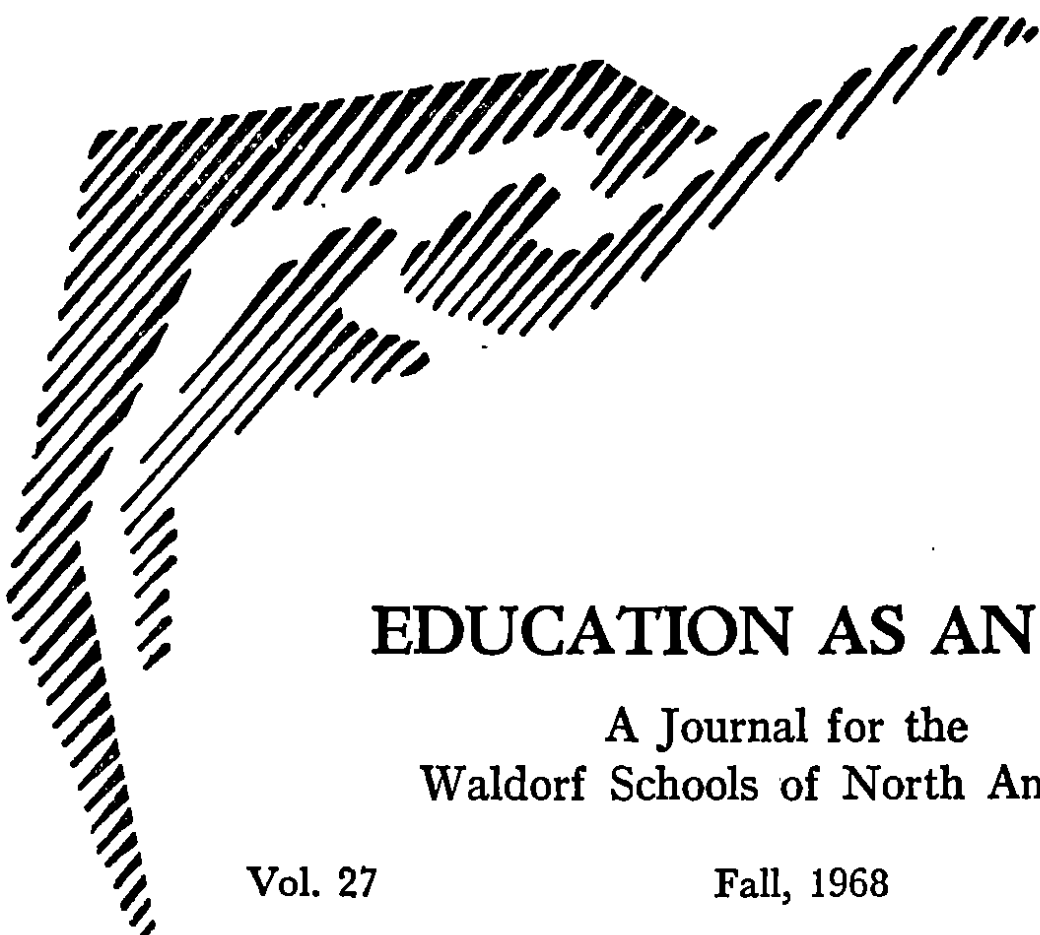




# EDUCATION AS AN ART

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## THE CHILD'S BODILY FORM

We live surrounded by miracles but we have come to take these miracles for granted. And thus the marvel of man's birth and of his growth occurs again and again and does not arrest us as it should, because we are used to it. Otherwise should we not feel awe and reverence for the formative forces of growth? They take hold upon the substance present in the mother's organism after conception and shape from it the human form. They model the sphere-like roundness of the head, the oval trunk, the ray-like limbs. They model the special form of each particular organ. They work creatively; and they can give us an understanding of what Divine Creation means . . .

No open-minded person who goes deeply into the nature of the forming forces can fail to see that there is artistry in their working, that what they make is beautiful. There is beauty in the vaulting of the domed skull, which in a tiny baby does not meet but opens like petals at the top. There is beauty in the delicate structure of the articulations of the backbone, which are like wings. The shoulder blades are beautiful and the fine modelling of the bones in the limbs. One feels impelled to touch it all with one's fingertips, not merely to look at it, but to feel it with the curve of one's hand. Best of all is to take some wax or clay in our own hands and gain comprehension of the forming forces through our finger tips by working

plastically. A person who models understands more of a child's growing bodily form than one who only studies works on anatomy.

