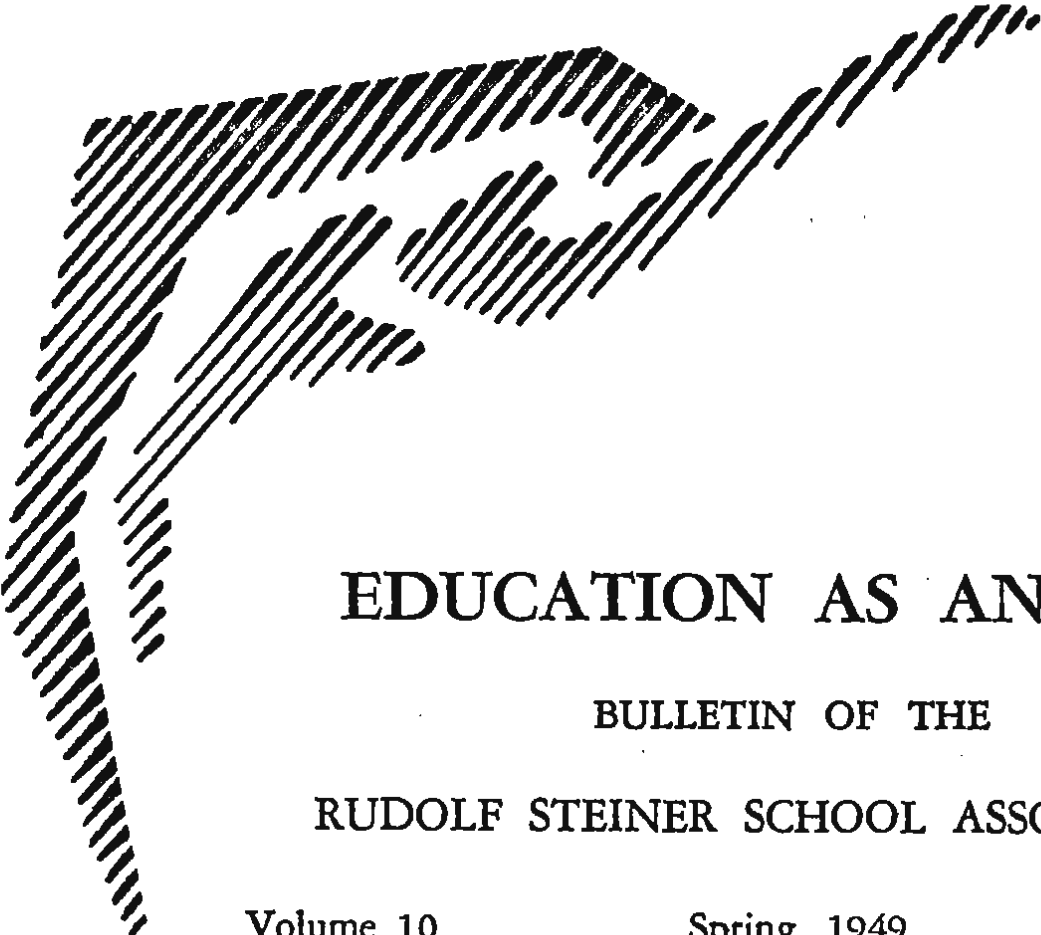




EDUCATION AS AN ART

BULLETIN OF THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

Volume 10

Spring, 1949

Number 1



EDITOR'S NOTE

During 1949, when plans and activities are going forward throughout America, in England and on the Continent, for large scale celebrations of the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of the poet Goethe, the Bulletin will also strive to make some small contributions to the "Goethe Year." In the forthcoming numbers the reader will find variations and developments on the theme of how Goethe's approach to nature and to the nature of man may become fruitful in the sphere of education; of how Rudolf Steiner brought forward and evolved further many indications, many elements which lay latent in Goethe's work in art and in science.

