

Let us live
with
Our Children



MARY PURDY COLLECTION
FROM
WELLINGTON COLLEGE OF
EDUCATION

LET US LIVE WITH OUR CHILDREN !

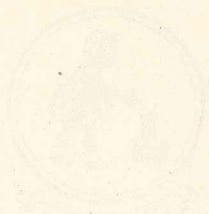


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FOREWORD

In the sphere of the care and welfare of infant life New Zealand, by means of the Plunket system, has done much for its children and established for the Dominion a very favourable reputation overseas. In the field of the mental hygiene of the child, however, we are only now beginning to realise that we have much to learn from the methods and experience of other countries. This book aims to develop interest in this very important phase of child welfare on the part of all, but especially of parents and teachers.

It is not to be assumed that in these few pages will be found an answer to every question raised by the behaviour problems of young children; but readers cannot fail to become aware of the urgent need of knowledge in this field and to have their interest stimulated in the emotional and behaviour difficulties of the young children, for whose early training they are in any measure responsible.

The writers of this pamphlet are agreed that the things the young child needs are simple: some understanding of his psychological make-up; some appreciation of the difficulties he meets in trying to adapt himself to a new and rapidly changing life; some sympathy with him in his struggle to develop his own personality. The young child needs the love and security of good home relations, companionship with those of his own age, freedom from the dominance, interference and ridicule of adults, protection from unnecessary fears and the physical and social material on which he is dependent for the exercise and development of his own capacities. If this book leads parents to become more apprehensive in regard to their children, it will do little but harm; if it encourages them in times of difficulty to maintain their emotional balance and to seek expert advice it will be a means of happiness to both parents and children.

It is fitting that this book should be issued by the Wellington Free Kindergarten Association, and I sincerely trust it will be read widely and intelligently.

T. A. HUNTER.

August, 1939.

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A CHILD'S VIEW OF LIFE

This is a picture of life as the child sees it, as he shows it to us in his words and his actions at the time, when he is struggling to understand how things behave and what *people* say and intend. Both persons and things are very puzzling when one has learnt to walk and get about the world, to speak a little and understand a little of what others say, but is still profoundly ignorant and inexperienced. Even the little that one *does* know and *can* hear and repeat, will itself very often lead one into error and bewilderment and disappointment.

The impressions and sayings I am going to put before you are not imagined or invented by me—they have all been given to me by little children themselves:

John, aged two, looks out of the window one winter's day in his English home, and to his astonishment sees the grass and the trees, the roofs of the houses and the path, all covered with—*sugar*! How *surprising* to see sugar over everything out there! How did it *get* there? What fun it will be to run out and gather it up and eat it—lots and lots and lots of sugar! But the grown-ups laugh when John delightedly exclaims "*Sugar.*" They say: "*That's* not sugar—it's snow!" Snow? What *is* snow? and why is sugar sometimes sugar and sometimes snow? It looks exactly like the sugar on top of my big brother's birthday cake—it shines and glitters and looks good to eat just as that did—*why* do they say it's not sugar? But after breakfast, when John runs out of doors, he finds that *this* sugar feels very cold when he touches it, and when he picks a handful up the sugar soon disappears, and there are only drops of water left on his fingers. What *funny* sugar it is! And it's not at all sweet to taste—only very cold. And now there's not so much on the trees and the roofs as there was—but lots of water is running down, and the lovely shining white is getting dirty. It must be because *this* sugar behaves in such a queer way that people *call* it snow!

The same John is found one day putting tooth-paste on his face, out of a tube. Mother had put something soft and soothing out of a tube on his cheeks when they were chapped by the cold wind—*here* is something that comes out of a tube when you squeeze it, it must be soft and soothing too. But what's the matter? this stuff *smells* different and *feels* different—it seems to have little rough bits in it and is not at all cool and pleasant. How queer! Then Mother comes along and smiles and says: "That's not Lanoline, John, that's tooth-paste." It must be to make your *teeth* better, not the outside of your cheeks—but how *can* it make your teeth better when it's all rough and smells so nasty?

One day, coming home from a walk in the dusk, John sees a silver moon riding in the sky, shining down through the trees. He says "Moon, moon," and gurgles with delight. Two hours later, when he goes up to bed, he sees another moon through his bedroom window, and exclaims: "*Nuvver* moon, *nuvver* moon." But Mother says: "That's not another moon—it's the *same* moon—there's only one." But how can that be, when the first moon was shining right through the trees—and *this* one is ever so much higher, right above the trees? How can it be? Mother says so—but I don't understand. Can the moon walk about, like men? Has it got legs? Did it *want* to climb up higher into the sky and get above the trees? Did it want to see *me* better, and shine into my window when I went to bed? Kind moon—I'm glad it could climb.

John's brother, aged four, brings home a coloured balloon one day. John has never seen a balloon before, although he has often played with his own large red ball. But *this* ball does not fall *flop* and bounce on the floor when big brother lets go of it—it goes up into the air—and if big brother gives it a little tap, away it goes, sailing right up to the ceiling? How does it *do* that? What a funny way for a ball to behave! Perhaps all balls will do that if you just know how to put them in the right place, or hit them in the right way? So John fetches his own heavy leather ball and tries to make it behave in the same way. But it won't! It falls down every time—*bump* on the floor. *Why* won't it, if big brother's ball will? Is it the way *he* stands when he taps it? Is it something he says to it? And John watches his brother closely, and tries to put

his feet and hold his hands and arms in exactly the way the elder boy does—but *still* his ball will not sail away up to the ceiling like the sun or the moon in the sky! It is queer and puzzling why two things which look alike behave in such different ways. But presently big brother lets John have the balloon—and now he *feels* how different it is—not only more smooth and soft to touch, but so light to hold—why, you have to keep a tight hold on it to prevent it sailing away out of reach! It doesn't press down on your hands as you hold it, but pulls away from them a bit, upwards. And, after all, it doesn't *look quite* the same—there's more light in it, somehow—perhaps it is this light in it, this shininess, that makes it go up instead of down—up to the sun and the moon. Yes, Mother says, "This is *lighter* than that," so John thinks this must be why it goes up to the sky—it's got more *light* in it!

And isn't it strange how *glass*, the glass that is so smooth to touch and hardly there at all, because although it stops your hand going through, it doesn't say "no" to your eyes—isn't it strange how a smooth thing that's hardly there at all can all at once, if you just drop it or hit it, become sharp like needles or teeth? How does it get those teeth, which bite and make the red blood come? Is it angry because I hit it, like big brother was when *he* bit me? And where does the red blood come from, anyhow? Are we all full of blood inside, like a big bag? Or does it get on to our fingers like dirt or soap? And why does the *red fire* eat up paper and coal, till they aren't there any more—just like a great red giant's mouth, eating his dinner! Let's throw big brother's book into the fire, and watch it get all eaten up: but if I go too near it the fire may eat *me* up too—it bit my finger one day when I picked up a lovely bright red bit that looked like a red flower. The fire eats *itself* up, too, 'cos soon there aren't any bright dancing flames left—only nasty black bits, all cold and dead. Why does it do that? When *I'm* awfully hungry, too, might I eat myself all up? I won't *get* as hungry as that—it's not safe!