Rudolf Steiner often put forward the following reflection: If nature is an artist and works through artistic impulses, then Science must become an artist too if she wants really to know nature... The nature of the tiny child will not be understood unless its bodily form is seen with artistic vision, is felt with artistic tact. For a baby is indeed after its birth *all body*. There are old pictures which represent the birth of Jesus. Rocky mountains rise about Mother and Child, plants grow in the foreground of the picture, ox and ass stretch their heads towards the manger. Above the cave a star, sometimes a whole starry heaven; and angels or angel hosts bend down towards the hollow. The whole Universe with all its kingdoms and beings attends the birth of the Divine child.

But the same miracle happens at the birth of every child. Cosmic forces and beings work at the spiritual form of its body, work in the living-forces which permeate it. A spiritual being has become man on earth, akin to the stones, the plants, the animals, in the vestures with which he clothes himself. The whole world works in harmony in order that a human body may come into being.

From *Childhood: A Study of the Growing Soul*  
by Caroline von Heydebrand

### MAN

Man alone  
Among creatures  
Stands straight,  
Free to turn his face  
Toward sun and earth.

Man alone  
Among creatures  
Can speak,  
Turning his breath into words,  
And his words into songs.

Man alone  
Among creatures  
Can think —  
He thinks to fill his needs,  
He thinks beyond his flesh,  
He thinks beyond space and time  
To know himself.

He carries his own seasons with him;  
In his spirit, he knows  
Winter and Spring, Summer and Fall:  
What he sees in his world  
He finds in himself.

The Cosmos is in him,  
All truth, all beauty, all goodness, —  
The idea that becomes a tool,

The vision that becomes a work of art,  
The love that becomes a new earth.  
Darkness goes out from him, or light:  
He can reject himself, and do evil;  
He can accept himself, and do good.

He is nature and more than nature,  
He is dust with a breath of life,  
And life that is more than death.  
Mineral, Plant and Animal —  
Man is like all of these  
And like none of these.  
His home is not earth,  
His destiny is not here.

### THE ANIMAL

The animal, wild and tame,  
Occupant of water, earth and air,  
Swims, crawls, crouches, runs, climbs, wings,  
Purrs, grunts, growls, sighs, cries, sings,  
Yet, head and tail, must remain  
Parallel to the earth.

Vast are his numbers, myriad his shapes,  
From lumbering elephants to humming insect.  
Each is moved by pleasure and pain,  
Yet each beast has only the self  
Of his flock, his herd, his kind.

Marvelous are his gifts, many his skills,  
Surpassing Man's.  
The fish's water-paddles,  
The bird's air-oar,  
The sloth's climbing claw,  
The goat's balance on his high ledge,  
The hoof that acorns the rough terrain,  
The keen scent, the turning ears,  
The head that becomes an eating limb,  
The force, the speed, the camouflage!  
Man has these in smaller measure,  
Yet Man, knowing his lack,  
Learns how to equip himself.

Manifold are his types, diverse his traits,  
Symbolizing Man's;  
The swift eagle screams and soars,  
The mighty lion leaps and roars,  
The strong bull bellows and gores:  
Such traits transformed are Man at his best,  
When he, swift in thinking,  
Great of heart,  
And strong of will,  
Grows to maturity.

## THE GREEN PLANT

The green plant  
From creeping vine to towering tree  
Discovers a lightness that carries it from the earth  
And shapes its leaves  
That every leaf may know  
The sun in his daily course;  
And finds its glory in flower  
And in those bundles of wrapped sunlight  
We call seeds.

Yet this is not all,  
For nature's busiest when plants are greenest,  
When the high sun gives birth  
To a fresh-growing earth;  
In the warmth of celestial fire  
The plant takes the air of decay  
And soil water, uniting them  
For its own nourishment  
And reviving the air of growth.

So it is the plant that gives  
And Man that receives;  
For Man gets his daily bread  
From earth's green mystery,  
Combining earth and sky  
In living chemistry.

## THE CRYSTAL

These hard stones of the earth,  
These hard bones of the earth  
Are not unlike the bones  
That hold our bodies in their strange uprightness.

Yet these rocks of the earth,  
Yet these bones of our frame  
Are unwieldy, heavy,  
Their great weight pulling them down,  
So that they lie silent, cold, dark.

But, then, wonderful to tell,  
There comes from these ponderous  
Rocks — a crystal form!  
A spear of light  
Defying the heaviness,  
Defying the darkness,  
Gleaming, radiant,  
A sparkling jewel pointing heavenward,  
Seeking its kin in the shining star  
And the six-sided flying snowflake.