GOETHE AND RUDOLF STEINER

Some eighty years ago—probably early in 1869, four years after the close of our terrible Civil War—a station agent, by the name of Steiner, on the South Austrian Railway was transferred from one insignificant little village to another, a shift by chance across the border from Austria into Hungary. Rudolf, first-born of the three children of the railway agent and his wife, was then in his eighth year. He was an unusual child. In the village the family had left, the school was so hopeless that the simple but affectionate and ambitious father had removed him from the neglectful and blundering care of the teacher and undertaken himself to tutor him between tasks in the station office. The school in the second village was scarcely superior—a single small room for several classes of children all under one teacher, following a dreary routine through the days. But the teacher himself had something for this boy because of the boy himself. Many hours were spent in the little room where the teacher lived. Here there were lessons in drawing, some introduction to mu-

sic, and other interesting things—but, most important of all, there was a textbook on geometry lying one day on the teacher's table. A look into this, and the eight-year-old borrowed it to keep as long as he wished, till he had mastered its content—rather unusual preoccupation for a village boy of eight years. But not for this particular boy.

He mastered the book, to be sure, but his interest in its pages was not just a craving to learn how to solve geometrical problems. He had been struggling even before this eighth year to understand exceptional experiences of his own, which no one could in the least comprehend if he ever mentioned them. Many years later, when he set down the story of his life, he said that in these exceptional experiences, belonging to another world than that of the senses, he was more at home than in the every-day world of objects and events visible to the bodily eye. Geometry, he said, seemed to him at that age of eight years to be analogous in its nature with those immaterial perceptions in which he loved to dwell. Geometry, he said, was also something self-existent in a non-physical realm of reality, where it is discovered and whence it is brought down to the earthly plane by the power of the human spirit. Geometry had, to a certain degree, confirmed for the boy the reality of the immaterial sphere open to his innate power of spiritual perception.

The boy was not a mystic, rather the opposite. With the endowment of a mystic, he combined in supreme degree the disposition of a born scientist. Not only did he long to go with his younger sister into a cotton mill they were forbidden to enter, in order that he might see at first hand everything that was happening there, but this same insatiable curiosity was concentrated ceaselessly upon the problem of those very experiences which he completely trusted and which meant so much to him. He could not rest content with experiencing but must in the full sense also know. He was not a youthful Wordsworth, dwelling in joy upon "intimations of immortality from recollections of early childhood." He was not a Tennyson, snatched at moments of deep revery away from the earth and whirled among the stars. Moments of high rapture were not characteristic of him, but rather the steadfast certainty of a higher reality open to his view, and steadfast endeavor to know the nature of this higher reality.

The way he went toward this ultimate achievement took him beyond Kant—from his fifteenth year on—and then to Goethe, and finally beyond Goethe to mountain heights which the great poet-scientist had glimpsed but not ascended.

For young Rudolf Steiner in his teens, Kant was a mountain barrier to be overcome, not a peak to be climbed for a distant view. He had to pass beyond Kant with his overwhelming denial of the capacity of the human spirit to achieve any knowledge whatever, and his assertion that man can come into contact only with his own subjective impressions. The young pioneer had to establish for himself, not only through innate experience but also through irrefutable thinking, that Kant had falsely applied to the spirit of man a limitation belonging only to the first level of observation and reflection. He was to establish ultimately for himself and also convincingly for others the truth that the human being is capable of transforming, of metamorphosing his capacities, from one level to another and still another.

With Goethe he found it well to linger for a long while. Not that he was his pupil, but Goethe rendered him vitally significant service, none the less. Editing all of Goethe's scientific writings with complete objectivity and faithfulness to the earlier thinker, he established the truth that Goethe had

possessed what the poet himself had called "perceptive power of thought", in contrast to mere intellectual reasoning; that he could really so immerse himself in the observation of a plant that the silence of the plant became spiritually audible, that he learned the unspoken language of this living entity. He established to his own satisfaction that Goethe, in a sense, had the power to divine the inner nature of this form of creation and to reveal this inner nature when he spoke of the "Urpflanze" or primeval plant.