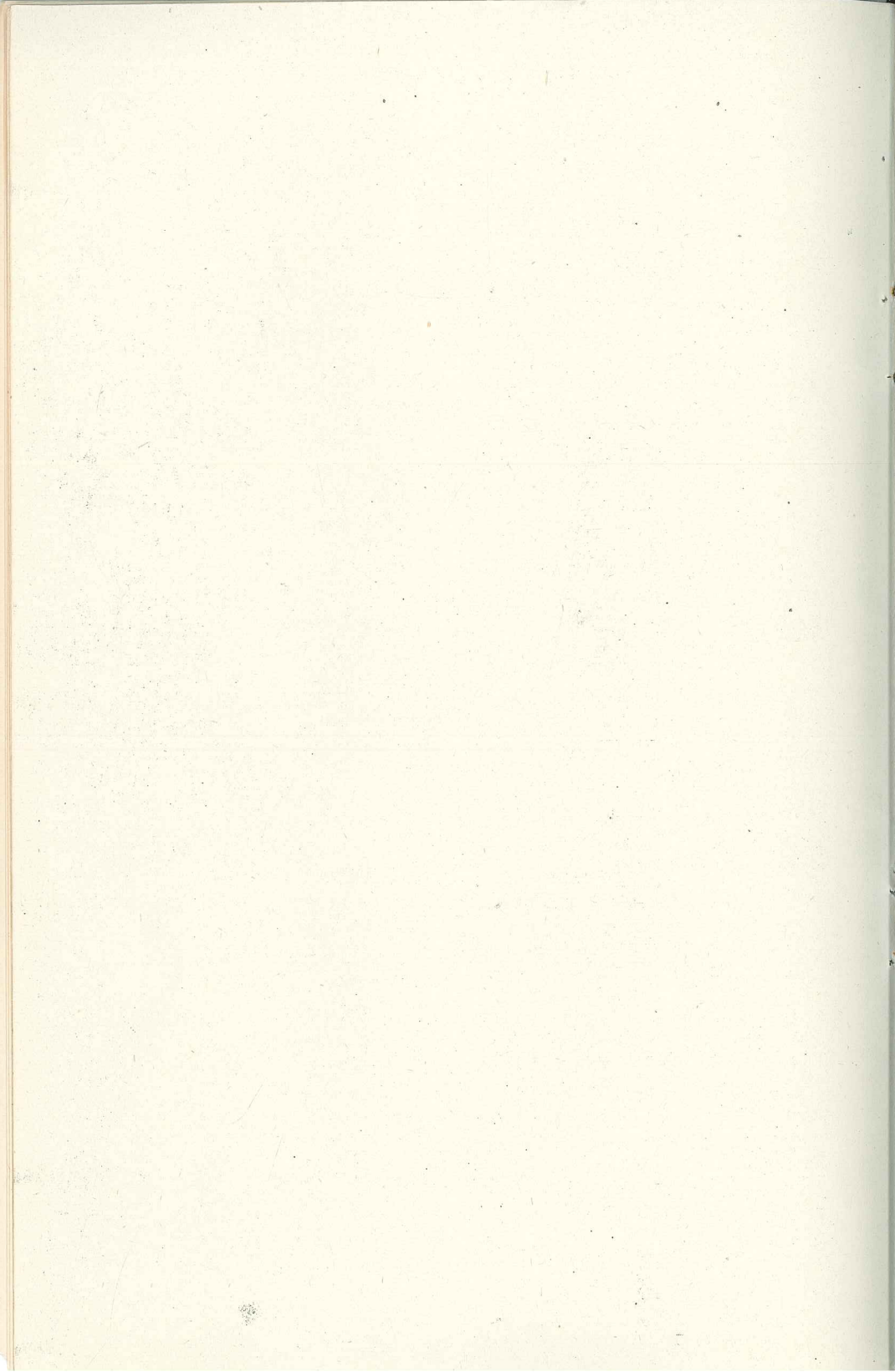
It isn't only the fire that may look like a gaping mouth to the tiny child. A little girl of eighteen months saw a shoe of her mother's when the whole sole had come loose and was flapping about, showing all the nails. She screamed and screamed with terror, and was so frightened that she could not bear to let her

mother wear any shoes at all, but an old red pair with which she was very familiar. Her mother had no idea what it was that frightened the child so acutely, and the child could not tell her. But after some months, when she had more words at her command, something was said about shoes, and the mother reminded her: "Do you remember how frightened you were when you saw my shoe that wanted mending?" "Yes," said the child, "*it might have eaten me all up!*" To her, it was a great empty mouth, full of teeth and danger. Thus does the little child's vivid imagination distort his vision, and people the world with fierce animals and giants and ogres.

Then there's that question of *water*—water which washes away all the dirt and carries it off down the gurgling pipe. Suppose it washes me away, too? If Nannie says *I'm* "very dirty," perhaps *I* shall be all washed away and swept off into the drain. One four-year-old boy was *dubbed* a "gutter urchin" by his tantalised mother, when he had vexatiously covered himself with garden soil from top to toe. To her it was a mere hasty word expressing her annoyance. But the child woke at night in shaking terror—lest it should be that the rain would wash *him* away down the drain of the gutter, as it carried the mud and autumn leaves. That's what "gutter urchin" must mean! Many children of these tender years suddenly develop a great fear of being bathed or having their hair washed—a fear which seems without rhyme or reason to the adults—but behind it there is always a child's logic, a child's imagination.

It's queer, too, ponders the child, how mother cuts things to pieces when she's going to *make* something. She takes the scissors and goes "snip-snap" through the lovely white or blue stuff. And daddy, when he says he's going to mend a chair or make something, takes a big hammer and knocks it very hard, or a long bright thing with lots of sharp teeth, and pulls that forwards and backwards—and cuts the nice big piece of wood up into small bits. But when *I* try to make something, and cut my blanket (in the morning before anyone is awake, and I feel I *must* make something good to keep me happy until it's breakfast time), they call me "naughty" and take the scissors away and say I ought to have known better. And if I get daddy's hammer and try to make the chair better, mother says I've ruined it—why won't it make things





when *I* cut and hammer—why must it always spoil them? Why is one sort of cutting good and another bad? Will I ever know how to hammer in a good way, how to cut a coat so as to make it instead of spoiling it?