And so is our life:  
Our bodies are held to the earth  
But our spirits may, crystal-like,  
Seek higher worlds, heavenly places,  
Our thoughts, weightless and pure  
May rise to the skies,  
And find God who is our home.

—MICHAEL R. SCHMIDT

*(Science teacher at Kimberton Farms School, Phoenixville, Pa.)*

*The four poems were originally prepared for the four Advent services at Kimberton Farms School. They have been particularly effective in seventh grade and eighth grade Physiology. My indebtedness to Herman Poppelbaum should be obvious. — M.S.*

## FAIRY TALES IN THE FIRST GRADE

"Tell us a story!" is the demand of the children after their first few days in school in which they have found, to their great joy, that fairy tales have a part in their lessons. Without a doubt the time they like best is the time when the teacher says, "Put your chairs in a nice round circle and get ready for a story."

At once all efforts converge to make this moment come quickly and, as soon as we are all sitting in the circle, the children settle down in a way that means, "We'd rather be here than anywhere else."

As for the teacher, this is the time when she can claim the most whole-hearted attention and so, within the imaginations of the story, deal with the inner life of the class as in no other way. To say "whole-hearted attention" does not give an adequate description of what happens in the children as they listen to a fairy tale. They go beyond attention into a much more active state. They hardly notice the story-teller for the story. As one tells a story one sees that no matter how lively one's feeling may be for what one tells, the children are far more active in their listening than the teacher is in the telling. For instance, in the midst of a story-battle between the Prince and the seven-headed dragon, a small boy will suddenly leap out of his chair and strike the dragon's head off; or when *Hansel* says to *Gretel*, in the dark forest, "Don't cry, little sister, I will take care of you," one sees the sad tears rolling down the cheeks of a certain little girl; or again when in the story a little gnome falls down, down, down into a deep hole in the ground and lands "bump" at the bottom, another little girl turns into a gnome and suddenly falls off her chair to land on the floor in the middle of the circle, which has become for her the bottom of the hole.

And so it is that all the wonderful range of feeling that weaves in every fairy tale becomes an activity within the children. If, at first, this happens only when you are telling the stories, it gradually comes about that it begins to happen at other times as an echo of the stories, and finally it appears in the children's own imaginations to enliven them.

At the beginning of the year the children were somewhat at a loss as to what to play at recess. They played stoop-tag, they played train, some of them only knew how to play at shooting guns. All of them had little inclination to stay together in a game. It was hard for them to make up their minds what to play and then to play it all the way through. The teacher showed them how to play Nuts an' May, Red Rover, Swinging Statues. She helped them act out some of the fairy tales, but it meant that she had to hover over every character to tell each one what he should say or do. Then after Christmas there was a surprising change.

It happened most unexpectedly one rainy day when recess was indoors. The teacher looked up from some work at the desk to see the whole class standing in royal splendor on the small stage at one end of the room. Each child had draped a piece of colored cloth around him. Each child wore a paper crown, or paper wings, or carried a paper sword. There they were deep in affairs of state: Kings and Queens, Princes and Princesses, Lords and Ladies, all in order. Then with *the* Queen leading the way, they walked in stately fashion from "palace" to "garden" to "palace" again, conversing in a lofty mood.

And so it began. After that there was never any question of what to do at recess. Day after day, for the rest of the year, they made up their play themselves and roamed the park as Kings and Queens, giants and witches, messengers and gnomes. In all their eager activity one saw that through the fairy tales their imaginations had been touched and awakened in much the same way that the Prince once awakened the Sleeping Beauty.

Why do the fairy tales do this more than any other sort of story?

When a fairy tale has been told by the teacher, the children are asked to retell it the next day. A comparison was made between their memory of Grimm's fairy tales and those well-thought-out "here and now" stories which describe *real life* in a way suited to children. No matter how long the fairy tale is, the children can remember its colorful pictures and its rhythmically recurring events and they can retell it almost word for word. But when they have been asked to retell a story that rises from a logical thought pattern, they answer again and again, "Oh, that's a hard story, we can't remember it."