Wordsworth's "something far more deeply interfused, whose dwelling is the light of setting suns"—this undefined, mysterious something, mystically sensed and dimly surmised, had been a matter of concrete knowledge to Goethe, manifest in concrete forms of life. Tennyson, born twenty-three years before Goethe's death in 1832, could vaguely sense in the "flower in the crannied wall" a deeply hidden key to the universe and to man; but he says only of the flower he has plucked out of the crannied wall: "And, if I could know you root and all, and all in all, I should know what God and man is." This was unlike Goethe's way of contemplating the flower rooted in the earth, breathing the life of the universe. Tennyson, gifted with power of concentration and deep reflection, could only question the uprooted flower but not listen, as could Goethe, to the silence of the plant rooted in the world. To Goethe's way of thinking, Kant's theory of the limitation of human knowledge could not be applied.

By the age of twenty-two years, Rudolf Steiner, in search of a path which can lead from the spirit of man back to the spirit of the universe—but not by way of mystical immersion—had reached a point of outlook where he could affirm that, "If one penetrates deeper and deeper into thought life, one finds that spiritual reality comes to meet this thought life."

It was just at this stage in his development that a brief paper he had written regarding the character of Goethe's thinking led to his being invited to edit all the scientific writings of this monumental figure in the history of human thought. For a number of years he dwelt upon this task, though engaged at the same time in much besides. Before he had completed the five volumes of the Vienna edition, he was already far along on a second edition of these scientific writings of the great poet-scientist.

The experience was the opposite of that in surmounting the barrier presented by Kant. One was a tremendous negation as to man's spiritual nature; the other a tremendous affirmation. The youthful successor to these two great figures, endowed from birth with the twofold gift of spiritual perception and penetrating reflection, had sharpened his intellect on the grindstone of Kant. He continued this discipline of his own powers, but in a vastly different manner. Through continuously passing in reflection from Goethe's interpretation of the natural world to his own independent view of its phenomena, he found his way more and more completely into the mind of Goethe. The earlier thinker had been almost wholly misunderstood as a thinker in his own day—though glorified as a poet—and the younger thinker set him before the world in his true light. In reciprocation, this long-continued endeavor to make Goethe as thinker really known to mankind resulted in the clarifying of Rudolf Steiner's own powers of independent thinking, and prepared the way for a richness of knowledge and a depth of penetration into the mystery of man and of the world.

Both great affirmers of the spirit, Goethe and Rudolf Steiner turned the light of their minds upon all aspects of the world and of man. With right

orientation the student of either finds a universe opening to his view. Education of humanity—beginning with education of childhood—will respond to a new daybreak when educators begin to find their way to the minds of Goethe and of Rudolf Steiner.

Olin D. Wannamaker

THE VALUE OF GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES*

In relating their collected fairy tales the Grimm brothers sought the purity of straightforward narration. They kept close to the original story, adding nothing of circumstance or trait. One of the brothers said: "Our first care was faithfulness to the truth. We strove to penetrate into the wild forests of our ancestors, listening to their noble language, watching their pure customs, recognizing their ancient freedom and hearty faith." Their aim was to preserve ancient wisdom which, during their lifetime, was still alive among some of the old people. The scientific age had come in full swing and many people had little or no understanding of those "old, superstitious and untrue tales." The Grimm brothers thought differently, and when they listened to old Frau Viehmannin, the wife of a cowherd, who told her stories with great exactness and no variations in repetitions, they penetrated into the imaginative dream world of a child and experienced the healthy, original strength that is inborn in these stories. They realized the educational value of the stories, and learned to read between the lines.

Luckily today we have passed that period of educational decline when fairy tales were banned from the schoolrooms and the homes of intellectuals. At least fairy tales are accepted today as a means of entertainment—"leaving a substantial by-product which has a moral significance." They are accepted today as a simple form of literature and thus have become again an everyday nourishment for many children.

Rudolf Steiner inspired teachers to make use of the fairy tale in a much deeper and more extensive way than it had been done heretofore. It is a well-known fact that fairy tales have their origin in the period of humanity's own childhood, in far-distant times when people lived in a naive dreamlike state of soul, before the unfolding of intellectual capacities. According to the principles of biogenetic law, children pass briefly through the different stages of mankind's evolution. Children between the ages of four and eight correspond approximately in their development with that period of humanity's childhood in which fairy tales originated. An unspoiled child absorbs fairy tales during this period of its life with an eagerness similar to the hunger and intensity with which a baby absorbs its mother's milk.

