

old, requires to amuse him, and she selects a bright coloured bird, or a rattle, or something which it can feel, shake and look at. An elder child complains of having nothing to do; and a toy or game is found or a book of pictures or little stories, with which he may amuse himself. The great aim of all those who understand the bringing-up of children is to keep them constantly engaged, and at the same time, though encouraging them to play as long as possible with one toy, yet to change and vary their occupations and amusements as soon as they show signs of mental fatigue or weariness. This constant employment is not only desirable for children, but is really essential for them; they must be doing something, and, as has been well remarked, even mischief is but misapplied energy. Toys are the natural instrument on which this energy and activity should be expended. It is the province of the toy dealer to find objects for the exercise of their minds and fingers, just as much as for the baker to supply them with bread, or the shoemaker with shoes.

Children are essentially active in every sense; and toys cannot properly be called toys at all if they are merely capable of being looked at, and do no more than amuse the eye for a few moments. This fact will often account for the peculiar way in which children take fancies to their toys. Of course the glitter of a new thing, whatever it may be, lasts for some time; but it will be remarked how they generally return to some old plaything, long since bereft of its beauty, because they can do something with it. A broken doll, even with no legs and arms, may be dressed and handled as a baby; a horse without legs may be dragged about the floor, and so on; whereas a new picturebook is soon put aside after the novelty of the illustrations is forgotten; and a very elaborate mechanical toy, too delicate even to be handled, is not much cared for after it has been exhibited a few times and has ceased to be a novelty.

While carefully avoiding the mistake of making play a lesson, some few toys if well selected, may impart a vast amount of instruction, and that without the child having to undergo any undue mental strain. It would, of course, be undesirable to give a little boy five or six years old a direct lesson on the principles of the bridge and the use of the keystone. Give him, however, a box of bricks capable of making a bridge with the centering, and show him how to put it together; he will puzzle over it for days, try every sort of arrangement, and unwittingly become gradually and practically acquainted with some important mechanical laws. Again, a little model of a steam engine made to work by gas or spirit, which may be bought for a few shillings, is a most attractive toy. Children will watch it for hours. They see the water poured in; they remark that it is made to boil, and soon has to be replenished; they notice the action of the valves, the piston, the crank, and all the parts. When they come to study the theoretical laws of steam and machines, half the difficulty of their first lesson vanishes. If during his play, the child is so fortunate as to have a really educated nurse or mother, herself acquainted with the outlines of such general knowledge, the child's play may be made, by simple toys, far more educational and interesting than any set lesson, and the result of the instruction far more fixed on his mind than the simplest theoretical idea could ever be by any number of repetitions and learnings by heart.

What is true concerning the box of bricks and the model engine is also true of a number of other toys; that is, they depend for their actions upon certain laws, with which, by a little skill, children may be made practically familiar without any undue taxing of their minds, and during the time they are engaged in play. Of these may be mentioned, the kite, the magnetic fish; hydrostatic toys, with water wells, fountains, &c.; pneumatic toys, such as pop-guns, &c.; tops of all sorts, the kaleidoscope, the magic wheel, &c. All these involve scientific laws which a child may understand familiarly with no more difficulty, if properly put before him, than he usually finds in learning to read.

The feature of the Kindergarten School is that play is really made to a great extent the means of instruction. This idea seems to be capable of greater development than it is at present, even in those excellently conducted institutions. With very young children, particularly in infant schools, the less the instruction partakes of the nature of a regular lesson the better. The importance of early teaching, among the poor especially, is obvious; and yet the evils of straining the mind and overtaxing the energy of very young children, by too rigid a course of training, are most serious. Toys, when carefully selected, seem to supply the means of avoiding the latter evil, and at the same time of securing the early imparting of knowledge.

