



**DR. MONTESSORI'S
OWN HANDBOOK**

Maria Montessori

UMAY YAYINEVİ

Maria Montessori

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Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook

Maria Montessori



PREFACE

If a preface is a light which should serve to illumine the contents of a volume, I choose, not words, but human figures to illustrate this little book intended to enter families where children are growing up. I therefore recall here, as an eloquent symbol, Helen Keller and Mrs. Anne Sullivan Macy, who are, by their example, both teachers to myself—and, before the world, living documents of the miracle in education.

In fact, Helen Keller is a marvelous example of the phenomenon common to all human beings: the possibility of the liberation of the imprisoned spirit of man by the education of the senses. Here lies the basis of the method of education of which the book gives a succinct idea.

If one only of the senses sufficed to make of Helen Keller a woman of exceptional culture and a writer, who better than she proves the potency of that method of education which builds on the senses? If Helen Keller attained through exquisite natural gifts to an elevated conception of the world, who better than she proves that in the inmost self of man lies the spirit ready to reveal itself?

Helen, clasp to your heart these little children, since they, above all others, will understand you. They are your younger brothers: when, with bandaged eyes and in silence, they touch with their little hands, profound impressions rise in their consciousness, and they exclaim with a new form of happiness: "I see with my hands." They alone, then, can fully understand the drama of the mysterious privilege your soul has known. When, in darkness and in silence, their spirit left free to expand, their intellectual energy redoubled, they become able to read and write without having learnt, almost as it were by intuition, they, only they, can understand in part the ecstasy which God granted you on the luminous path of learning.

Maria Montessori.

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Recent years have seen a remarkable improvement in the conditions of child life. In all civilized countries, but especially in England, statistics show a decrease in infant mortality.

Related to this decrease in mortality a corresponding improvement is to be seen in the physical development of children; they are physically finer and more vigorous. It has been the diffusion, the popularization of science, which has brought about such notable advantages. Mothers have learned to care for the health of their children with a corresponding improvement in the physical results.

The great progress made may perhaps deceive us into thinking that everything possible has been done for children. We have only to weigh the matter carefully, however, to reflect: Are our children only those healthy little bodies which to-day are growing and developing so vigorously under our eyes? Is their destiny fulfilled in the production of beautiful human bodies? In that case there would be little difference between their lot and that of the animals which we raise that we may have good meat or a fine fleece.

But the physical life cannot be the whole of life—it is only the foundation of life, and just as in the construction of a building it would be absurd to take pride and pleasure in the laying of the foundations while the house itself remained unbuilt, so in the upbringing of a child it is absurd to talk of complete success when we have done nothing beyond tending to his physical well-being.

As the body of a child must grow and develop, so also the spirit must take from its environment the nourishment which it needs to develop according to its own laws of growth. It cannot be denied that the phenomena of development are a great work in themselves. The

consolidation of the bones, the growth of the whole body, the completion of the minute construction of the brain, the formation of the teeth, all these are very real labors of the physiological organism, as is also the transformation which the organism undergoes during the course of childhood.

But in the period from three to six years the child is developing his functions, and it is in this period that he may be most fittingly compared with the embryo in the mother's womb, inasmuch as the child at this period is creating his own psychological organs.

The functions to be established by the child fall into two groups: (1) the motor functions by which he is to secure his balance and learn to walk, and to coordinate his movements; (2) the sensory functions through which, receiving sensations from his environment, he lays the foundations of his intelligence by a continual exercise of observation, comparison and judgment. In this way he gradually comes to be acquainted with his environment and to develop his intelligence.

At the same time, he is laying the foundations of character by bringing into subjection the lower and more purely animal instincts, and by developing the higher social qualities. These are the two groups of activities by which the child builds up the man.

My method is scientific, both in its substance and in its aim. It makes for the attainment of a more advanced stage of progress, in directions no longer only material and physiological. It is an endeavor to complete the course which hygiene has already taken, but in the treatment of the physical side alone.

A "CHILDREN'S HOUSE"

The "Children's House" is the environment which is offered to the child that he may be given the opportunity of developing his activities. This kind of school is not of a fixed type, but may vary according to the financial resources at disposal and to the opportunities afforded by the environment.

It ought to be a real house; that is to say, a set of rooms with a garden of which the children are the masters. A garden which contains shelters is ideal, because the children can play or sleep under them, and can also bring their tables out to work or dine. In this way the children's life is lived as much as possible in the open air, and in the shade of the trees.

Within the "Children's House" the most important piece of furniture is undoubtedly the sideboard set apart for the children's own use, and so low that a child of four may easily reach its highest shelf and may independently put in order or take out the objects placed there. This piece of furniture contains, well arranged, all the material for the children's work.



Fig. 1. Cupboard with Apparatus

The other is a chest of drawers containing two or three columns of little drawers, each of which has a bright handle, and a small card with a name upon it. Every child has his own drawer, in which to put things belonging to him. Round the walls of the room are fixed blackboards at a low level, so that the children can write or draw on them, and pleasing, artistic pictures, which are changed from time to time as the lessons require.

There should also be a space reserved for a small garden of growing plants. The children love to tend them, and the care of plants and of small animals leads them gradually to feel a love for and an understanding of nature.

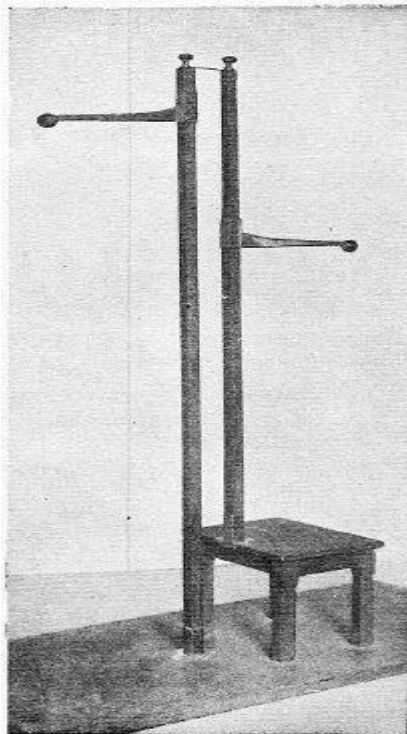


Fig. 2. The Montessori Pedometer

My pedometer forms part of the equipment of a “Children’s House.” After various modifications I have now reduced this instrument to a very practical form. The purpose of the pedometer, as its name shows, is to measure the children. It consists of a wide rectangular board, forming the base, from the center of which rise two wooden posts held together at the top by a narrow flat piece of metal. To each post is connected a horizontal metal rod—the indicator—which runs up and down by means of a screw, and is fixed at any degree of height by turning the screw.

The children are very fond of the pedometer. “Shall we measure ourselves?” is one of the proposals which they make most willingly and with the greatest likelihood of finding many of their companions to join them. They also take great care of the pedometer, dusting it, and polishing its metal parts.

THE METHOD

The technique of my method as it follows the guidance of the natural physiological and psychical development of the child, may be divided into three parts:

Motor Education.

Sensory Education.

Language.

The care and management of the environment itself afford the principal means of motor education, while sensory education and the education of language are provided for by my didactic material.

The didactic material for the education of the senses consists of:

- (a) Three sets of solid insets in wooden blocks for inserting cylinders of different sizes.