I was deeply impressed when I heard of a mother in England who, in line with her honest belief in pure scientific thinking, deprived her little daughter of all fairy tales with the result that the child became seriously ill in spite of all the physical care that was given her, and it was said that the child recovered only on account of the fairy tales which her nurse was finally allowed to tell her.

It is interesting to read that the Grimm brothers advised the mothers to tell only one or two stories at a time because otherwise it would be harmful just as it is harmful to drink too much milk at a time.

*See also *The Importance of Fairy Tales in a Rudolf Steiner School* by Frederick Hiebel, *Selected Articles from the Bulletin*, Vol. I.

The fact that the contents of the most famous fairy tales are to be found, in one form or another, in legends, mythologies and folk lore of all nations seems to indicate that they all have the same origin. Whether they all came from Central Asia, as some authors claim, is to my mind questionable. I should rather imagine that fairy tales came into being in different localities much in the same way as today various people might relate the same dream. They are imaginative pictures of successive stages of human development and probably were perceived independently in different countries. It is a quite frequent occurrence in the history of inventions that the same idea springs up in different localities simultaneously.

It is easier today for the intellectually trained scientist, to make a technical invention than it is for the intellectually trained poet to create a real fairy tale. Many so-called "fairy tales", written in modern times, do not deserve this name. It would be more appropriate to call them fanciful tales. The name "fairy tale" deserves to be re-established in its old purity today and not be thought of as a phrase for things that are not quite true.

People often refer to "the golden age of childhood" or "childhood's paradise", and with great happiness they like to recall those unspoiled days of paradise. Play in the child's own created world is a sort of dream, and the dreaming is a manifestation of artistic union with the world about him. But the child in time must part from his paradise so as gradually to awaken to his own self-hood. This process of awakening, this gradual conquest of his own personality, is painted in the most vivid colors in true fairy tales and this is the reason why fairy tales are so much liked by children and make such a deep and lasting impression. Because the fairy tales are imaginative analogies of the inner development of humanity as a whole as well as that of the individual child, they are the best spiritual nourishment a child can possibly receive during the period of transition or awakening.

In ever so many of Grimm's fairy tales we find a prince and a princess in the center of events. In a great variety of ways the bewitched prince or the enchanted princess is finally set free. The ultimate marriage pictures the conscious union of the two, the prince—the human ego, and the princess—the soul, after many struggles and trials.

In the original edition of Grimm's fairy tales, the first fairy tale is "The Frog Prince" or "Iron Henry". I wonder whether this selection was made purposely or whether it came about accidentally. It is one of those stories that lend themselves beautifully to interpretation.

Most fairy tales start with "Once upon a time"—which means it can happen any time to anybody—and many end with the words "and if they have not died since, they are still alive." Who? The people or the happenings? In "The Frog Prince" it is told that the old king's youngest daughter played with a golden ball in a forest at the edge of a well. In the first two sentences an atmosphere of dreamlike phantasy is already created, and the youngest, most beautiful princess (no darkness, no evil as yet has spoiled the sunlike soul) plays in her childhood paradise. But one day the golden ball falls on the ground and rolls into the well. As in Richard Wagner's "Rheingold" the pure innocent gold of ancient wisdom disappears in the water. The ugly frog takes pity on the princess, but he is not interested in pearls or precious stones for a reward; he wishes to participate in her personal affairs. She promises everything the frog asks for, but runs away as soon as she has recovered the ball. When next day the frog comes to the castle the princess is shocked and frightened, but the old king (the eternal conscience) commands her to fulfill her promise.

It affords a strong will impulse to give up her paradise and unite with the cold, intellectual ego. All at once she flings the frog with all her might against the wall, and a handsome prince stands before her. They are married and live happily ever after.

The fairy tale, "The Wolf and the Seven Kids" pictures the inquisitiveness of the awakening human being. Like little kids that jump about anywhere and everywhere, so the growing child senses his surroundings, without plan or organization. In spite of the warning of the wise, protecting mother goat, the kids open the door to lie and deceit. They lose their delightful paradise and experience darkness in the wolf's stomach. Only the smallest one escapes into the clock and thus is saved, and is able to save the others also.

