; but if the elm tree says what I say; if running water and burning coal, each in its several fashion says what I say, then it must be true."

3. Humanity in its thought, recorded in history, repeats the story. Thought begins like the seed, in the vague, the general, the indefinite, and moves on, governed by the same laws that rule all lower life, the seed thought widening until it expands into the thought of the Universe, just as the acorn holds forests innumerable.

The course of human development has been slow and interrupted. Movements towards something higher and better are often impeded and seemingly overcome, but still the great general movement goes on, gathering strength with the advancing years. The poet likens these efforts at advancement to the tired wave, vainly lashing the shore, and gaining no inch; but far behind,

"Through creeks and inlets making
Comes silent, flooding in, the main."

Education understands to spare the children the painful interruptions in their reproduction of race experiences. It looks there to the general course of development, and the child under rational direction, indicated by history, and by nature, (for all natural growth is reasonable growth) is carried, at the quickest rate of speed over the road so slowly and painfully travelled by his race-progenitors.

This race development is recorded for us in the history of Art. We know what men thought by what they did. With its constantly varying forms of expression, the history of Art furnishes us with a history of human development. Philosophy truly declares it to be a visible manifestation of the course of thought by which man's mind has developed; therefore tracing the course

of Art, we trace also the course of thought, interpreting one by the other; and, as individual thought moves along the same lines, the general forms of Art production are made to reappear in the Gifts and Occupations, which are the educational appliances of the Kindergarten. Architecture, the earliest art, solid, material, suggesting much and requiring little from the mind, has its parallel in the earliest gifts—Ball, Cube and Cylinder, nature's patterns upon which the universe is built, solid material, suggesting much and requiring little from the child.

To architecture succeeds painting—less of material, more of mind—a mass of dead pigments until transformed and glorified by the thought, and parallel to this is the child's use of plane and line, with which, owing to increasing power, he is able to make a picture of thought.

Tracing the correspondence still further, we find that as primitive men produce rude forms, and through the doing discover the reason of their doing, that is, the mathematical laws that regulate their production, so too, out of the child's rude building, science dawns for him, in the color, number, direction, size, the surface qualities of the objects he plays with; these are brought to his observation by the judicious word of the Kindergarten.

Thus science and art have ever kept pace; men have passed from a recognition of the surface qualities of objects to their deeper and hidden relations—hidden in order that their minds might be allured to search out the mysteries of creation, and, through this seeking be brought to ever higher forms by re-thinking science, which is the highest form of thought, because God's thought. With every discovery in science, a higher form of art production has appeared, and this, in turn has given rise to a deeper science. As the gifts advance the qualities become more complex, and the child, discovering them for himself, begins the necessary activity, the creation of his intellect.

In the childhood of the race not only science and art, but religion also was implicit in these early art productions. All earnest thought of men has been, and always will be, religious thought, although they speak not of Christ but of their idols, and so we find, clearly expressed in primitive architecture, mute answers as to life, its origin its destiny. Through their art they found expression for body, mind and soul, and the same triple appeal is made to the child in his earliest art productions. The gifts become for him, not only a means of gaining manual skill and dexterity by handling, and not alone a means of revealing to him elementary truths of science. Science, art and religion are ever one, separate strands radiating from one great centre, truth. To the infant race, and to the child these three exist in undifferentiated unity; as their art products are rude, the scientific thought derived from them, vague and dim, so too, vague and dim are the religious questionings expressed. "What is the world?" "What is life?" "From whence did I come?" "Whither am I going?" mutely questions the primitive man.

"What made the world?" was the question. "Power" answered their Art as they fashioned in stone a God with multiplied hands and feet. Then a new thought awakens; "we shall live forever," and The Pyramids, wonderful tombs to preserve the body, imperfectly answers the dawning of immortality. Again they question "what is life?" and the sphinx, half human, half animal helps to interpret the awakening thought of the struggle that will go on forever in every human life.

The same questions that stirred at the heart of man in his childhood of the race, are stirring at the heart of the child; they are mute questionings, too dim for word expression, but

understanding how, in time, symbolic art led on to a clearer idea which again found its expression in a higher symbol until at last the symbol drops, and the truth symbolizer is revealed. Froebel helps the child to re-live the process of thought by giving him a material symbol as foundation for clearer ideas.