- (b) Three sets of wooden solids of different sizes and shapes — cubes, prisms, and rods.
- (c) Four sets of tablets for the education of the chromatic sense.
- (d) A collection of geometrical insets in metal frames — for drawing.
- (e) Two sets of plane geometrical insets in wood with corresponding frames.
- (f) A collection of cards bearing geometrical forms in three gradations.
- (g) Two boards with rough and smooth surfaces; sandpaper cards; wooden tablets of two different weights.
- (h) A collection of sixty-four colored tablets arranged in eight colors graduated in eight tints.
- (i) A set of cylindrical sound boxes.
- (j) A series of thirteen bells for the study of musical notes.

Didactic Material for the Preparation for Writing and Arithmetic

- (m) Two sloping desks and various iron insets.
- (n) Cards on which are pasted sandpaper letters.
- (o) Two alphabets of colored cardboard and of different sizes.
- (p) A series of cards on which are pasted sandpaper figures (1, 2, 3, etc.).
- (q) A series of large cards bearing the same figures in smooth paper for the enumeration of numbers above ten.
- (r) Two boxes with small sticks for counting.

MOTOR EDUCATION

The education of the movements is very complex, as it must correspond to all the coordinated movements which the child has to establish in his physiological organism. The child, if left without guidance, is disorderly in his movements, and these disorderly movements are the special characteristic of the little child. In fact, he “never keeps still,” and “touches everything.” This is often the source of the conflicts between the adult and the child.

In our system we try to deal with this problem in a comprehensive way by assigning certain occupations to the children which contain in themselves the possibility of the acquisition of coordinated movement. The child who pours water from one vessel to another is practicing this coordination; so is the one who washes something, or who polishes a piece of copper.

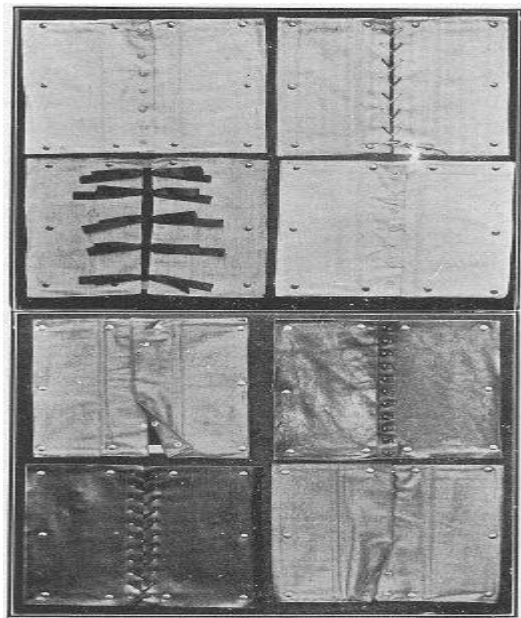


Fig. 3. Frames for Lacing and Buttoning

In the care of the person the first step is that of dressing and undressing. For this end there is in my didactic material a collection of frames to which are attached pieces of stuff, leather, etc. These can be buttoned, hooked, tied together—in fact, joined in all the different ways which our civilization has invented for fastening the different parts of clothing and of footwear together.



Fig. 4. Child Buttoning on Frame

We see little children, scarcely two and a half years of age, helping one another to put on their overcoats and little aprons. And this

practice of helping their companions puts them in the position of actors in the social life of the school—as teachers of the younger ones. When we see children wanting to dress themselves and their companions, and defending themselves with all their might against the adult who would try to help them, we have a practical proof of the importance of this exercise.

In the same way for the teaching of the other and larger movements, such as washing, setting the table, etc., the children learn how to perform with perfect nicety the actions of everyday life, and in this they find both a pleasing exercise and a source of great satisfaction.

Among the gymnastic exercises that which must be considered the most important is that of the “line.” A line is described in chalk or paint upon a large space of floor. Instead of one line, there may also be two concentric lines, elliptical in form. The children are taught to walk upon these lines like tight-rope walkers, placing their feet one in front of the other. To keep their balance, they make efforts exactly similar to those of real tight-rope walkers, except that they have no danger of falling, since the line is traced on the floor.

As to the little gymnasium, one piece of apparatus is particularly practical. This is the “fence,” from which the children hang by their arms, freeing their legs from the heavy weight of the body and strengthening the arms. This fence has also the advantage of being useful in a garden for the purpose of dividing one part from another.

The instructions of the teacher consist then merely in a hint, a touch—enough to give a start to the child. The rest develops of itself. The children learn from one another and throw themselves into the work with enthusiasm and delight. This atmosphere of quiet activity which reigns in our “Children’s Houses” when the exercises are proceeding well, is very striking.

SENSORY EDUCATION

My didactic material offers to the child the means for what may be called "sensory education." In the box of material, the first three objects which are likely to attract the attention of a little child from two and a half to three years old are three solid pieces of wood, in each of which is inserted a row of ten small cylinders, or sometimes discs, all furnished with a button for a handle.

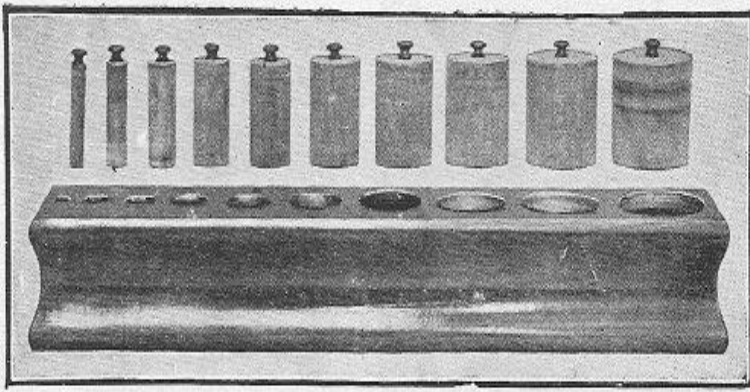


Fig. 5. Cylinders Decreasing in Diameter only

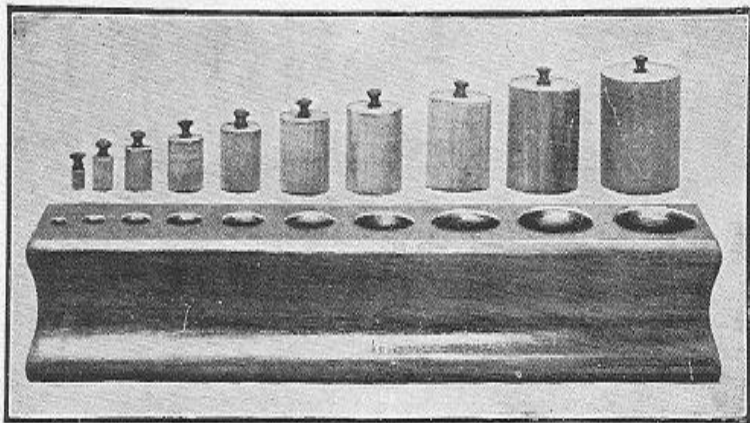


Fig. 6. Cylinders Decreasing in Diameter and Height

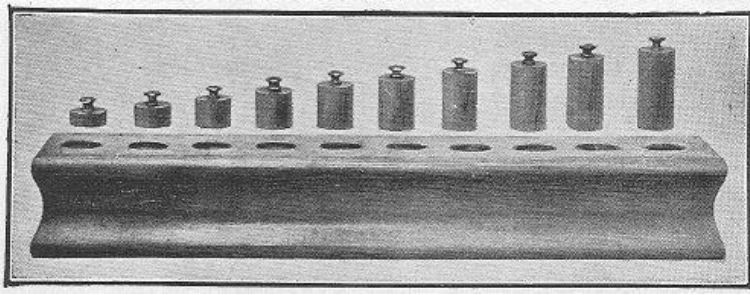


Fig. 7. Cylinders Decreasing in Height only

In the first case there is a row of cylinders of the same height, but with a diameter which decreases from thick to thin. In the second there are cylinders which decrease in all dimensions, and in the third, cylinders all of the same diameter but varying in height. The child takes the cylinders out of their places, mixes them upon the table, and then puts each one back in its own place.