The brave little tailor makes his appearance in a number of Grimm's fairy tales and is undoubtedly the personification of awakening intellectual cleverness. These few examples may suffice to bring out how in fairy tales spiritual truth and its relationship to human development are revealed.

William Harrer

FROM A TEACHER'S NOTEBOOK

To the capacities of parents and teachers who are to understand and truly be loved by children, belongs a living insight into the child as he really is, an insight unrestricted by any sort of pedantry or grownup ideas of what a child ought to be. Only when an adult is capable of immersing himself, one might say 'drenching himself', in a child's world, can he summon the imaginative power and humor to guide and transform the forces which he sees and feels there. The following sketches by a former teacher of the Waldorf School may be looked upon as exercises in such hearty insight.

The Editor

CHRISTMAS

One afternoon, during the days before Christmas, I entered my classroom. The children were talking and shouting excitedly among themselves. There were quite evidently two parties each trying to convince the other. In the last row little George sat and sobbed. I quieted the storm and asked, "George, what is the matter, why are you crying?" "Gustav says the story about the Christ Child is all a fake." I asked astonished, "Why should the Christmas story be a fake?"

"Of course it is! None of it's true, what they tell you. The Christmas tree, my mother buys on the street, and the shiney things that hang on it come out of a box in the closet. All those presents you get—the Christ Child doesn't bring them either. My mother buys them at the store. The Christ Child doesn't bring a thing—it's all just a fake."

I notice how Gustav's brutal enlightenment destroys a whole world of wonder for George, and yet the little doubter is right!

"Come," I said, "let's not fight any more. I would rather tell you all the real, true Christmas story. And, in the most pictorial way I could, I told the story of Mary and Joseph, their journey to Bethlehem, their poverty and need, how they could find no lodgings but must content themselves with a stable, how at last the Christ Child was born, and I ended: "That is the real

Christmas story, and this story is true." The children had listened with held breath. George's face brightened and Gustav grew more and more thoughtful. When I had finished, Robert, a sturdy, choleric little boy, turned with a decisive jerk and said to Gustav: "So there, *now* talk!"

FAIRY TALE

It was in the first grade of a public school in South Wuerttemberg. I had announced that I would tell the story of the Star-Thalers: "Once upon a time there was a little girl. Her father and mother had died. She had no house to live in, no bed to sleep in, only the clothes on her body and a crust of bread in her hand. But she was godly and good, and in her trust in the dear God above she set out along the road which led out into the wide world."

And I told further how she gave away, one after the other, her bread, her bonnet, her small jacket and little skirt. For some time I had noticed how Anton, a chubby-cheeked, sanguine little boy, grew restless, slid back and forth on his chair, stood up and wanted to speak. But with a calming gesture I was able to hold him back again and again, and continued quietly about how the little girl finally gave away even her little shirt.

That was too much for my Anton. He sprang up with a flushed face, pointed with his index finger to his forehead and said excitedly, "But how silly! I knew right off that she would give her shirt away too." He looked about the room and wanted to give still further expression to his indignant astonishment. My remark: "Just wait, the story is not nearly finished yet," made him sit down and wait skeptically for what new and unbelievable impossibility was about to come. I went on: "And as she stood there and had nothing upon her body, all at once the stars fell down from Heaven and became real, hard, shiney thalers. And although she had given her shirt away, now she had on a new one as white as snow that glistened like the stars. Into this she gathered the thalers and was rich for the rest of her life."

At this Anton rose slowly and thoughtfully, nodded his head and said: "Yes, now that's something quite different. If I had just known *that* . . . !"

WHAT TO DO?

Alfred, a second grader, came late to school every day. Good Heavens! There are so many things to see and settle along the way to school. As a teacher one could certainly sympathize with the little observer and investigator. But he must come on time to lessons all the same. Of this necessity I tried to convince him, and he saw it all very well. But the next day he came late again. I scolded. The same result. I grew strict, set him in a corner, left him standing in front of the class for a while without paying him the slightest attention. Nothing dawned. Then one day I said to him very seriously and reproachfully: "Now see here, Alfred, you come late every day, and day after day we have to go through a scene. Aren't you really ashamed of yourself?" Alfred drew his forehead into thoughtful furrows and said very earnestly, "I will think it over!" "Good, think hard!" And Alfred thought, one minute, two minutes, five minutes. We all waited full of expectation for the result of this self-questioning. At last I thought to hurry the process a little and asked calmly, "Now, aren't you honestly ashamed?" Alfred slowly shook his head, and then it came hesitatingly, long-drawn-out as though from far away, "Honestly—not!"