Take, for instance, a typical story of a little boy who goes to visit his grandfather on a farm. He sees the dog, the cat, the pig, the calf and all the other farm animals and they are described realistically. Then follows some sort of adventure during the course of which the little boy is kind to animals. Compare all such realistic, moralistic stories with any one of Grimm's fairy tales, and what do you find? In the fairy tales all the human qualities of courage, honesty, warmth of heart, kindness are opposed by trickery, treachery, cruelty and folly. These qualities appear as Kings and soldiers, witches and dwarves, giants and dragons. Event after event unfolds in which these beings play their part to carry the children with them through all the adventures of the realm of human moral feeling.

The story teller, parent or teacher, can develop a sense for the difference between stories which create an inner activity and those which don't. In stories which have a rhythmic repetition of events that follow one another

in a pictorial and often *un*-logical way the children are enlivened. Stories which have the effect of going on and on, in which situations develop for logical purposes, in which thoughts are called upon to make sense, such stories clearly baffle the children. The rhythmic and pictorial qualities of the fairy tale rise directly from the realm of feeling. This reality of the fairy tale claims the children at an age when feeling is their guide. In comparison, the "here and now" stories which describe the "real" world in a scientific way have the effect of keeping the children out of the story, for is it not true that the scientific view (no matter if it is in three-letter words) must be impersonal? And when you are tempted to tell a moralizing story, just remember that it will make children with healthy feeling want to run away.

The unpleasant effect of moralistic stories arises because thought is trying to take the place of feeling as a basis for moral education. The fairy tales avoid this, and, in the way in which they exercise and educate children in the human moral realm, they bring to the first year of school work something which must be recognized more and more as a necessary element of education. In an age when brilliance of mind has failed to create any understanding of the connection between moral feeling and knowledge, it is of great importance for the future that education should make this connection by planting in the fields of a knowledge-of-the-world the seed which is the knowledge of the human being as a moral being.

The fairy tales do this. At the heart of each fairy tale lies a kernel of wisdom about man. And this wisdom nourishes the children. They are truly hungry for it.

One can point to this as the inner content of the work of the first grade in the Rudolf Steiner School, and at the same time show how the fairy tales lend themselves to the teaching of the three R's, as well as to painting, modelling, and dramatics.

The form of the letters of the alphabet are taught in such a way as to show how they emerge out of picture shapes. The *W* is a *Wave* in the sea where swims the Prince, enchanted as a fish. The *Butterflies* asleep in the palace gardens, while *Briar Rose* sleeps, give the shape of the letter *B*. The seven *Mountains*, which are travelled by the witch and the seven dwarves in the story of *Snow White*, become *M*'s. One sees how these imaginations of things are better teachers than the things themselves would be. Small children pay scant heed to the shapes of actual objects in comparison with the rapt attention they give to the story of the wicked witch who comes over the seven mountains to bring *Snow White* a poisoned apple.

In arithmetic, stories like the *Seven Ravens* and the *Twelve Dancing Princesses*, can be used to dramatize various number relationships.

In painting and in modelling with colored plasticine or wax, the fairy tales give an unlimited variety of subjects for developing artistic skills.

The teacher learns from the fairy tales too. She learns a great deal about the children through these stories; learns how closely thinking, feeling and willing are connected at this age of childhood, and how feeling, especially, plays the leading role in all the child's learning experience.

There is no reason why mothers and fathers, as well as teachers, should not make some of these discoveries for themselves by telling fairy tales to their children. It is not the same thing to read to them, for when reading the book separates you from the child. For those who have tried telling these stories, but have found it difficult to remember a story, there is a way of learning how. Read the story to yourself as often as you have to, but while reading it visualize it as you go along. See the characters, the places, the weather, the action, as pictures in your mind's eye. Then when you start to tell the story look for these pictures to guide you, and you will find that you can remember.

—DOROTHY J. HARRER

(*Curriculum Advisor, Rudolf Steiner School, New York*)

Reprint from "*Education As An Art*," Vol. 5, No. 2, 1944

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## REPORT FROM THE DETROIT WALDORF SCHOOL

In the Lecture Series 1967-68 at our school, Dr. Franz Winkler, a practicing physician in New York City who directed a psychiatric hospital before he specialized in internal medicine, spoke on *Education and Mental Health*.

He opened his lecture by stating that behind the countless ills of our time lie the confusion and bewilderment of modern man. Since this problem can be solved only by education in the broadest sense of the word, it is the educator today whose success or failure may decide the fate of our civilization. Before passing judgment, however, we must realize that hardly any era in recorded history has required so much of the individual, while giving him so little wisdom and strength to cope with life.