Fig. 8. Child using Case of Cylinders

They like to do it alone; in fact, sometimes almost in private for fear of inopportune help. But how is the child to find the right place for each of the little cylinders which lie mixed upon the table? He first makes trials; it often happens that he places a cylinder which is too large for the hole it is put into, or that he recognizes his error and takes it back, or that he makes the best of it and crowns it over the edge. In this case the child is exercising his intelligence, and the completion of the exercise is a real satisfaction to him.

The material which I have described serves to educate the eye to distinguish difference in dimension, for the child ends by being able to recognize at a glance the larger or the smaller hole which exactly fits the cylinder which he holds in his hand. The educative process is based on this: that the control of the error lies in the material itself, and the child has concrete evidence of it.

The Three Sets of Wooden Solids

Together with the solid insets, the didactic material includes three sets of objects in graduated sizes. These objects are: (1) ten cubes; (2) ten prisms (rectangular parallelepipeds); and (3) ten rods.

(1) The first set consists of ten wooden cubes colored pink. The sides of the cubes diminish from ten centimeters to one centimeter. The child builds them up into a little tower, using the biggest cube for the foundation and ending with the smallest.

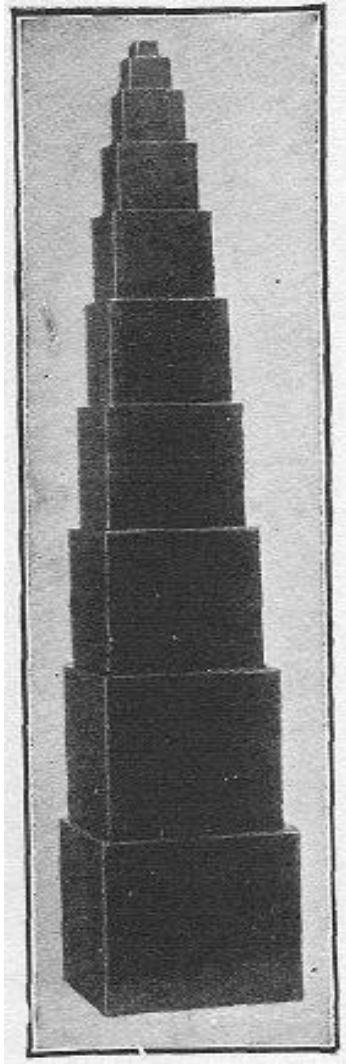


Fig. 9. The Tower

(2) The second set consists of ten prisms, colored green. The length of the prisms is always twenty centimeters, but the square section diminishes from ten centimeters a side to one centimeter a side. The child scatters the ten pieces over a light-colored carpet, and then beginning sometimes with the thickest, sometimes with the thinnest, he places them in their right order of gradation upon a table.

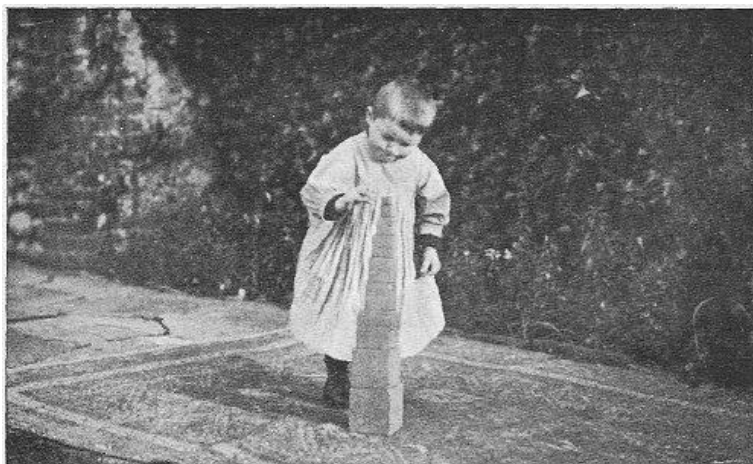


Fig. 10. Child Playing with Tower. (Photo taken at Mr. Hawker's School at Runton.)

(3) Ten rods, colored green, or alternately red and blue, all of which have the same square section of four centimeters a side, but vary by ten centimeters in length from ten centimeters to one meter.

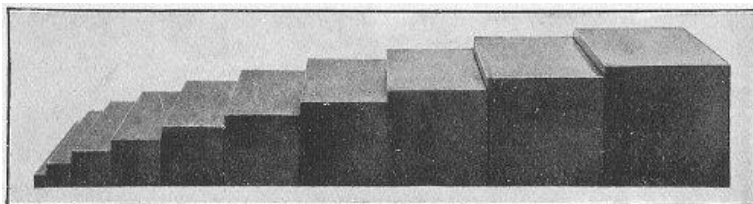


Fig. 11. The Broad Stair

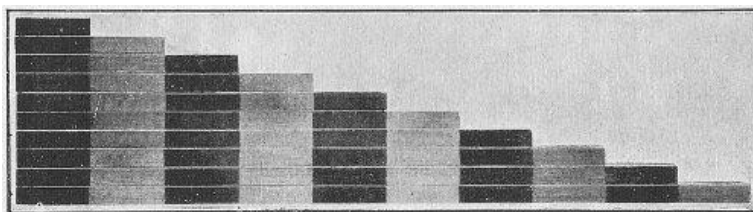


Fig. 12. The Long Stair

It often happens that a child working with the long rods makes the most glaring mistakes. As the aim of the exercise, however, is not that

the child shall learn to do it correctly, but that he shall practise by himself, there is no need to intervene. One day the child will arrange all the rods in their right order, and then, full of joy, he will call the teacher to come and admire them. The object of the exercise will thus be achieved.

Touch: Rough and Smooth Surfaces

These three sets, the cubes, the prisms, and the rods, cause the child to move about and to handle and carry objects which are difficult for him to grasp with one hand. The exercises of touching are very important in the education of the sense of touch proper.

The material consists of a small rectangular board, one half of which is covered with very smooth white paper, and the other with sandpaper. The child is taught to stroke the surfaces lightly with the tips of the fingers, and this touch he practices till it produces in him two clearly distinct impressions.

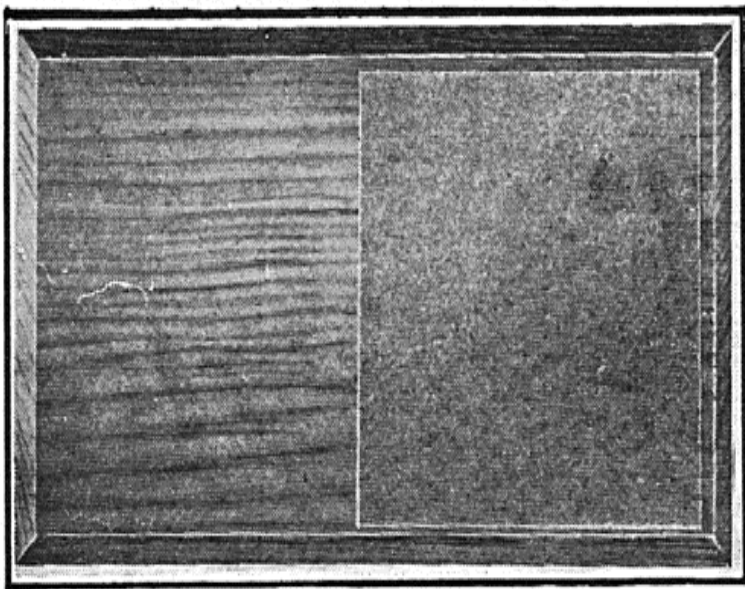


Fig. 13. Board with Rough and Smooth Surfaces

After this, the child is taught to pass the soft cushioned tips of his fingers as lightly as possible over the two separate surfaces, that he may appreciate their difference. The delicate movement backwards and forwards of the suspended hand, as it is brought into light contact with the surface, is an exercise not only of the tactile sense, but also of the muscular sense.