Karl Ege

THE SEARCH FOR THE BEST METHOD OF LEARNING HOW TO READ

Over a century ago, Horace Mann, Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, found that while in the schools which he inspected, whole classes could read fluently, many of the children had little or no understanding of what they read. These children had been taught phonetically. Consequently Mann evolved a theory for reforming the system, and sight reading took the place of the phonetic method. By 1880 this method, based on the visual memorizing of words, began to take hold upon progressive education and with it came emphasis on silent reading. This is the method prevalent up to this moment. But at the same time a new development in reading instruction has gradually come about. After nearly one hundred years of sight reading, it has been found necessary to start remedial reading at all levels of education.

All educators are probably agreed that the purpose of education is to teach children to live successfully in the cultural epoch into which they are born. It follows that these good educators endeavor to help the children by advancing educational methods. But it is at this very point that real danger for the child may arise. Someone may start out full of a crusader's zeal, determined to right the wrongs done to children by some special method. The observation of the trouble may be careful and sympathetic, but then a theory as to a possible cure stirs enthusiasm further, and the crusader goes home to his laboratory or study and starts to work developing and crystalizing his theory until it becomes a new method full of rules to which children's education must conform. One has only to read the history of education to realize how often this has occurred. But though theories and methods may come and theories and methods may go, children go on forever, developing according to the same natural laws. Changing forms of culture may make different demands upon them, but it is not so much the content of reading that affects small children as the whole process of learning to read. The teacher who is actually working with children is in the best position to understand the effects which result from learning to read. She can fit educational methods to the child, and not force the child to fit the method.

To find what a young child, fresh from Kindergarten can best adapt to his use, one must turn back to an early stage of man's development. Children just beginning to be skillful in using their tools: eye, ear and hand, are like primitive man whose love of beauty and ornament led him to draw crude pictures and to adorn his rough pottery. As he became more 'civilized', this purely artistic pleasure was turned to the practical end of drawing picture signs for conveying messages to distant friends. These signs slowly evolved through the ages, as one can easily observe in Egyptian hieroglyphs, until by way of Arabia and Phoenicia the foundation of our alphabet was finally laid in Greece and Rome. Here the A B C method of learning to read evolved and already, in this learning letter by letter, we have a method which does not call upon the full range of the child's activities, upon the whole child. In the sixteenth century the phonetic method of teaching reading was introduced, and in our times both of these methods have been discarded for the entirely intellectual, visual learning of whole words. This means is almost wholly dependent on visual memory, a type of memory not always part of a child's equipment, or only partially so. However there is a still more recent method of teaching reading, that of remedial reading. This has arisen in the last quarter of the century

since neurologists, psycho-analysts and specialists in education have been called in to deal with the wide-spread inability to read understandingly found from elementary school up through college and even in the business world. Remedial reading courses now take an important place in educational work.

The rapid increase in the number of remedial reading centers and the inclusion of this work in the school curriculum indicates that there is some lack in general reading training.

Remedial reading courses use all the faculties of their pupils and secure good results. They do not discard the visual method, but add the phonetic to it. They also call up the child's physical activity by training the hand to follow each letter skillfully. One who works with struggling, backward readers can experience the immediate help given by the knowledge of letter sounds to a child attacking an unknown word. A slow child has often a poor visual memory and words and syllables, supposedly memorized, continually escape him, leaving him hopelessly confused. With sounds as a guide, he soon finds a clue to some well-known friend in his vocabulary. With the present evidence of what has happened through one-sided training and of what can be achieved through the combined use of three methods, it would seem that educators will eventually take the hint and once more make use of all the skills which a child possesses.