"What is Life?" mutely questions the child, and the Ball, his early plaything, with its simple harmonious unbroken surface seems to whisper to his heart, "Life is Unity," thus shadowing to him the great fundamental law of life. "Fuller in its scope than gravitation, for that belongs only to the physical world, fuller in its scope than the laws of thought, for they belong only to the intellectual world, fuller even than the law of love for that belongs only to the ethical world," this great law binds and includes all life, the life of nature, the life of mind, the life of soul. It speaks to us from the life of nature as its truths are proclaimed by Science, and it speaks to us from the life of man as the truths of the united life of mankind are proclaimed to us by the fundamental doctrine of Religion and its embodiment in the laws of civilization. "Physical life is one," says Science; there is no unrelated thing. Every breath of wind, and every ray of sunshine carry untold influences into every heart of this great system. Dust and planet are one, linked by chains we cannot see. "Human life is one," says Religion. Invisible chains are linking all life, past, present, and to come, binding the high and the low, the rich and the poor, and, like the clod of earth that pulsates, with all the universe running through it, man is only great, when

"The world's heart stirs in his pulse"

This is the great truth that faintly whispers to the child in his first gift, his earliest art production. The full truth is deep in the heart of the Kindergarten, and softly it is worshiped to him, again and again from the many different experiences she has prepared for him. As the gifts advance, clearer and clearer the great truth discloses itself to his heart. The second gift, through its contrasted forms, ball and cube, but mediated by the cylinder which is like both, hints to him a new form of unity. Life is apparent in conflict, it seems to say, but all differences must meet into unity, as the sweetest harmony comes from the different chords. Life is variety, complexity, but still unity, the building gifts seem to say, as the many and varied forms fit, each in its appointed place, and thus education begins to shadow to the child his part and place in the world, showing him, in symbolic form, that he too is a unit in the organism, with a part and a purpose different from all others, and yet in harmony.

Thus far the broad relation of the Kindergarten gifts to the historic development of art—the latter showing the natural unfolding of thought and will as it moved with toil and struggle through the ages, humanity seeking expression for its whole nature, body mind and soul, this historic progress forming the justification for the re-appearance of the general forms of art development in the Kindergarten gifts. The child in his use of the gifts, kept in the straight line of progress, seeks through them, ever more clearly to define his struggling thoughts. Science and religion, as we have seen, for both race and child, are born of this expression. Thus, developed out of his own living experience, they shall have a real meaning for the child. Appealing through these three, science, art, religion, to his complete nature, we begin to build up an organic education, holding it in its indissoluble unity as the cultivation of body, mind and soul.

The Kindergarten has also a strong bearing upon art in its more limited sense, fine art. Educational progress

in each age of the world is closely related to progress in every other branch of life; this is because each age is organic, the soul of it lives in every one of its forms; it breathes upon art, upon science, upon literature, upon educational systems and leaves its impress. These are the avenues that tell us of the spiritual life of a people because their highest attained insight is reflected in these different forms. With the rise of science and the arts, wealth follows, and leisure, which rightly defined, means the intelligent use of time for higher wants than those of the body, comes in the train of wealth. All man's lower wants are now provided for, because understanding nature, he can make her do his bidding. Then the higher wants make themselves keenly felt. Life in this latest century is searching for knowledge of itself; the deepening consciousness of to day is looking for standards of true living, realizing that

"I shall show himself he can see himself
How poor a thing is man."

Art in its different forms in one means of reflecting this higher life to which men are aspiring. In its highest form the pen and brush seem taken from the hand of the Artist and wielded by the Divine hand. Human souls meet then the counterpart of what they should be. Thus Art becomes the interpreter of life. It is this recognition that impels the nations to make their educational system means of the highest development. This idea makes us "cast aside as a debasing illusion" utility solely. "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven," this is, writes Froebel, "Seek ye first the divine within yourselves—and all else shall be added unto you." For this reason, the Kindergarten places stress primarily upon the development of spiritual power. Utility will follow as an inevitable accompaniment. In this spiritual development, Beauty is an important factor—therefore the aesthetic training of the Kindergarten. It is one of the means appointed by God for the elevation of the human Soul. By means of the aesthetic training of the Kindergarten all children may become elevated and refined without ever becoming Artists. "A certain measure of art intellect," says Ruskin, "is born annually in every nation, greater or less, according to the degree of cultivation in the nation." This cannot be increased but may be lost to the nation unless means are taken for its preservation. The Kindergarten is an early experimental school, where, from the general nature of the material, early tendencies may be discovered and guided. More important in its relation to later Art production is the constant cultivation in the Kindergarten of the creative imagination. The child's mind in the Kindergarten exercises, through a process by which the different faculties receive due exercise is led from the abstraction of an idea to its reproduction. This highest form of mental activity constitutes the new departure of the Kindergarten. It bears closely upon an art training, as in the creative activity, there is the full assertion of the supremacy of mind in its reaction and consequent freedom from sense impression. The poet studies life in its concrete manifestations, but spiritualizes these sense impressions and fills them with a higher meaning; the painter looks upon nature and from these concrete perceptions paints scenes "that never were on land or sea;" the child using the same faculty—the faculty that witnesses of God in man—idealizes his sense perceptions in his inventions, giving them the form of his own original idea. In this way the Kindergarten shows itself the most efficient means for preserving and cultivating the Art Intellect. The child after abstracting his simple ideas of form, color, number, etc., embodies them in new forms, rising from forms of beauty, first with blocks, tablets and sticks, later with pencil and