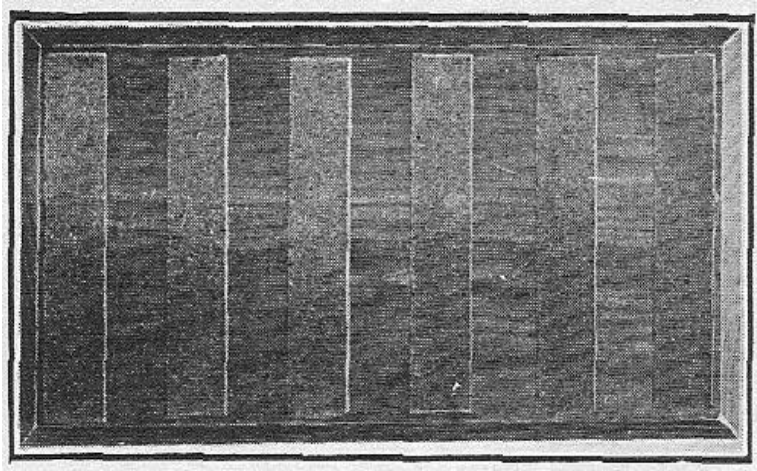


Fig. 14. Board with Gummed Strips of Paper

Graduated series of sandpaper cards are also given. The child perfects himself by exercises in touching these surfaces, not only refining his capacity for perceiving tactile differences which are always growing more similar, but also perfecting the movement of which he is ever gaining greater mastery.

Baric Sense: Weight

For the education of the baric sense we use wooden tablets of the same size and shape, but of different weights. These tablets, which are smooth and nicely finished, are made of three different kinds of wood: wistaria, walnut, and pine. Their measurements are: length, six centimeters; breadth, eight centimeters; thickness, half a centimeter.

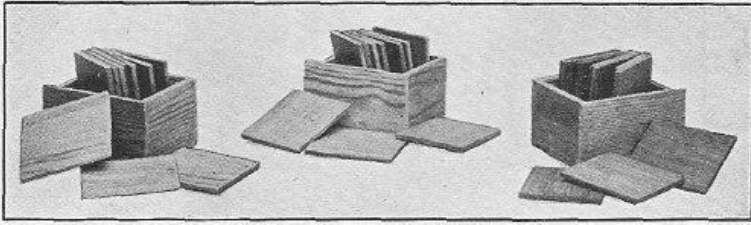


Fig. 15. Wood Tablets Differing in Weight

Chromatic Sense: Color

The didactic material for the education of the chromatic sense consists of small flat tablets round which are wound skeins of wool of all colors and their various gradations, in all sixty-four colors arranged in eight different tints, each composed of eight shades.

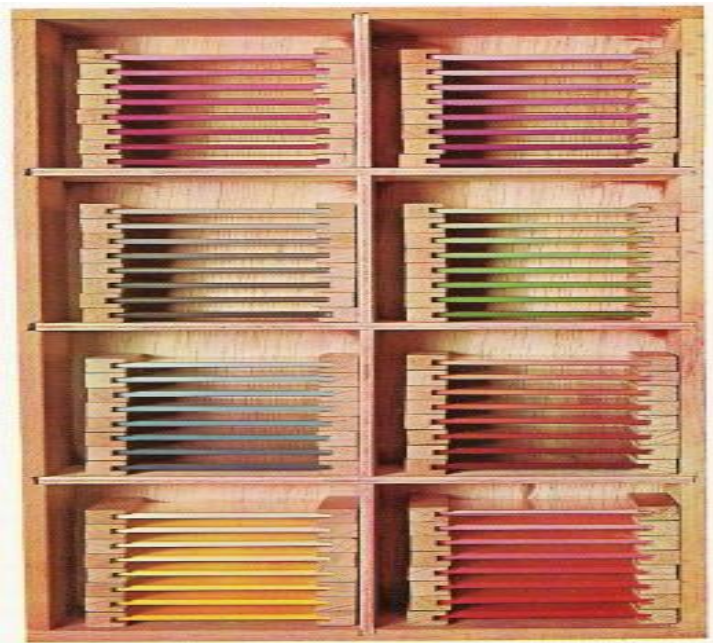


Fig. 16. Color Spools

The child begins by learning to recognize the identity of two colors, and then passes on to arrange the shades in gradation, building up a little staircase of color. The material may be used in so many ways that

it really opens a new world to the child who is developing a chromatic sense.

Geometric Sense: Plane Insets

For the education of the sense of form there is in my didactic material a frame consisting of six large drawers. The material within the drawers consists of plane geometrical forms cut in blue wood. Almost all the frames have a large geometrical figure inserted in the center, each colored blue and provided with a small button for a handle.

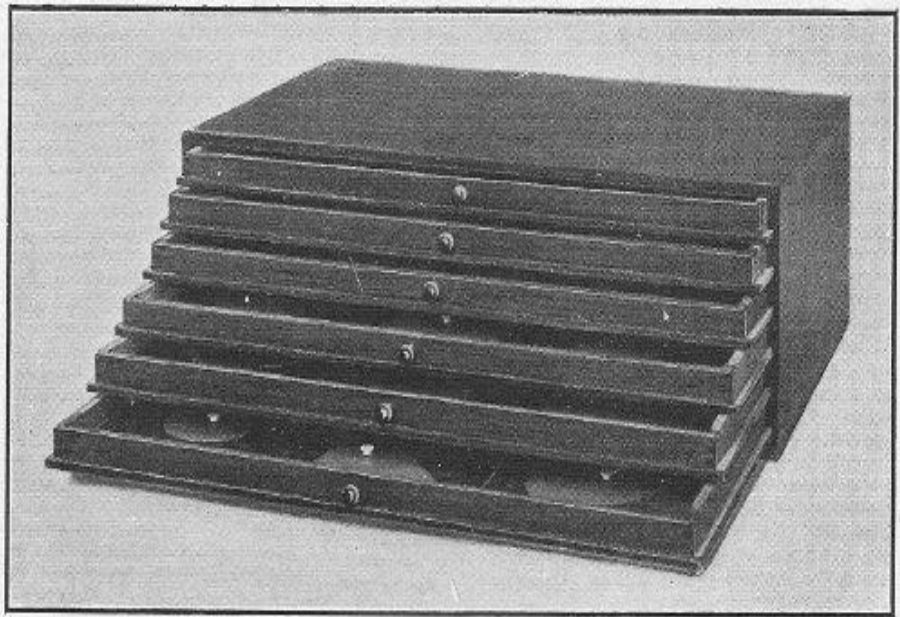


Fig. 17. Cabinet with Drawers to hold Geometrical Insets

The geometrical figures are arranged in the drawers according to their form:

- (1) In one drawer there are six circles varying in diameter.