There's the puzzle of *sizes*, too. There's such a lot to learn about sizes, when you are two or even three years old. You want to wear big brother's shoes, because you feel that would make *you* a big brother. And you insist on putting them on, although mother says they're too big for you—and you're woefully disappointed when you find that they fall off every time you try to walk in them. Perhaps they'll get smaller one day, and then you can keep them on—'cos mother said the other day, "*Your* shoes are getting too small for you." And when some *people* get bigger, others get smaller, the little child thinks. A three-year-old said to her mother: "When I get big I'll be like you. Then *you'll* be my *little* girl." She was unable to accept the view that her mother would not get smaller, and when being put to bed the same evening she smiled with a wise air and said: "Women *does* get smaller!"

A boy of two-and-a-half, looking at a photograph of his big brother when *he* was two, said: "That's Ek"—his name for himself. "No," replies mother, "that's not Ek—that's Martin." The child looks very bewildered at such a statement. How can this be Martin? This is a little boy, like Ek himself—Martin is much bigger than that, and wears a big boy's suit. Mother sees the bewilderment, and so adds: "Once Martin was small like Ek is now. Soon you will get bigger and be as big as Martin is now." Whereupon the two-year-old says, complacently: "When Ek big, then Martin be little."

Then there are all sorts of queer puzzles about *words*. A little girl who is not feeling very well is surprised to hear her mother tell someone that she has "a furred tongue." A *furred* tongue? She touches it with her finger and moves it about in her mouth—she can't *feel* the fur on it! Is it growing? Can mother see if even I don't know its there? Is it black and white fur like pussy's, or brown and black stripes like the next-door cat's? This girl kept these frightened queries to herself until she was quite grown-up, and never could understand how your tongue could have fur on it without your knowing it yourself.

Again, the boy of two-and-a-half, seeing his mother about to light the gas fire with matches, begs to be allowed to "match it," as he says. He takes *two* matches at once in his hand, showing them to his mother. "Look, *match it*," he remarks. He seems thus to have three meanings for the word "match"—the name of the article, the real verb "match" in the sense of pairing, and his own use of the word as a verb, meaning "light the fire by striking a match." He seems to be struggling to sort out these meanings of the one sound which he hears—as well as to understand the behaviour of real matches and to master their use. The same boy loves to play "band," as he called it—a soldier's band which he has seen and heard. But he plays the band by banging a pan, an aluminium saucepan, on some other object, as he marches about—and he uses the same general word, which might be any or all of the three words *pan*, *band* and *bang*, to describe both the objects and the banging and the noise that is made. You make or create a band by banging with a pan!

These half-understood words of the grown-ups may bring not only mistakes and puzzles, but acute fears, too. One boy of nearly three became very terrified of the kilted Scotch soldiers he saw in the park during the Coronation. Not for some weeks, when he was playing with a grown-up friend at *being* soldiers, did he show us why he was so much afraid. He suddenly looked at his friend's skirt and asked: "Where's you killed?" Killed, not kilt! Evidently to him Scotch soldiers were people who wear *killed* things, perhaps things *they* had killed, round their middles. No wonder he was terrified!

And apart from hasty speech and faulty hearing, how difficult it is for the little child to understand so much of the real behaviour of the grown-ups! Martin, aged four, has been requested to put on his dressing-gown. He says to his mother: "I want *you* to do it for me." "Why?" asks his mother, "that's one of the things you can do for yourself, isn't it?" "Yes, but I want *you* to help me." "But you don't *need* to be helped with the things you can do for yourself, Martin!" "But you help *visitors* on with their coats sometimes. Why do you do that?"

And there's all the puzzle of *dreams*, which, when you are small, are terribly—or beautifully—real to you. When you dream of ice-

cream and chocolate, you seem really to have it. It isn't until you are six or seven that you can say: "It *seems* as if it really happened, but it doesn't *really*, does it?" And there appear to be more unpleasant dreams than happy ones, for Charles, aged four, says one day at the meal-table, more to himself than to anyone else: "I don't like dreams—they're nasty things! Besides, I don't have any!" Thus telling us only too convincingly by his denial not only that he does have dreams, but that they are so unpleasant that he wishes he didn't. And another older child says: "You have dreams to punish you—God sends them because you've done wrong."

Fortunately, life at two and four years is not all puzzle, all anxiety. There are intense delights, too. Good things to eat never taste so delectable as then. To stroke the cat's soft fur or let water and sand dribble through your fingers is an exquisite pleasure. Flowers smell sweeter, the fire glows more comfortingly, the lights shine brighter, it's more fun to dance and sing than ever in the later years. The glory of mother's return after being out to tea and she comes to kiss one good-night, the thrill of being lifted in the air by father, and feeling the funny rough love of his cheek—what can there be in later life so wholly satisfying?

And there's always the hope and prospect of getting bigger and understanding some of these queer things that grown-ups do and say—by being a grown-up yourself!

Two-year-old Ek is seen standing in front of a long mirror and saying reflectively, "*Rather* like a man!" What a modest assessment of his own picture, there in the mirror. But what hopefulness, too! Perhaps these short limbs will lengthen, those frightening dreams fly away, and all those queer puzzles get sorted out. If not now, *one day*; but what a *long time* "one day" is in coming.

* * * *

How much help the little child needs in learning to believe in himself and his own future, to understand the puzzles of language and of people's behaviour, and of his own conflicting feelings; and to learn how to help him we need to learn to understand his view of life and of ourselves.

SUSAN ISAACS.

THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

The best sort of parent-child relationship is one where there is mutual confidence and a real sharing of interests; one that gives the child happiness and a feeling of security and helps him to learn to be independent; and one in which the parents take their responsibilities sensibly, allowing themselves neither to become over-anxious, nor to make unreasonable sacrifices of their comfort and convenience. Some parents with great natural gifts for their job achieve such a relationship with very little effort; a few are by temperament really quite unfitted for parenthood at all; most people fall between the two extremes—they get along fairly well with their children, but in one direction or another fail to establish a thoroughly satisfactory relationship. There is no simple solution for the difficulties that arise—their causes are many and varied—but it is possible to describe in a general way the conditions that are necessary if good relations between parents and children are to develop.

The Need for Affection.

In the first place, small children need plenty of ordinary human affection. Unless they are sure of their parents' love for them they cannot face the world with confidence, and they may quite easily grow up into suspicious, uncooperative, difficult people. Yet even parental affection can take unhealthy forms. It can be selfish and possessive, as when a mother wants all her child's love for herself and tries to keep him tied to her apron strings; or, especially in these days of small families, it can be over-intense or over-anxious. In either case, the effects are bad; the children become too dependent, or emotionally strained, or irritable and rebellious. Children should not be smothered with parental care. They get on best with parents who, while genuinely affectionate, are sufficiently detached to know when to leave them alone, to encourage them to take pleasure in the company of other people, and to wait for them to respond to the affection they receive in their own time and their own way.