Reading may be taught entirely by means of the various games and toys with letters and words which are in common use. These toys depend for their interest and attraction on the way they are put before children. With one teacher, they are little better than a dry spelling book; whereas with another, the finding out the differ-

ent letters and the placing them together like a puzzle may interest a child for hours, during which the infant is learning to read and spell in the best possible manner, and in a way he is least likely to forget. The first four rules of arithmetic, again, may be taught almost entirely by means of cube bricks, and a great step made in the formidable multiplication table, before the child is wearied out with the monotonous repetition of what too often appears to him to be an endless and meaningless list of figures. Writing is the only subject which perhaps requires more direct lesson-work. Even here, however, the 'print' letters used to teach reading may be copied on a slate, their shape learned, and, what is of still greater importance, the power of holding and guiding a pencil imparted, before the copy-book, pot-hook and hanger has made writing an unpleasant and tedious task.

Cookery as a regular subject of instruction in girls' schools has hitherto been looked upon as one of those things which, though no doubt desirable, is unfortunately impossible. Toys, however, seem to prove that this is a mistake. Judging from the collection of cooking-stoves which Mr. Cremer has brought together in his International collection of toys in the Exhibition this year, it is clear that 'pretending to cook' is played at largely by the children of all countries. These stoves, though in miniature, are made large enough, and are so fitted with gas, as to be capable of dressing a small dinner. It would seem that by a regular course of instruction in practical play-cooking, a most agreeable and permanently useful game might be introduced in all schools, to the immense advantage of all classes.

Not only in direct instruction, however, is the use of toys to be considered educational, but those playthings to which a child is accustomed have no small influence on his general tone of thought. To those who are naturally over quiet and studious, those toys should be given which are likely to develop the physical powers, such as a rocking-horse, a cart requiring to be drawn about, a wheelbarrow, a set of gardening tools, a drum, and the like. It would be better to encourage such children to this description of plaything, rather than to allow them constantly to amuse themselves, after the bent of their inclinations, with books, puzzles and other sedentary amusements. For those full of life, and whom it is impossible to keep still for many minutes at a time, the occasional use of the quieter toys which are to be avoided in the former case is desirable. In France, guns, swords, and miniature war implements are looked upon as almost the only plaything for a boy, and this national taste has undoubtedly had a considerable influence on the national character.

A few words should be said of the doll, which is the most natural and universal toy. It must be owned the English taste in dolls is better than that of our neighbours on the other side of the Channel. An English doll is almost always an imitation of a child; the French, on the other hand, is a very fashionable young lady, too often made to imitate as nearly as may be a class of the community concerning whose ways and style all will agree that little children should be as far removed from them and as little familiarized with as possible. It is true that the French dolls have other uses; they serve first as models of fashion; but what we urge is that children's playthings are in themselves sufficiently important not to be merely out of date models of the follies of grown-up persons.

The dressing of dolls may be made a most pleasant mode of teaching a little girl to work. All girls are fond of dressing their own babies, though they soon weary of hemming dusters. By making dolls' clothes exact miniatures of children's garments, so that they will take on and off, agreeable occupation in needlework will be found for a little girl. The child will be easily made to take a pride in having her doll's wardrobe as neat and well worked as she can; and good habits of care, neatness and order may thus be inculcated. In this way, as has already been pointed out, play, and useful instruction, and training may be combined through the agency of toys. In watching a little girl play with her doll, an insight may often be obtained into the mode in which the child herself is being brought up. When young, we all imitate more or less the habits of our elders; and in whichever way a child is seen using her doll, whether it be roughly, kindly, or gently by making a great fuss over its appearance, such as thinking chiefly of the fashion of its dress and ornaments, so may the characteristic features of the treatment that child herself receives at home be frequently inferred.

The cost of toys cannot be taken as a guide to their usefulness or value. To a certain extent, as in all other articles, it is true that, good things cannot be had for nothing, but the most expensive playthings are by no means necessarily the best. Nothing is more desirable than to encourage children as much as possible to make some of their own toys; when they do this, it affords them immense pleasure and amusement. It should also be borne in mind that the fewer playthings a child has in use at the same time the