

What renders children so happy in the kindergarten? That they learn to play, the only thing they care for after having satisfied their animal wants. What will render pupils as happy in a primary school? That they learn to learn, the next thing children care for, after they have learned to play. This latter should be the result of the kindergarten time; it should be found existing, therefore, in children at their seventh year. If childish play has been neglected, an undue wish for play will be brought into the class-room, and confusion and perversion begin, but not education. Of course, school children must, besides learning, play and work also, but not the whole day. They must learn now, and they desire to learn. So there must be a proper time for learning and for playing.

The next question of importance is, what are the young pupils to learn? Let us first ask, What do they care to learn? Many of the things for which they are commonly punished or scolded, in school and at home, for instance, drawing, humming, singing, beating or stamping time, saying little naughty things savoring of wit, humor, or irony, but which might easily be turned into poetry; inquisitive and curious questions. In all this the educator perceives that a natural bent of the young mind at that age is to give expression to the inward working of the imagination. What children are to learn first at school is, therefore, to draw, to sing, to rhyme; and, above all things, to express their own feelings of what is pleasing and beautiful, and therefore to learn to write, to note down music, to invent, to understand geometrical figures.

But with the freer exercise of the imaginative faculties, thinking has become freer. Children evidently begin to think when they begin to speak, but first only on the immediate objects about them, then, in the kindergarten time, about the imagined relations of these objects. In the seventh year, they begin to think of the images and ideas that have, in their minds, become independent of the presence of external things. This is proved by the faculty of thinking on mere geometrical form, and on the ideas of the objects which the words of the language they use express. Therefore, lessons on the laws of form, and on the kinds of objects expressed by their own language, will attract the attention of the young pupils, and do so in a most powerful degree when they are supported by work in drawing, by pictures