Be Truthful with Children.

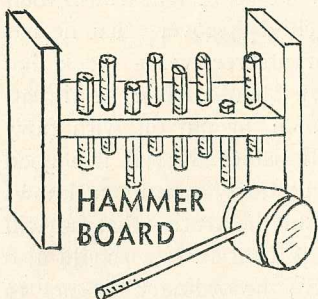
It is also very important that parents should be truthful in their relations with their children. When a child discovers that he has been deceived, his confidence in his parents receives a shock that may have very serious effects. Children should never be threatened with the bogeyman or the policeman, or put off with fairy tales when they ask about the origin of babies. Nor is it a good policy to pretend that "the doctor won't hurt" when one knows that he will: it is better to tell the child the truth—that he will have a little pain but that he must try to bear it. We should also be frank about our own faults, and have the ordinary decency to apologise when we have been hasty with children or unjust to them.

A Firm but Flexible Routine.

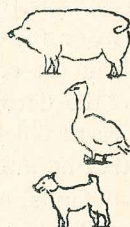
Third, there should be a background of orderly routine in the small child's life. Regular times for meals and baths and going to bed are not only good for his health, but also help to give him that sense of security which has already been mentioned. Up to a point, children prefer order to disorder—notice, for example, how strongly they will sometimes resent any alteration in the details of the daily round—and they readily accustom themselves to a simple and sensible routine that is suited to their stage of development. It is not too much to say that failure to establish such a routine is responsible for half the problems of management that parents find so trying. This does not mean, however that a rigid set of rules should be laid down and followed slavishly through thick and thin. There are occasions when the routine should be varied: if, for example, a child is obviously not hungry, or obviously not tired, it is wiser to delay the meal or bedtime than to expect him to eat or sleep.

The Importance of Consistency.

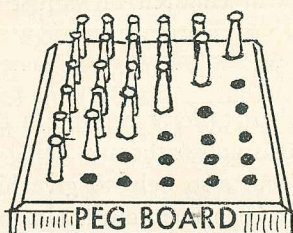
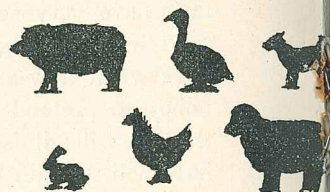
A related need is that for firm and consistent control. The impulses of young children are strong and quick, their emotions vivid and often contradictory. It gives them assurance to be able to feel that the adults who surround them are stable, well-controlled people who know their own minds. Consistency in the handling



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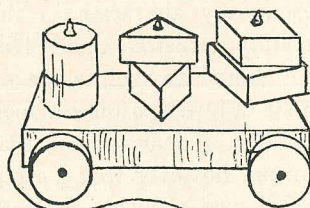
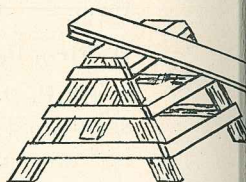


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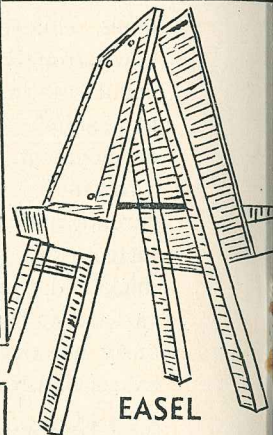


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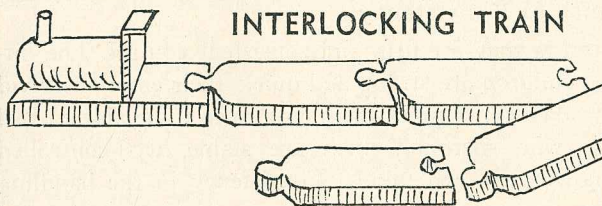
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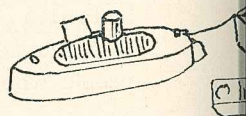
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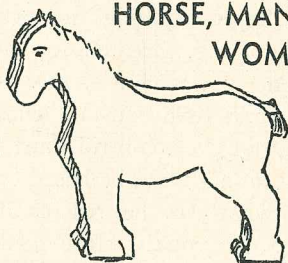
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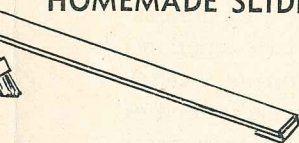
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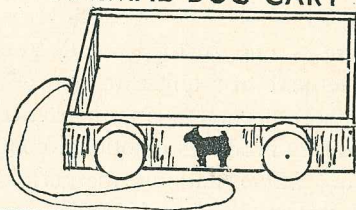
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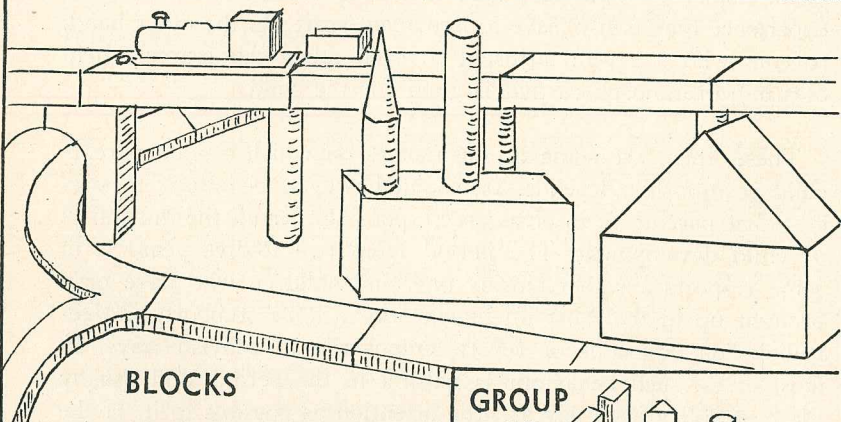
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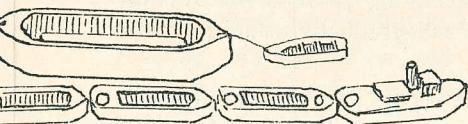
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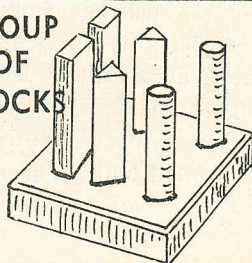
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BOATS



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of children is perhaps even more essential than firmness. The child who is permitted something one day and forbidden it the next, whose parents "try everything" in turn—slapping, scolding, coaxing, bribing, indulging, threatening—simply does not know where he is. Treatment that is consistently over-severe is bad, but it is better for the child than constant chopping and changing. To be really effective, however, control must be more than firm and consistent; it must, in addition, be based on a knowledge of the child's needs and of what can be reasonably expected of him at his particular stage of growth. Here books on child psychology can help greatly, and there are plenty to be had at any good public library.