The complacency prevailing only a few decades ago has been shaken by the steady increase in delinquency, mental disorders and drug addiction. Alarmed by these symptoms, psychologists and educators are now paying more attention to the problem of mental health. "Headstart" movements and many other kinds of remedial education have been tried. Such endeavors have become highly controversial, partly due to the fact that no consensus exists as to what constitutes mental health.

Dr. Winkler suggests that a common ground might be found by characterizing a healthy condition of the mind as a state of balance between the capacity of an individual for clear thinking, the stamina of his emotional life and his capacity for creative action.

It was Rudolf Steiner who called the attention of physicians and psychologists to these three interrelated but nevertheless separate aspects of the human psyche. He pointed out that these psychological aspects are related even to various physiological processes of the body. Thus in a highly simplified way we may distinguish between

- 1) the analytical mind, based chiefly on the instrument of the central nervous system,
- 2) the emotional life, strongly influenced by the rhythmical processes such as breathing and circulation,
- 3) the will, or capacity for creative action, which is related to glandular and metabolic processes.

The interrelation between psychology and physiology can be demonstrated by the fact that, just as it is at times possible to improve mental health by proper medication, severe physical illnesses are often dramatically improved by the right kind of education. Such education, however, will succeed only when it treats the three principles mentioned as distinct entities, united, of course, by the innermost core of the human individuality.

Modern psychology is not inclined to accept a distinction between thinking, feeling and will. That such a distinction exists, however, can be illustrated by some of the psychological phenomena of our time. Dr. Winkler gave some examples of the imbalance occurring when one of the above mentioned aspects predominates at the expense of the others. He cited the phenomenon of withdrawal into hippiedom and into the dream state of mind-changing drugs. Many of the so-called hippies are young people possessed of a capacity for love and compassion, emotions not matched, however, by a mental ability strong enough to analyze the reasons for the conditions which they reject, and by will power creative enough to improve them.

If among hippies emotions are stronger than thoughts and will, another kind of imbalance exists among many modern scientists. Their faculty for critical analysis often dwarfs their feeling of compassion and understanding which would make science truly beneficial. The lack of creative ability (will power) on the part of modern scientists is clearly indicated by the fact that no modern invention has added to the perfection of our imperfect world.

Among a third group of people, often called do-gooders, will power is frequently predominant. Such people are quick to act in an attempt to improve social, economic and political ills, without, however, possessing the analytical faculties of the mind and the truly compassionate understanding of the heart which alone could render their action fruitful.

Dr. Steiner pointed out that in a child up to his seventh year, *creative abilities* are in the foreground and therefore the foremost target of education. Premature intellectual training or an attempt to mold a child's emotions by exhortation may lead to a permanent weakness of the will.

Between the 7th and 14th year, the child's *emotions* require special attention. His emotional life will benefit when a child is encouraged to venerate personalities (contemporary or historical) who can serve as guides toward the fulfillment of his special needs. Between the 14th and 21st year, main attention must be paid to applying discipline to the training of his *mental capacities*.

To enable the teacher to fulfill his task, he must never cease to perfect his own education, without which he cannot hope to guide his pupil toward true mental health.

The human ego, taking full control at about the 21st year, may be visualized as a coachman, holding the reins of three pairs of horses which symbolize thinking, feeling and will. It is the special task of Waldorf Schools to create conditions under which the individual learns to distinguish between his spiritual core and his partly physiological and hereditary trends. To fulfill this task, an educator needs more than intellect, he needs intuition which can be trained as objectively as the intellect can be trained for scientific tasks. The training of such intuitive insight in our scientific, intellectually controlled civilization requires an inner training of the kind which Rudolf Steiner has called Anthroposophy.

*Dr. Winkler is the author of MAN: THE BRIDGE BETWEEN TWO WORLDS, which has been called "an extraordinary book for our country to produce at so flaccid a moment in its cultural history; it combines poetic insight, moral courage, and a cool judgment, refined by long scientific training..." (Stringfellow Barr in The Saturday Review). It is available in paperback (\$1.75) at the Anthroposophic Press, 211 Madison Ave., New York 10016.*

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## FIRST GRADE CORRESPONDENCE

Children in the Waldorf schools have a common bond with other children all over the world as they learn with the same curriculum and methods. In any case the children in our schools have a feeling for their fellow human beings all over the world as they learn their languages, as they hear of our common historical heritage, as they learn to appreciate the world as a geographical whole and each man as a unique individual. Children lucky enough to visit other Waldorf schools always remark how at home they feel, yet such is our freedom that each school has its own unique atmosphere.