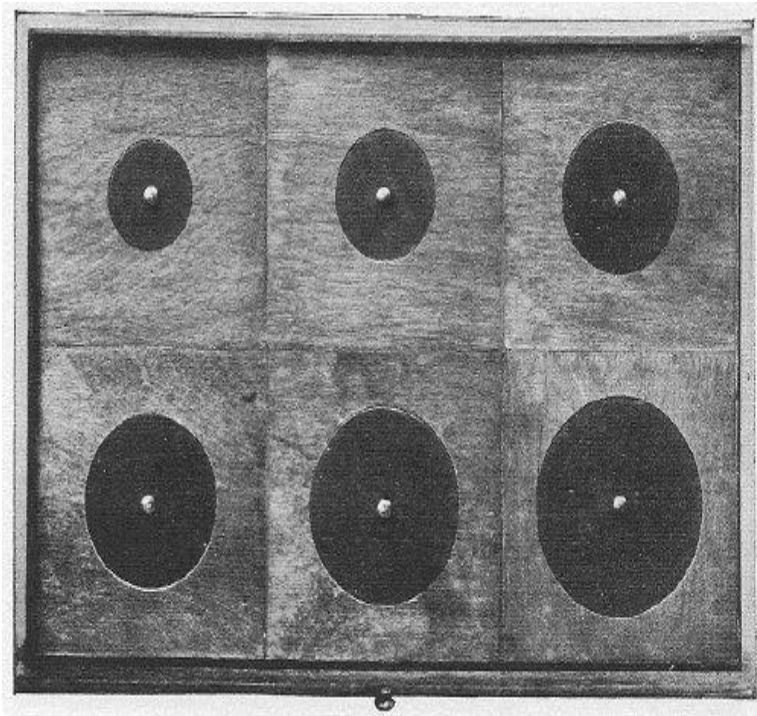


Fig. 18. Set of Six Circles

(2) In another there is a square, together with five rectangles in which the length is always equal to the side of the square while the breadth gradually decreases.

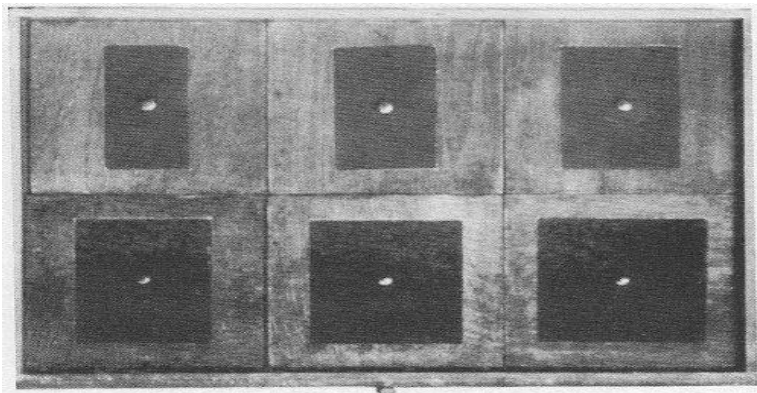


Fig. 18 (continued). Set of Six Rectangles

(3) Another drawer contains six triangles, which vary either according to their sides or according to their angles (the equilateral, isosceles, scalene, right angled, obtuse angled, and acute angled).

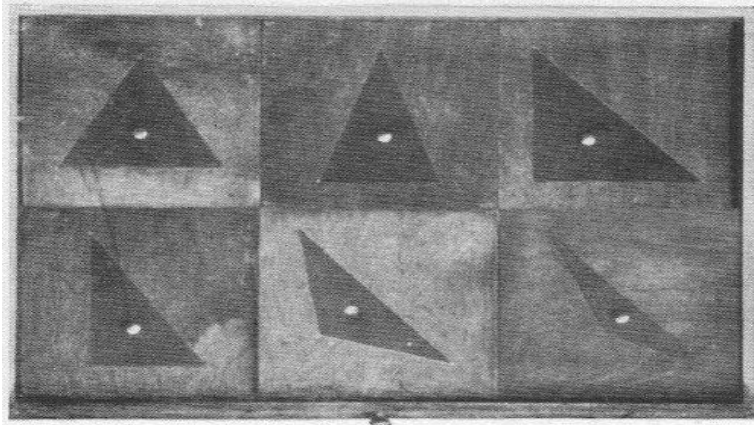


Fig. 19. Set of Six Triangles

(4) In another drawer there are six regular polygons containing from five to ten sides, i.e., the pentagon, hexagon, heptagon, octagon, nonagon, and decagon.

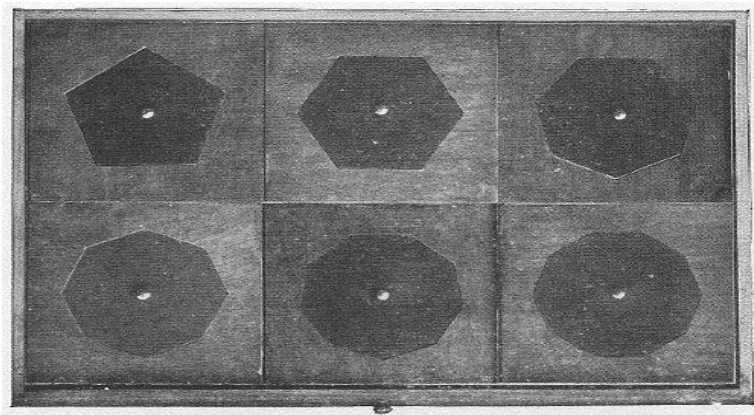


Fig. 20. Set of Six Polygons

(5) Another drawer contains various figures: an oval, an ellipse, a rhombus, and a trapezoid.

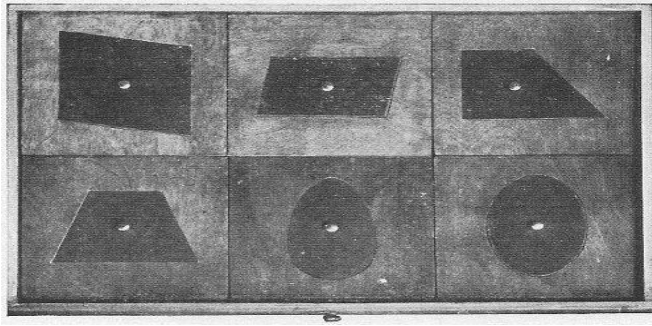


Fig. 21. Set of Six Irregular Figures

(6) Finally, there are four plain wooden tablets, i.e., without any geometrical inset, which should have no button fixed to them; also, two other irregular geometrical figures.

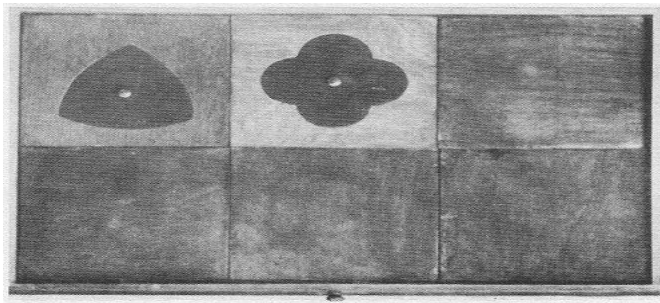


Fig. 22. Set of Four Blanks and Two Irregular Figures

Connected with this material there is a wooden frame furnished with a kind of rack which opens like a lid, and serves, when shut, to keep firmly in place six of the insets which may be arranged on the bottom of the frame itself, entirely covering it.