Harmony Between Parents.

There is one further point. Young children are very impressionable and are quick to sense disturbances in the emotional atmosphere around them. In particular, lack of harmony between the parents produces emotional conflict in the child; he is fond of both his father and his mother, identifies himself with both of them, and feels himself pulled in opposite directions. Such an experience may easily leave a permanent scar. On the other hand, parents who are well adjusted to each other can scarcely help creating an atmosphere that is good for the child.

These, then, are some of the factors on which a good parent-child relationship depends. It would, however, be wrong to suggest that parents themselves are responsible for all the difficulties of child development. The period from two to five years is in some respects a rather stormy one, and children who have been brought up in the most intelligent way will be stubborn and rebellious on occasions or revert temporarily to babyish ways. In most cases, such behaviour is natural to the period, and usually the best policy is to pay as little attention as possible to it. If the parents' general attitude is right, if they are reasonably patient and consistent, and if they provide interesting occupations for the child, there is every chance that he will gradually achieve a more self-controlled and stable attitude.

A. E. CAMPBELL, M.A., Dip.Ed.

THE CHILD IN THE HOME

You often hear it said of a person, "Oh, he comes from a good home." But I wonder if you have ever stopped to think just what is meant by a good home? I think what we usually mean is one where there is plenty of money to live comfortably. But is a well-to-do home necessarily a good one, and can money give children all the things they need? Of course, every home has to provide food and clothing for a family and a certain amount of money is needed for these things. But there are other, more subtle things which money cannot buy, and these are just as necessary as good food and clothing to a child if he is to grow into a happy and satisfactory person. Just as a child's body demands nourishing food and fresh air and exercise, so his mind needs certain things if it is to grow properly, and any average parent in any average home can provide these. Here, then, are some of the things I think a home should give a child before it is worthy of being called a "good home."

A Pattern of Life.

First of all, the home should give a pattern for the lives of the children. Children are born imitators, and whether you wish it or not, you will be the model on which your child will base his own life. Until he goes to school at least he will generally look on his parents as perfect, and he will want to behave as they do. Parents who are reasonable and honest and consistent in all their behaviour are giving their children a good pattern of life. It's no use preaching to small children, if your own conduct is at all shaky.

Children will very easily catch fears of all kinds from their parents, so it behoves us to be as calm and serene as we can, and not to show fear and nervousness if we can possibly help it. So often a child sees that his mother is afraid of a thunderstorm, and so he becomes afraid of thunderstorms, too. Remember also that it is important not to discuss all sorts of fearsome things, such as illnesses and operations and so on in front of young children. They often become frightened and worried through hearing odd bits of conversation.

Answers to Questions.

The home should be a place where all the child's questions are answered in a perfectly honest and straightforward way. Even if awkward and embarrassing questions are asked, such as, "Where do babies come from?" they must still be answered truthfully and clearly. A child can be made to feel very miserable and distressed if his questions are evaded, or if he is told some cock-and-bull story that he soon discovers is not true. It is often difficult for busy parents to find the time and patience to answer all the eager questions of a little child, but it is an important part of their job.

Chances to be Useful.

Parents should remember that every little child wants to be useful in the home, and all his awkward efforts to do things should be encouraged, even if he is rather a nuisance. Small children like to play at household jobs with their mothers, and they should be allowed to help with sweeping and cooking and cleaning if they want to. Of course they sometimes make a mess, but what's a mess compared with a child's happiness? And the doing of all these things is not only making the child happy; it is also teaching him all sorts of things about the world he lives in, and teaching him that he really shares in all the activities of the home. If a child is discouraged when he tries to be helpful and do things, if he is told he's too slow or too messy, then he will probably lose confidence in himself and feel that he never will be able to do things.

Chances to be Active.

All children need plenty of opportunity for active, outdoor play, and most homes can provide this without having to spend much money. Practically any parent can put a few boxes or a little ladder or something like that in the backyard, and even a sand-pit is not very difficult. All children love to play with water, and it is very simple, in warm weather, to put a bucket of water and a few basins and old spoons outside for them to play with. Every child needs the opportunity of doing these things, and practically every home can provide them without much trouble.

A Place of His Own.

It is important to see that every child has some place in the home that is really his. It is not always possible for each child to have a room of his own, but he should at least be given some little corner or cupboard that belongs to him and to no one else. And even if he cannot have a room of his own, he should at least have a bed to himself, and he should never be allowed to share his parents' room.

Companions.

One thing that is often sadly lacking in the modern small family is companionship for the children. Parents do forget that it is not good for any child to have nothing but the company of adults all the time. Up to the age of two the child naturally spends most of his time with his mother and he does not actually need any other company but that of his parents. But after that he should be growing used to mixing freely with other children. We all have to learn to fit in with other people, and the earlier we do it the easier it is. A kindergarten is the obvious answer to the problem of providing companions, but if there is no kindergarten available, then the parents must see that the child has playmates, and they must be prepared to put up with a certain amount of noise and untidiness.

A Happy Atmosphere.

It is probably not necessary to tell most parents that no child can grow up happily in a home where there is an atmosphere of hate and quarrelling and deceit. A home like this will poison a child's mind instead of helping it to grow properly. The best thing that parents can provide for their children is a home where there is a peaceful and cheerful atmosphere and where the parents themselves lead happy and useful lives.

BEATRICE BEEBY, B.A.

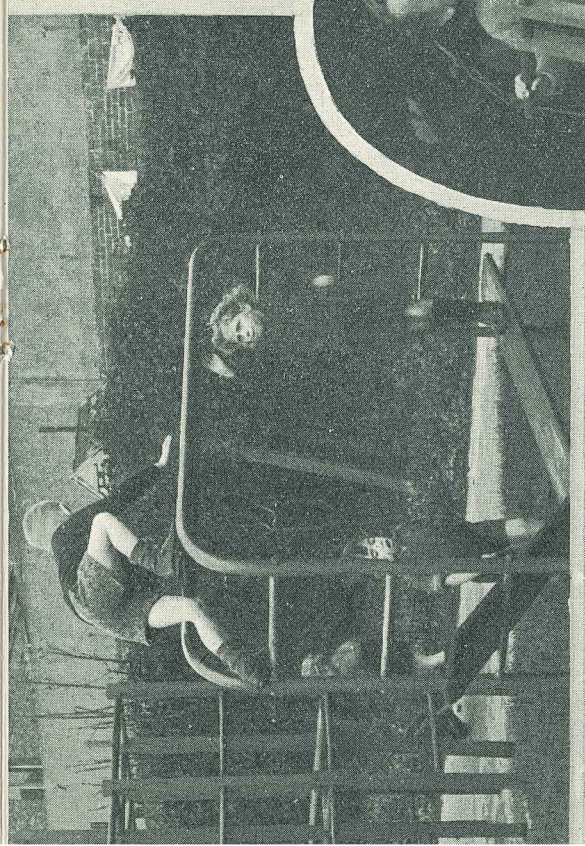
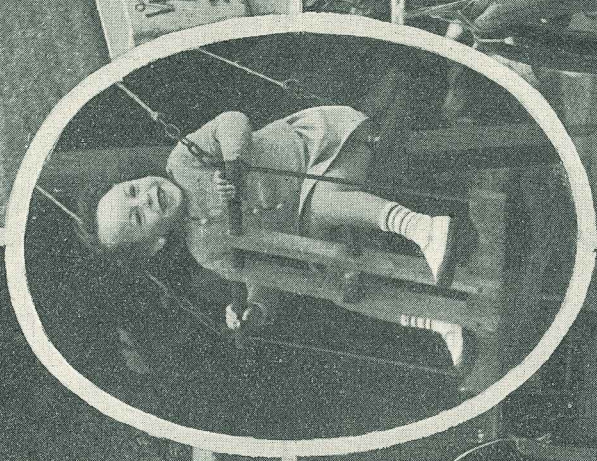
THE PLAY LIFE OF THE CHILD