When I was training as a Waldorf teacher, I experienced a real United Nations atmosphere at Emerson College. Here students from Europe, America, Africa and Australia all united with a common purpose, not easy to describe but easy to feel during the daily tasks of potato peeling and dishwashing, or in high-flown and far-reaching discussion of life's experiences and aspirations. It is with sincere feeling that many of the students say: "Here I have found a home." As teachers we hope that the children also will have this feeling, first for their school and later for their place in adult life. At the end of our training course it happened that I knew several others who were also going to take first grades. How wonderful it would be if we could extend the comradeship we had experienced to the children in our classes!

With this in mind, the children in the First Grade at Highland Hall drew pictures for the Class One children in two English and one Scottish school, as well as for two American first grades. Anxiously we waited for the replies, but surface mail takes several weeks, and to organize a class to send replies also takes time. Just before Easter came our first reply, and by the end of the year all the classes had replied.

How different were the styles of drawing and writing, and yet there was a certain quality in common. Most of the classes used the Stockmar beeswax block crayons, and drew with bold gesture-strokes. Although we encourage our children not to use niggling outlines and expect the diagonal-stroke shading from the older children, the first two grades often still resort to the "gesture" drawing of their kindergarten years. The head is round, so we draw round and round with the thick beeswax block and how the color glows! The arms and legs *do* stretch out like sticks, and the five fingers (there may be more than five in these drawings!) do ray out to the stars. And that little house with the chimney askew and the gay little flowers in the garden does somehow resemble the absorbed face of the young artist leaning over it. And as a teacher watches the class at work, he gives thanks to the patient kindergarten teacher who has repeatedly said, "Now fill in all those white spaces, use all the big sheet of paper." And the teacher shakes his head over one of the new children who squeezes a few weak spidery strokes into a corner and asserts that he's finished.

The Scottish class used Reeve's Terrachrome crayons (pastels), and each drawing had to be carefully covered with tissue paper to prevent smudging. They shared with us the Russian tale of the Firebird. These



children were already beginning with the diagonal shading stroke, the sun was sometimes shaded rather than drawn with the gesture of roundness, the sea was

drawn with horizontal and undulating strokes, the sweeping lines of the boat were followed with loving care in repeated curving strokes. This was the only class to send us all the same picture, and obviously the class was working from an example by the teacher, yet the various treatments by the children were very individual. There was the princess in her bird-prowed boat, sometimes far out at sea, sometimes coming into a fir-tree clad shore, sometimes in full sunshine, sometimes under a night blue sky, sometimes vigorously rowing, sometimes carried without effort by her magic boat, the waves calm and blue or the surging depths clouded with purples and greens. The Wynstones (Gloucester, England) school shared with us the story of Faithful John (Grimm), where every child had drawn a different episode.

The work of each class contained the same kind of writing in block capitals with carefully chosen colors shaded around. How lovingly each letter is written and what an effort there is to keep the lines straight out of an inner strength without guidelines and to make the page a balanced and artistic whole. A child who makes this effort in his early years derives the capacity to approach his adult life with balance, perseverance and joy. Individual decorations appeared around the writing, but in every class children wished to show that they too had mastered the difficult pentagram or five-pointed star: ★

One member of our class went to visit our sister school in Sacramento, and she proudly took with her a book of drawings from her class. Sacramento sent us in return a large book with samples of their work, and we were told how this class could "read" every page. In our class we too can "read" our own pages, but not yet those written by others.

The joy which a class has in sending and receiving these letters is wonderful to see. The effort needed to make and maintain the communication is well worth it, and the children have a real feeling that being in an international Waldorf school is something special: here are other children who shade, who always use colored crayons, who work on large pieces of paper, and who have even heard the same stories. How carefully the class picked up those delicate pastel drawings by the edges and tried to choose their favorite picture! How joyfully our tongues rolled round the Scottish names — Calum, Murray, Gavin, Grant, Malcolm! How surprised we were to discover that Sacramento also had an Andrea and that Wynstones also had a Michael, and how interested the class was to hear that in Scotland Robin is a boy's name!

One of our most precious letters, however, is not from a contemporary of the children but from someone much older. How many Waldorf classes can boast of a letter from their class teacher's old class teacher?

—ELIZABETH NOBBS

*(Teacher at Highland Hall, Northridge, California)*

*Just published: Perspective Drawing, by Dr. H. von Baravalle. Valuable for the Elementary School. Waldorf School Monographs, 25 Pershing Road, Englewood, N. J. 07631 (\$1.50)*

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