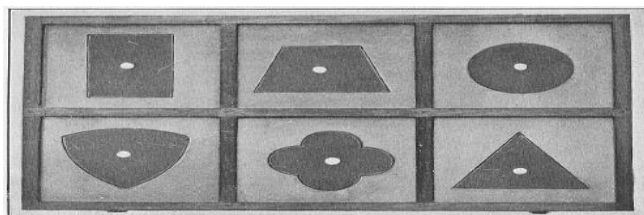


Fig. 23. Frame to hold Geometrical Insets

This frame is used for the preparation of the first presentation to the child of the plane geometrical forms. The teacher may select according to her own judgment certain forms from among the whole series at her disposal. At first it is advisable to show the child only a few figures which differ very widely from one another in form. The next step is to present figures more alike, until the child can distinguish between the very slight differences between the various types of triangles or the different quadrilaterals.



Fig. 24. Child Touching the Insets

Together with the plane insets there is a series of cards in three grades. In the first series the forms are filled in, i.e., they are cut out in blue paper and gummed on to the card; in the second series there is only an outline about half a centimeter in width, which is cut out in the same blue paper and gummed to the card; in the third series, however, the geometrical figures are instead outlined only in black ink.

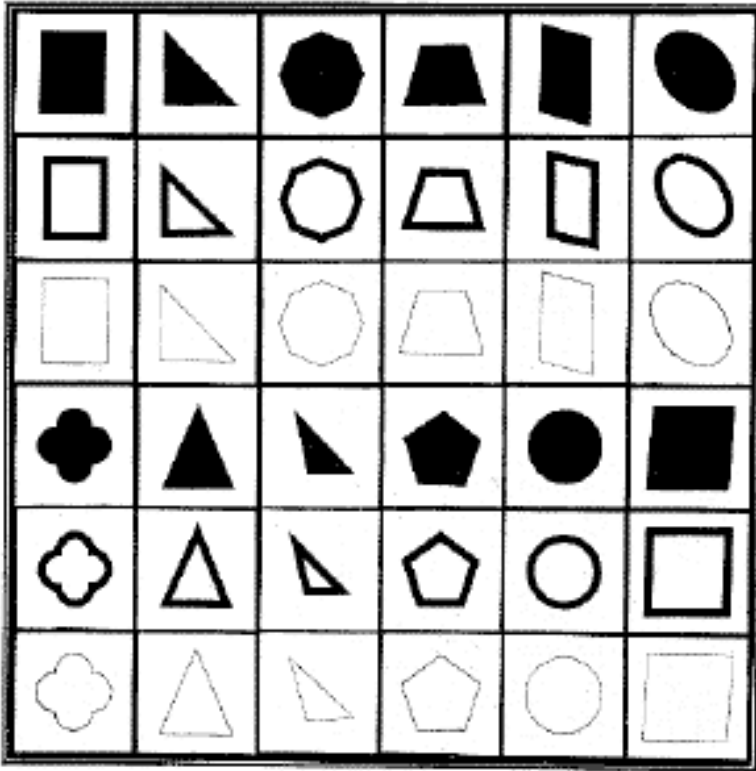


Fig. 25. Series of Cards with Geometrical Forms

The child whose hand has been trained to trace the outline of the insets and who has seen, in the cards, the same figures reproduced in blue paper or by lines alone, when he takes up a pencil and follows the outline of the insets produces a perfect geometrical figure.

Another game invented by the children consists in putting out and mixing all the cards of the three series on two or three adjoining tables. The child then takes a wooden geometrical form and places it, as quickly as possible, on the corresponding cards which he has recognized at a glance among all the rest.

The Stereognostic Sense

The sense of form comes from the combination of two sensations, tactile and muscular, muscular sensations being sensations of movement. What we call in the blind the tactile sense is in reality more often the stereognostic sense. That is, they perceive by means of their hands the form of bodies.

It is the special aim of the exercises for the stereognostic sense to lead the child to recognize forms by touch alone, without the help of the sight. For this purpose, we use all the geometrical solids of different forms which we include in the material: the cylinder, the prism, the pyramid, the cone, the sphere, etc. The child has first to recognize the separate solids with the sense of sight; then, blinded, to recognize them by touch alone.

Auditory Sense: Sound Boxes and Bells



Fig. 26. Sound Boxes

The material for the education of the auditory sense consists of: (1) a series of thirteen bells; (2) a series of six small cylindrical boxes of

equal size and appearance, but filled with various materials such as sand, pebbles, etc., producing different grades of sound from loud to barely perceptible.

The next exercise consists in the comparison of one sound with another; that is, the child arranges the six cylinders in a series according to the loudness of sound which they produce. The exercise is analogous to that with the color spools, which also are paired and then arranged in gradation.



Fig. 27. Musical Bells

The bells which are used for the education of the musical sense, placed together upon the table, he tries, by striking the bells one after the other, to find the sound which is the same as the first one he has struck (doh). When he has succeeded in finding the corresponding sound, he puts the bell thus chosen opposite the first one (doh) upon the board. Then he strikes the second bell, re, once or twice; then from among the mixed group of bells he tries to find the one with the same sound. And so on for the whole series.

If the objects which have been described constitute the didactic material for the beginnings of a methodical education of the auditory sense, I have no desire to limit to them an educational process which is so important and already so complex in its practice.

Silence

It is quite plain to see that the children take a great interest in the "Silence"; they seem to give themselves up to a kind of spell: they might be said to be wrapped in meditation. Little by little, as each child, watching himself, becomes more and more still, the silence deepens till it becomes a complete hush. Then the light breathing of the children is no longer heard. It seems as if the children were not there.

From this point the children gradually go on to perfect themselves; they walk lightly, take care not to knock against the furniture, move their chairs without noise, and place things upon the table with great care. The result of this is seen in the grace of carriage and of movement, which is especially remarkable in our little ones.

LANGUAGE AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD

The special importance of the sense of hearing comes from the fact that it is the sense organ connected with speech. Therefore, to train the child's attention to follow sounds and noises which are produced in the environment, to recognize them and to discriminate between them is to educate the ear to hear spoken language more perfectly.

In our method great attention is given to the development of the language. As we have seen, the education of the senses is a preparation for the observation of the environment which is, to a great degree, the object of the intelligence. Language is connected to the observation of things and phenomena; it completes and accompanies that observation, fixing in a word the concept that is forming in the mind.

The names to be taught are those of the objects constituting the environment of the child—that is, the names of the pieces of furniture, the names of the materials, the colors, and the forms, etc. The teacher, in giving a name to an object, indicates it with a gesture. "This is a table." "This is red." "This is round."

The method of giving the lesson consists of three stages:

First Period: The teacher indicates the object and says its name clearly: "This is red."

Second Period: "Give me the red one."

Third Period: "What color is this?" — "Red."

FREEDOM

The success of these results is closely connected with the delicate intervention of the one who guides the children in their development. It is necessary for the teacher to guide the child without letting him feel her presence too much, so that she may be always ready to supply the desired help, but may never be the obstacle between the child and his experience.

A room in which all the children move about usefully, intelligently, and voluntarily, without committing any rough or rude act, would seem to me a classroom very well disciplined indeed. To seat the children in rows, as in the ordinary schoolroom, to assign to each a place, and to propose that they shall sit still and not talk, is not to organize a class, it is to immobilize and to silence it.