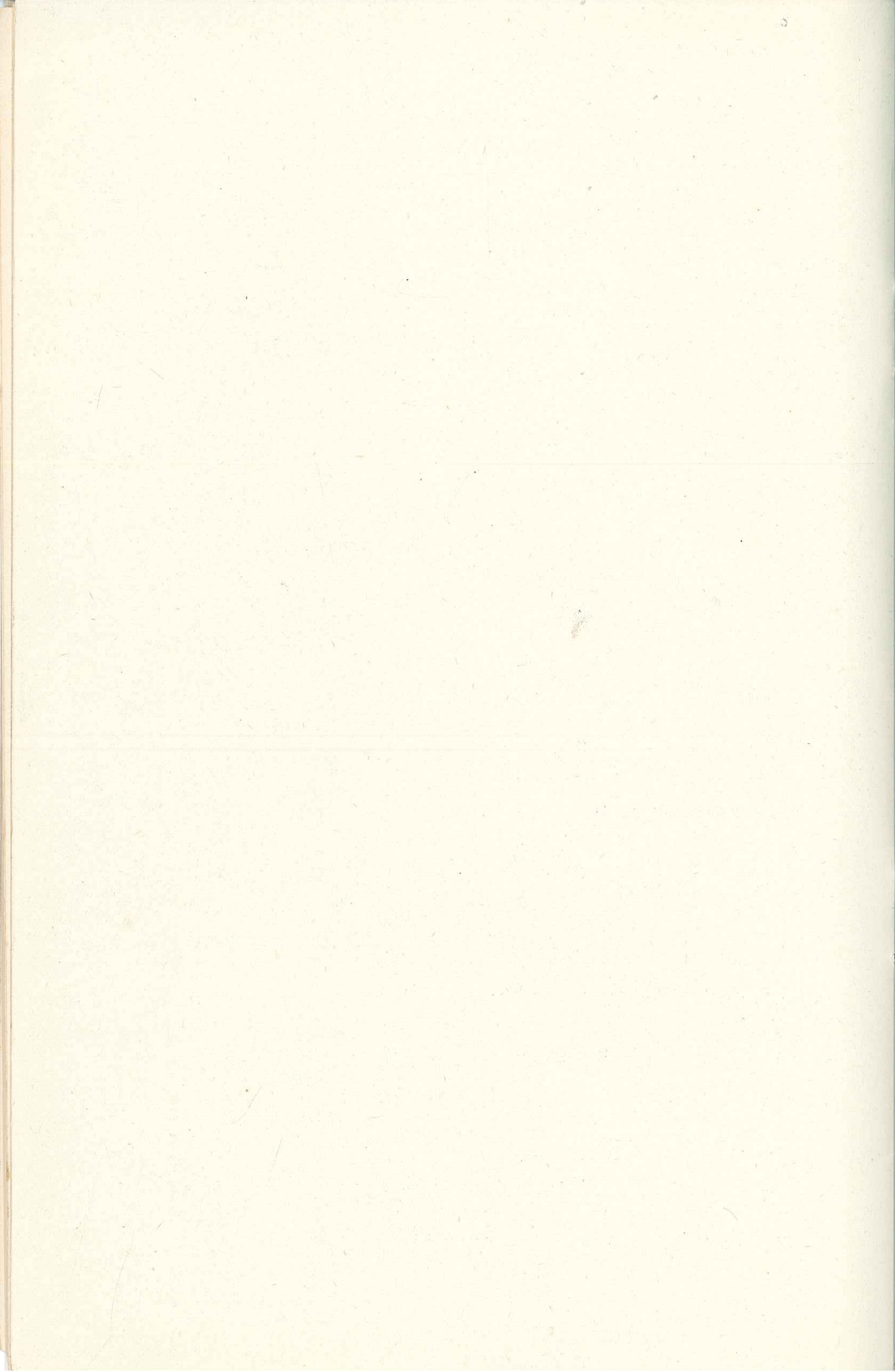
Play Necessary to Natural Development.

Watch a normal, healthy child. As a baby, he kicks, waves his arms about, gurgles. As a toddler, he is constantly active, using his legs, hands and body in all the ways we know so well. Throughout childhood, if he has space and opportunity for play, he runs, climbs, rolls, tumbles, pulls and pushes, builds things up and knocks them down, digs, swings, hammers, splashes in water, throws and tries to catch things. You seldom see him standing still for any length of time, or sitting inactive; and he is rarely quiet and uncommunicative.

The child who does not play is a sick child. To get at the cause of the sickness is the business of an expert, someone who has studied all aspects of child development. There may be a physical cause: perhaps wrong feeding, or over-feeding, has interfered with the natural functioning of the organs and clogged the machine. But, as well as physical sickness, there is such a thing as *mental sickness*. A child may be unable to play because of an over-strong emotional attachment to his mother; or he may be suffering from some fear which paralyses his actions—he may be afraid of other children, afraid of being alone, afraid of hurting himself, or there may be some deep-rooted emotional disturbance that even the expert finds difficulty in discovering. In such cases a child may regain his capacity for play as soon as his anxiety is lessened, but there is always the danger that his trouble will become fixed, and difficult to cure, if it is not handled wisely in its early stages.