The teachers who follow the Waldorf School methods return again and again to Dr. Steiner's suggestions which come from a life rich in varied teaching experiences. These suggestions turn the attention to close and continued observation of the growing child and his evolving capacities. Observation proves that at certain stages an age-group is peculiarly ready to receive certain types of knowledge and to develop new skills. The teacher, turning his attention first to kindergarten children, finds that these active little boys and girls do not need didactic teaching, for their whole little beings are already possessed with a desire to copy all the exciting things which adults are doing. As they approach six or seven, this imitative quality can be used in a more concentrated way in order to begin to learn writing and reading. Many so-called clever children could be stimulated to read earlier, but in so doing they often sacrifice an opportunity to develop their social and artistic qualities as well as their health. For this reason it is good for a well-rounded development that they take the fullest advantage of the special capacities which unfold at each age rather than drive ahead in a one-sided manner.

When the first grade receives them, the teacher is faced with the necessity of teaching reading. If he has sensitive perceptions he at once grasps Horace Mann's meaning when he said that presenting children with the alphabet is "giving them what they never saw, heard or thought before." Dr. Steiner thoroughly agreed with him when he said, "In teaching the child the present form of reading, we teach him what, apart from the place of the individual within a quite definite culture, has no significance at all for the human entity." Horace Mann sought to overcome this by having the children learn whole printed words as the signs standing for sounds to which the child's ear is accustomed. Rudolf Steiner recognized, as anyone may, that the child's developmental stages have a strong connection with the race's stages of development and he utilises this knowledge in a practical way. He sees, as we see, that children love to draw, especially with bright crayons, and this love of making pictures can be used, as in primeval times, to lead over into lettering. A child enters the first grade fresh from active play which often imitates adult

occupations. He is full of curiosity about doing "real" work in school. This vigor in play is slowly transformed into vigor in work. The training is based on the development from a primitive pictorial stage to a "civilized" one where pictures are changed to sign language and finally to letters and words.* At this age children delight in seeing how the letter B can grow out of the crude picture

of a   B or a   B or in following

the shape of a mountain on the floor, up and down, up and down,

  M then tracing it in the air with hand and arm in full action, and at last to bring it down in size to a printed M which they can find in a book. Waves of water can follow the opposite direction,

 W down and up, down and up to the ultimate W. The vowels follow a different course as they are closely allied to inner feeling and have the quality of singing sounds. As they learn their outer forms, it is a simple matter for a child to learn at the same time the main sounds of each as:

A in day, A in cat, A in star and A in ball.

E is long as in green, E is short as in red.

I is long as in five, I is short as in six.

O is long as in cold, O is short as in hot.

U is long as in flute, U is short as in drum.

Words and sentences are quickly developed to fit special class needs developing from the oral into the visual training, while the kinesthetic approach accompanies all the work, transforming the freer, larger gestures of the small child into the loving care with which the colored letters are formed.

The children work first on the board, then on large paper, always copying the teacher's careful and artistic pictures and letters. When the day comes that they start their own books and see them filling up with material which they can read because they made it, there is joy in sound accomplishment and real learning grounded in experience. When they begin to read in a printed book of the familiar Little Red Hen, or the Boy and the Goat, they already have a small sight vocabulary, and what they do not remember they can always sound out. This gives them a sense of security. In the early stages the young eyes, still only partially oriented in space, are helped by the pointing finger and the guidance of a colored strip of paper. This "old-fashioned" custom is wholesome training.

Just learning to read is not enough. Children can also learn to read in the way which is best for their whole being in body, soul and spirit. As Dr. Steiner said to his teachers, "You will not be concerned with the handing down of a province of knowledge as such, but with manipulating this province of knowledge in order to develop human abilities."

This fundamental method of teaching does more than teach a child to read, for it continually considers his needs with loving care giving the body the needed activity, the heart a warm enthusiasm for beauty and skill, and the mind a sound basis for healthy development.

Margaret Peckham

*See also *Mechanical and Artistic Influences in Education Today*, by Henry Barnes, Selected Articles, Vol. II.