The tendencies which we stigmatize as evil in little children of three to six years of age are often merely those which cause annoyance to us adults when, not understanding their needs, we try to prevent their every movement, their every attempt to gain experience for themselves in the world (by touching, by handling things, etc.).

But the child who is living spontaneously in this school of ours is already making progress, is developing his intellectual activities in accordance with his real needs and with the needs of his age, and this development is proceeding in a surprising and marvelous way. If it is so, what is the precise role of the teacher?

As a rule, however, we do not respect our children. We try to force them to follow us without regard to their special needs. We are overbearing with them, and above all, rude; and then we expect them to be submissive and well-behaved, knowing all the time how strong

is the instinct of imitation and how touching the confidence and affection which little children bear toward their elders.

WRITING

The child who has completed all the exercises above described, and is thus prepared for an advance towards unexpected conquests, is about four years old. He is not an unknown quantity, as are children who have been left to gain varied and casual experiences by themselves, and who therefore are rich in practical knowledge but poor in intellect, because the many impressions received have not been organized in their minds.

The didactic material, in fact, does not offer to the child the content of the mind, but the order for that content. It causes the children to distinguish identities from differences, extreme contrasts before fine gradations, and always to make their distinctions by means of the sense-material.

In the didactic material there are two sloping wooden boards, on each of which stand five square metal frames, colored pink. In each of these is inserted a blue geometrical figure similar to the geometrical insets and provided with a small button for a handle.

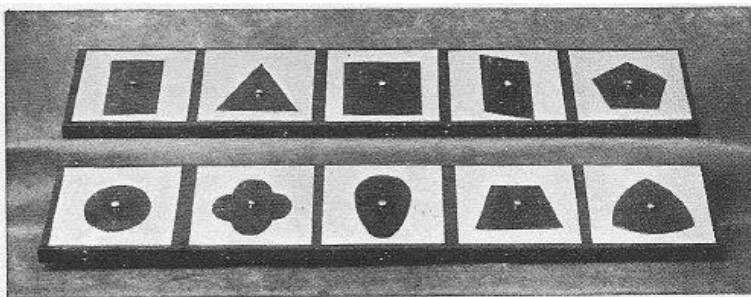


Fig. 28. Sloping Boards to Display Set of Metal Insets

He lays the frame of the iron inset on the sheet of paper, and, holding it down firmly with one hand, he follows with a colored pencil the interior outline which describes a geometrical figure. Then he lifts the square frame, and finds drawn upon the paper an enclosed geometrical form, a triangle, a circle, a hexagon, etc. The child has not been taught to draw; he has been prepared for it without knowing it.

The children show great interest in this occupation, and fill in the forms that they have drawn with colored penciling, which makes the execution very careful and delicate. The management of the instrument—the pencil—is perfected in this way through the spontaneous exercise.

Exercises for the Writing of Alphabetical Signs

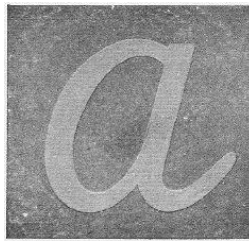


Fig. 29. Single Sandpaper Letter

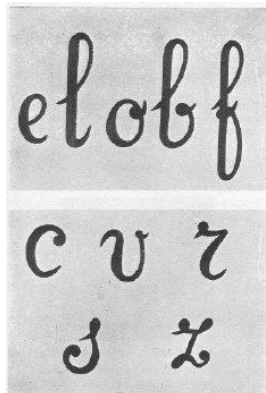


Fig. 30. Groups of Sandpaper Letters

The children “have to touch over the alphabetical signs as though they were writing.” They touch them with the tips of the index and middle fingers in the same way as when they touched the wooden insets, and with the hand raised as when they lightly touched the rough and smooth surfaces. The teacher herself touches the letters to show the child how the movement should be performed, and the children follow her guidance.

The question: “What letter is this?” is asked to which the child replies, naming the letter. She proceeds in the same way through all the other letters, giving, in the case of the consonants, not the name, but only the sound. The child then touches the letters by himself over and over again, either on the separate cards or on the cardboard sheet containing the whole alphabet, until he can say immediately on touching any letter what sound it represents.

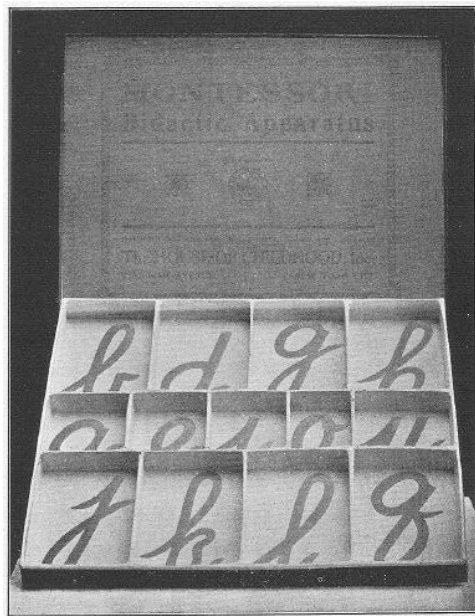


Fig. 31. Box of Movable Letters

In the material there are two movable alphabets. One of them consists of larger letters, and is divided into two boxes, each of which contains the vowels. This is used for the first exercises, in which the child needs very large objects in order to recognize the letters. When he is acquainted with one half of the consonants he can begin to compose words, choosing from the box the letters he requires.

The child prepared in this way has entered upon a course of development through which he will pass as surely as the growth of the body and the development of the natural functions have passed through their course of development when life has once been established. For the intellectual life is like the physical life—it is constituted of a succession of functions, and if these functions have once been set going, they will inevitably develop.

THE READING OF MUSIC

When the child knows how to read, he can make a first application of this knowledge to the reading of the names of musical notes.

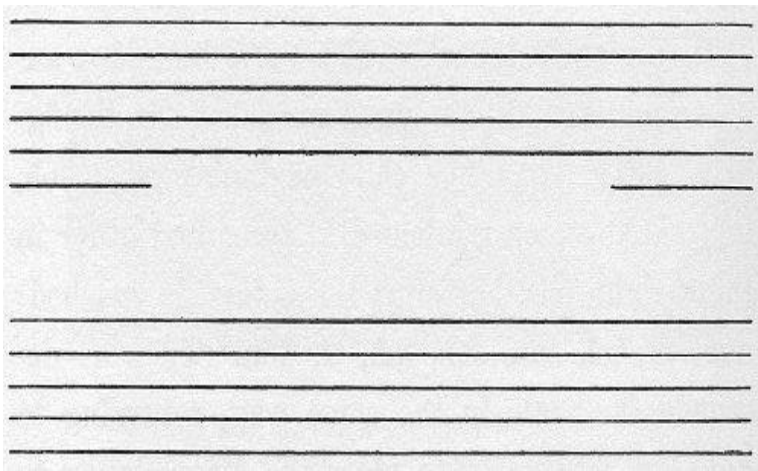


Fig. 32. The Musical Staff

In connection with the material for sensory education, consisting of the series of bells, we use a didactic material, which serves as an introduction to musical reading. For this purpose we have, in the first place, a staff of five lines made on a long board of green wood. The board is divided by a wooden bar into two portions, of which the upper represents the treble and the lower the bass clef. On this board there are small wooden discs to be fitted into the spaces of the staff in the places which correspond to the different notes.