Even temporary inability to play is a serious matter, as it means a definite set-back in the child's natural development. Sometimes it is the result of too little association with other children of the same age, sometimes of too much adult attention or interference. Some grown-ups have the mistaken idea that a child has to be entertained, and are constantly suggesting to him what he should do and how he should do it, thus depriving him of the chance to think or to act for himself. Again, a child may lose his inclination to play if he is constantly kept quiet or made aware of his clothes, or if he has not enough suitable playthings. Children brought up under





such conditions may not only be unable to play, but may, in addition, develop feelings of insecurity and fear when they find themselves without the support of their over-attentive parents. The result is that when they are placed in ideal conditions for play, such as those provided by the Kindergarten, they are unable to use their opportunities because of their lack of confidence and feeling of insecurity.

It is essential to healthy development that the child should enjoy plenty of play in the companionship of other children.

Play as a Safety Valve.

All living things must have an outlet for their energies. Many adults find an outlet in their work or in their hobbies. A child finds it in his play, through which he works off the physical energy that his healthy body is constantly generating. He tumbles, rolls, runs for the sheer joy of "blowing off steam."

But there are less obvious ways in which play acts as a safety valve. In his play the child *expresses the intense feelings* of love, hate, fear, anger, and happiness that surge through him. He knows that in his relations with real people he must keep some of these feelings in check, but he can vent his hate or his anger on his toys without the fear of hurting them or of receiving a rebuff in return.

Play gives him also an outlet for *phantasy*. He can be in his play what he longs to be in reality. He can be a tiger and eat people up, a parent with babies of his own, a fairy giving gifts. In his phantasy he can do the things he cannot do, or would be afraid of doing, in reality. "Mother sweeps and cooks and pours out the tea—I can be a mother and do these things too." "Daddy smokes a pipe—I am a Daddy smoking a pipe." In play of this kind the child dramatises his impressions of the outside world and finds a way of satisfying desires that would otherwise remain unfulfilled.

Understanding the Child Through His Play.

No aspect of a child's behaviour is more important for adults to understand than his play. His play mirrors so much of all there is to know about him; it is our surest indication of the child as he really is. Training and long experience are necessary to a deep interpretation of a child's play, but we can understand much of

what he is thinking and feeling through intelligent and unobtrusive observation. By noticing the way he meets his problems and handles his toys we can learn a great deal about his disposition, skill and ability to learn. Modern intelligence tests include a variety of toys which the child is asked to use in different ways. The tester pays as much attention to the child's approach and the manner in which he handles the toys as she does to his ability to follow instructions and solve the problems he is set.

In observing a child's play with other children we can learn something of his *social development*—that is, his ability to adjust himself to other children. Proper social adjustment is something that must be *learned*. Adults often fail to realise that a child has to grow out of his own world, where he is egotistically preoccupied with his personal needs and desires, into a world of many people and many conventions. He has to learn the right approach to social life and he needs very sympathetic people to help him gradually to understand the rights of others, community laws and the many mysteries of our intricate civilization.

It is very important that the child have companions of his own age all through life. He must live with others in order to understand others, and development proceeds most satisfactorily when he lives more in the world of his contemporaries than in the worlds of those who are either too advanced or too immature for him. Companionship with children of about the same age, and the sense of security given by the knowledge that there is an understanding adult in the background who will help him deal with situations and impulses that are too much for him alone, are important requirements for satisfactory social development.

The way the child's play develops indicates how the child himself is developing. As the child's body and mind develop his play becomes more and more varied, skilful and intelligent. Parents should follow the development of the child from birth and notice his growing ability to control his limbs, his organs of speech, etc. It is also important that parents should compare their child's development with that of other children of the same age, so that they can learn to know what is *natural to the various stages of growth*. Because of ignorance of how children develop, many parents be-

come anxious. They think their child is backward or delinquent when his behaviour is simply that of an ordinary healthy child. As a result a state of anxiety is created in the child himself—when his parents have no confidence in his goodness, where is he to find security? Sometimes parents fall into the opposite error and view quite common achievements as those of a genius. In either case the child is given from the beginning a false idea of himself and his powers, and all sorts of emotional difficulties may arise.

Norms of development—that is, what we may expect as natural development at different ages—have been established by experts who have studied large numbers of children. These are of great help to parents who want to get some idea of how their children are progressing.

The Adult's Part in the Child's Play.

A healthy child is developing all the time—each week sees a forward step. These advances in his capabilities must be recognised and provided for if his needs are to be satisfied and his progress assured. Many difficulties in development arise from the lack of natural outlets for the child. Peevishness, irritability, boredom, destructiveness, dependence, and general ill-health, all result from insufficient interests, and lack of space and opportunity for healthy, progressive play. Many parents urge their children to go and play, without taking an intelligent survey of the opportunities their garden or backyard provides, or recognising that the provision of a variety of suitable toys and materials for the different stages of development is their responsibility. Above all, space is needed if the intense activity of the healthy child is to be given proper scope. Happy the child whose parents have been able to take this into consideration when choosing a home. But even where living conditions are crowded, open-air spaces are usually provided where parents may take their children and give them the outlet they need. Parks and other open spaces should be used much more freely than they are.

With the advent of motor cars, the evil of confining children's activity has taken another form. A walk, play in the park, or on the beach, are of infinitely greater value than long drives in a restricted space with limited and fleeting views of the landscape.

Wisely used, of course, cars are means of giving children a change of environment and the opportunity to see new things and actively investigate them.

Parents should understand that if a child's ideas are to grow, if his imagination and knowledge are to develop, he must have stimulus—opportunities to investigate the things around him, walks, contact with nature, excursions to places of interest to him, picture books, stories, and contact with people. The young child depends on the grown-up to provide *the stimulation his growing intelligence requires*.

Further, if a child is to be free and happy in his play he must not be expected to divide his attention between his engrossing occupation and his clothes. The child who plays well becomes absorbed in what he is doing—and it is play carried on in this spirit that we should do everything in our power to encourage. One thing we should do is to *provide suitable clothes*—dungarees, gumboots for the sand or wet, sacking or waterproof aprons for play with water, clay or paint and sun-suits for summer water play.

We should also remember that a child's play should never be interrupted except for a justifiable reason. We would do well to stop and ask ourselves, "Why do I need to interfere with his play?" When the child is busily absorbed in creating something, his whole mind and his whole body are at work. Unnecessary interruption or interference may rob him of his inspiration, his effort to achieve something and his satisfaction in succeeding. When there is a real necessity to interrupt a child's play—when a meal-time, or bed-time, has arrived, for example—a warning such as "It is nearly bed-time," or "You have just a little more time for play," gives the child time to adjust himself to the change and prepare for it.

Although a child resents unnecessary interruption, he likes to feel that there is a sympathetic adult in the back ground, someone who can share his joys and sorrows and enter into his play when required to do so. The adult has a place, and an essential one, but it is *mainly in the background*.

