

chilly portal is not the place to detain him in. A complete sense of his utter ignorance, as measured by the vast territory of knowledge, would—were it possible for him to realize it—crush the learner-embryo within him. Be careful, therefore, not to unduly insist on the fact of his ignorance, and never suffer yourself to be drawn into the unworthiness of emphasizing your own superior knowledge.

And this suggests another and complementary counsel: to develop concurrently with the sense of ignorance the consciousness of a power (with your help) to surmount this ignorance. We want the painful stupor that is apt to overwhelm the young mind in face of the big unknown only as a spur to effort. The first dazing look out into the unbounded void must give place to a cheering perception of a track worn by human feet, which his own too may follow. In other words, as soon as the pupil is made to feel that his mind is a blank, he must be encouraged to put forth his powers of filling up the void. And here we see the importance of the highest tutorial tact at the very outset of the expedition, so as to secure the initial courage and firm forward tread. The beginning with the wrong subject, the sudden casting of the little traveller on some baffling steep of knowledge at the start, may cause a serious delay. On the other hand, the gentle leading of him from the actual level where he stands up some easy slope of learning will bring the needed confidence. At first, this confidence will be rather in you, his guide, than in himself; but if your method is sound, he will soon come to see that it is his own limbs that bear him onward, and, trusting to you to show a passable way, he acquires a cheerful readiness to push forward.

I cannot refrain from pausing here

to express my strong opinion that, in spite of all that Froebel and others have taught us, we are still far from realizing in our practice the supreme importance of the start in learning. Do we not even now abruptly plunge the beginner into the baffling obscurities of a new subject without any serious attempt at starting at the learner's actual standpoint? Theorists are no doubt making a beginning here. Thus, the Germans, with their notion of *Heimkunde*, or home-lore, have seen how to pave the way from the crude, unsystematized, and narrowly-bounded knowledge of the pre-scholastic mind to the methodical study of *Erdkunde*, or earth-lore. But this idea of setting out from the point of actual unaided attainment needs to be generalized and applied to all departments of study. I rejoice to see that a beginning has been made in Germany in something like a careful statistical investigation into the contents of children's minds. We must know the child-mind intimately—all its contents alike, whether these be true or false ideas—before we are in a position to instruct it. And when the teacher does truly see into all the odd workings of this child-mind, when he fully realizes how scanty is its stock of accurate observation, what a queer jumble of fact and childish fancy its first attempts at knowledge-getting have resulted in, he will, I venture to predict, make a profound and radical change in his methods.

The change I here refer to I should describe as the prefixing to exact systematic study of any subject a preliminary unsystematic study. Systematic study is an excellent thing if we can only secure it. But what if we cannot? What if the attempt to take the child through such a systematic study should issue in a mere unstable heap of vaguely apprehended fact in place of a connected and orderly arrangement of clearly appre-