BLESSING ON THE HOUSE

Gaelic Verse for a New House

*God bless the corners of this house
And be the lintel blesst.
God bless the door which opens wide
To stranger as to kin,
And bless each crystal window-pane
Which lets the starlight in.
God bless the roof-tree overhead
And every sturdy wall.
The peace of Man,
The peace of God,
The peace of Love on All.*

HOUSING

To the children of eight or nine years we teach a period of six weeks called "Housing". At this age the child is entering more deeply into the house of his own body. He acquires more distance now to his environment and no longer feels that all that is around him belongs to him. This study may help him to understand how closely all beings are connected with one another. Everything that has to do with housing, and housing all over the world, if told and demonstrated correctly and in a manner which speaks to the imagination of the child, will be of great value in opening new horizons to him at this time in his life.

One might ask, why study houses all over the world, why not just those in one's immediate environment? Would it be of any importance for a French child, for instance, to learn about Indians, or an American child about Eskimos? Yes, I think so. This period offers the teacher a special opportunity to lay a basis for the understanding of other peoples and other ways of living.

A child in the third grade has collected a good store of fairy tales and fables and will soon learn about geography in the fourth grade, and "housing all over the world" seems to be a natural transition. As we have a limited period of six weeks we have of course to condense the subject matter.

We may start with the most primitive house, not yet man-made but taken directly from nature: the cave. Man needs shelter, food and clothing. He uses tools of stone or bone, he builds a fire which is sacred to him. From the stone house we may go to those made of wood. To build these wooden houses dense forests have to be cleared. Stone axes cut the trees, and poles are prepared to hold up larger or smaller structures such as the Indian tepee which is covered with buffalo or deer skin and decorated with drawings of hunting scenes, with stars, sun and moon. There are also round houses, covered with birchbark, called wigwams. Everybody and everything helps: the family, the tribe, the world of stones, plants and animals, water and fire. There never was a house made by two human hands only.

The children learned parts of Hiawatha's Childhood and the rhythm of this poem had a wonderfully harmonizing effect upon them. Under the hands of the children an Indian village came into existence. The tepees were made

of twigs and yellow cloth, and were decorated by colored drawings. There were trees and a brook and, under the care of Indian women, cornfields and squashbeds. Old Indian legends and holy songs that were sung at the planting of the corn and at harvest time, were brought to the children. At the end of the period, after having lived with the Indians in our imagination for some time, we went to the Museum of Natural History to see real examples of various types of ancient housing.

The study of this kind of tent led to that of other primitive homes like those of the African tribes in the jungle and grassland, and to the nomads in the desert. Jungle, grassland and desert were for the most part new terms for the third grade. From the desert we made a big jump—even at the risk of getting sniffles—to the land of snow and ice: the igloo of the Eskimo. It was January, and if the snow in Central Park had been dry enough we would have started to build an igloo using exact measurements. Finally we put our study into a poem reminiscent of Hiawatha and recited it with a great deal of action.

Here we made a break in our study of houses and postponed the rest to the end of the school year. Then we started from the simplest forms of building and finally arrived at more complicated ones such as masonry and stone construction. To begin with we learned how the first white settlers built their log cabins. The modern child has many naive reactions to this early life. One little girl asked, "Did the first settlers have hospitals?" When I said, "No, they had no hospitals in the beginning," the astonished question was, "But how could children be born?"

There was a demonstration of how mortar is made and a wall was built with some bricks. The modern house with its foundation and many rooms, no longer merely a one-room structure, showed us again how many people have to work together at the task of building a house; how many craftsmen of all kinds, with their varied and cunning tools, are needed, and how they need each other in order to accomplish the job.

It was on the farm that we gained our most impressive experience of how each being serves the other. At the end of our housing period in early mid-summer, farm life filled the classroom. The teaching of housing now centered on the farm and the farmer. We learned the various stages through which grain passes from the sowing and reaping until it goes to the mill to be transformed into flour and then into bread. The children felt that there was a real connection between housing and bread, that the making of bread is also like the making of a house, a house made by heaven and earth.

Christiane Sorge

Membership in the Rudolf Steiner School Association, including the quarterly Bulletin, is \$2.00 per year. Single copies of the Bulletin, 15c. each; for more than 10 copies 10c. each, postpaid.

Address Secretary, Rudolf Steiner School Association, 15 East 79th Street, New York.

Editor of the Bulletin: Christy Barnes.

Designs: Anna Barer.