Learning is a difficult process and a gradual one. It is important to understand that however crude and amusing the child's

attempts may appear to the grown-up, they represent sincere and earnest effort on the part of the child himself. How much inspiration and courage have been lost as the result of ridicule! It is a sound rule never to laugh *at a child*, but always to laugh *with him*. We should never forget that the soul of a child is more sensitive than anything man can create. When we consciously set out to understand a child's mind, which works so differently from that of an adult, he becomes a creature of absorbing interest, and we wonder how anyone could ever regard him just as a toy, or as a nuisance. And we begin to realise something of what is involved in the business of growing-up: for even when he is given the support of loving, understanding grown-ups, the child has still to face all the difficulties of his own nature and to conquer the anxieties that arise from his lack of experience and lack of knowledge.

ENID T. WILSON,
Principal Wellington Free Kindergarten.

NURSERY SCHOOLS, FREE KINDERGARTENS, CHILDREN'S PLAY CENTRES.

These are all places where excellent provision is made for happy, healthy play under the guidance of people specially trained to understand the child's needs.

Nursery Schools make provision for children from the toddler stage onward. As the name implies, they provide all the requirements of a well-run children's nursery founded on an educational basis. The staff consists of people trained to understand the physical, mental and emotional make-up of the child. Children attend the Nursery School for approximately 5 to 6 hours daily. They eat, sleep and play under guidance and supervision.

Free Kindergartens: These provide a trained staff and *are open* for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years. The children attend during the mornings from 9 until 12. The name "Kindergarten" means children's garden, and the aim of a good kindergarten is to provide for happy, healthy play out-doors when and

where possible, and in buildings of an open-air type. Kindergartens are equipped with play material suited to the child's needs at different stages of his development. Stories, music, excursions, rest periods for the younger children, are all part of the programme. The child's social development is greatly aided by companionship of children of a similar age, and whilst he is given every opportunity of developing his individuality, he is being helped at the same time to become a useful member of the community. Thus the Kindergarten lays the early basis of good citizenship.

(N.B.—There are over 30 Free Kindergartens in New Zealand, subsidised by the Government, but depending largely on voluntary contributions and other forms of assistance for their development.

Children's Play Centres: These are open to children of varying ages for approximately two hours in the early evening, on stated days. Play equipment of all kinds is provided according to space and opportunity. Games and interesting occupations for older children are built up according to the children's needs. The children themselves play an active part in creating the Play Centre and in planning and making equipment.

The Play-centre movement is one which is developing in England. Some teachers' training colleges have established Play Centres which are run mainly by the students. Trainees are given an excellent opportunity of watching children under free, natural conditions, getting to know their play interests at different ages, learning to play with children, and, in all, gaining an insight into the mind and needs of the child and the value of play therapy.

CHILD GUIDANCE CLINICS

These are centres, staffed by a physician, a psychologist, a play therapist, and a social worker, where parents may take children whose behaviour is causing them concern. A physical examination, a mental test, and very often observation of the child whilst at play, together with a visit to the home, and perhaps the school by the social worker, are all part of the clinic's programme.

ON CHOOSING TOYS

Toys—the tools through which a child educates himself. An intelligent choice of the child's playthings results in his getting satisfaction and a lasting education from his play rather than mere entertainment for a short period while the toy remains whole and a novelty.

Toys should be Strong and Durable. It is not only disheartening for a child when a toy quickly falls to pieces, but he is being given a wrong sense of values.

Home-made toys or those made to order by a cabinetmaker are usually preferable to shop goods.

The *infant's* need of playthings begins much earlier than many people realise, and just so long as a baby is left without playthings (objects to grasp, hit, drop, watch, and put into his mouth) his development is being retarded.

To aid his developing intelligence the baby needs to see bright colours, watch things that move, hear pleasant sounds, and have the joy and experience of handling things of different shape and texture.

The *young child* is gaining control over his larger muscles. He needs toys he can push and pull, pile up and knock down, dig and pat; toys that come apart and can be put together again. He needs things he can grasp with his whole hand rather than small objects which involve strain on eyes and smaller muscles.

The *older child* of 4 or 5 years is seeing things in relation to one another. A motor car or a train are not just isolated objects to be pulled and pushed; they suggest a garage—people—a petrol pump—railway lines—signals and tunnels.

When a child reaches the stage of seeing relationships, how valuable if the family plan intelligently when choosing their gifts—each giving a toy which will contribute to the whole rather than a number of isolated articles.

All children require:

- (1) Toys that give valuable opportunity for *physical activity*—something to satisfy the desire to be moving and to make things move; climbing and swinging apparatus; sand to dig; odd boxes and large blocks of different sizes and shapes for building, and barrows for carting things.
- (2) Materials through which they can *express their ideas*—clay, paper, chalk, paint and scissors.
- (3) Toys for *imitative and dramatic play*—dolls, prams, housekeeping materials such as pots and pans, brooms and tea sets; telephones, toys for travel play, motor cars, aeroplanes, trains; and a dressing-up box.

SUGGESTIONS FOR INEXPENSIVE ACTIVITY EQUIPMENT

Planks carefully planed and dowelled so as not to split.

Packing Cases of different sizes. These are used in endless ways by children.

Kerosene Cases with two holes bored at each end and a rope handle affixed.

Motor Tyres securely tied to a crossbar about 10in. from the ground make good swings. (Illustration shows other usages.)

Small Ladders approximately 3ft. long.

Boxes on Rubber-tyred Wheels, with rope handles or shafts.

Large smooth Beach Stones, small Logs, odd pieces of Wood are useful for carting about.

An Oil Drum cut low with smooth edges makes a splashable pool; an old bath in a yard serves a good purpose, but the amount of water must be regulated.

A Kerosene Tin with side cut out and edges smooth makes an excellent bath for a rubber doll.

A Moveable Bar fitted across an open doorway makes excellent indoor swinging and stretching apparatus for wet days or in crowded areas. The height can be regulated.

A Box of Things usually discarded in the home—tins, and lids, string, match boxes, milk bottle tops, cardboard boxes, together with a ticket punch (1/3d), paper clips and paste—all give good scope for endless activity.

A Large Block of Soft Wood, a tin of large-headed nails and a shoemaker's hammer.

A Sand Box or Bin with sand sufficiently damp; a moveable plank to place across it for "baking"; a collection of wooden spoons, discarded enamel bowls and saucepans, sieves, etc.

Boon for Visitors to Wellington

Cosy Nursery at Railway Station



PLAY-ROOM OF THE NURSERY

MOTHERS and others (passengers by rail) visiting Wellington, or passing through—who have children (up to the age of 8 years) with them—can have the benefit of the well-equipped nursery at the Railway Station. The young folk have the best of care under the supervision of trained nurses.

This ideal nursery is open from 9-30 a.m. to 5-0 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and from 9-30 a.m. to 9-0 p.m. on Fridays.

The charge is only 6d. for the first hour and 3d. an hour thereafter (with a maximum of 2/-).

Safety and Happiness for Children