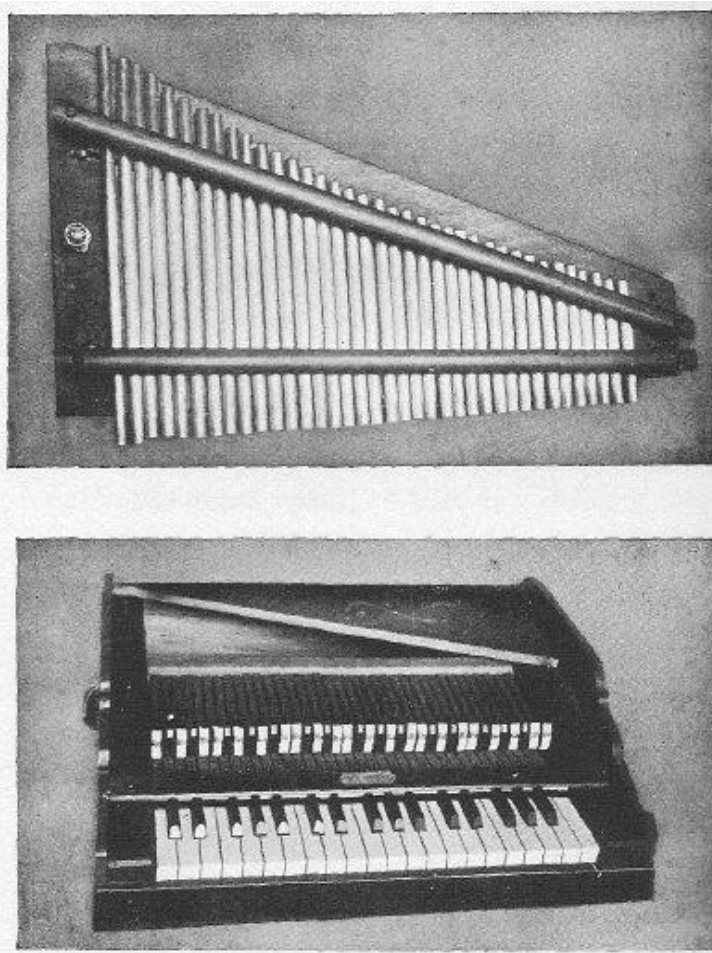


Fig. 33. Didactic Material for Musical Reading

On the wooden board, round spaces are cut out corresponding to the notes. Inside each of the spaces there is a figure. On one side of each of the discs is written a number and on the other the name of the note. They are fitted by the child into the corresponding places. Following this exercise there is another staff made on a board of green wood, which is longer than the other and has neither indentures nor signs. A considerable number of discs, on one side of which are written the names of the notes, is at the disposal of the child.

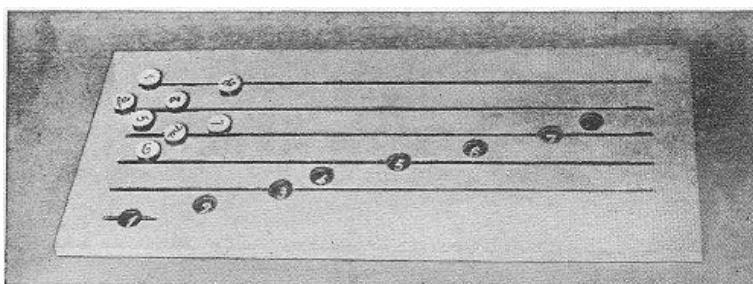


Fig. 34. Didactic Material for Musical Reading

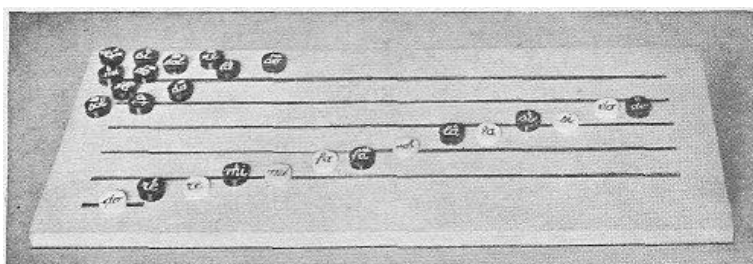


Fig. 35. The child arranges the semitones on the staff

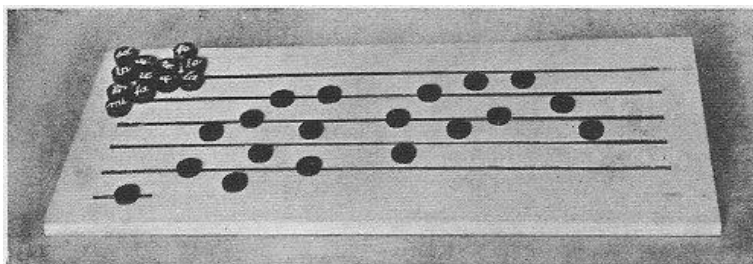


Fig. 36. Children arrange notes, leaving them face up

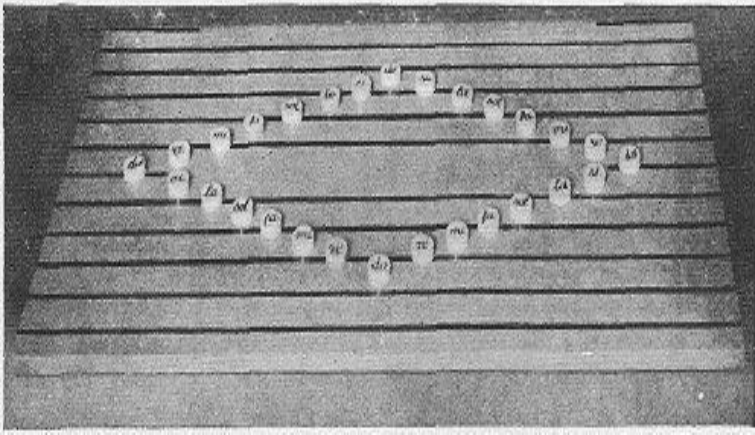


Fig. 37. The double staff is formed by putting the two staves together

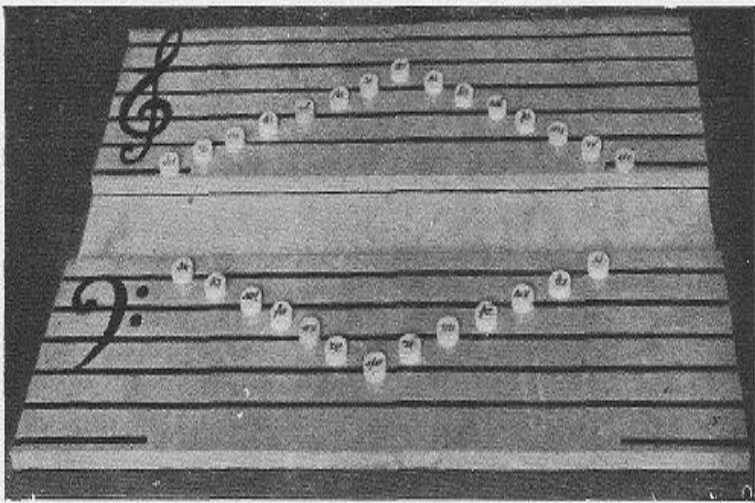


Fig. 38. The two boards are separated; notes remain in treble and bass clef positions

After the discs have been arranged in this way, the upper staff is separated from the lower. In the lower the notes are arranged according to the bass clef. In this way the first elements of musical reading are presented to the child, reading which corresponds to sounds with which the child's ear is already familiar.

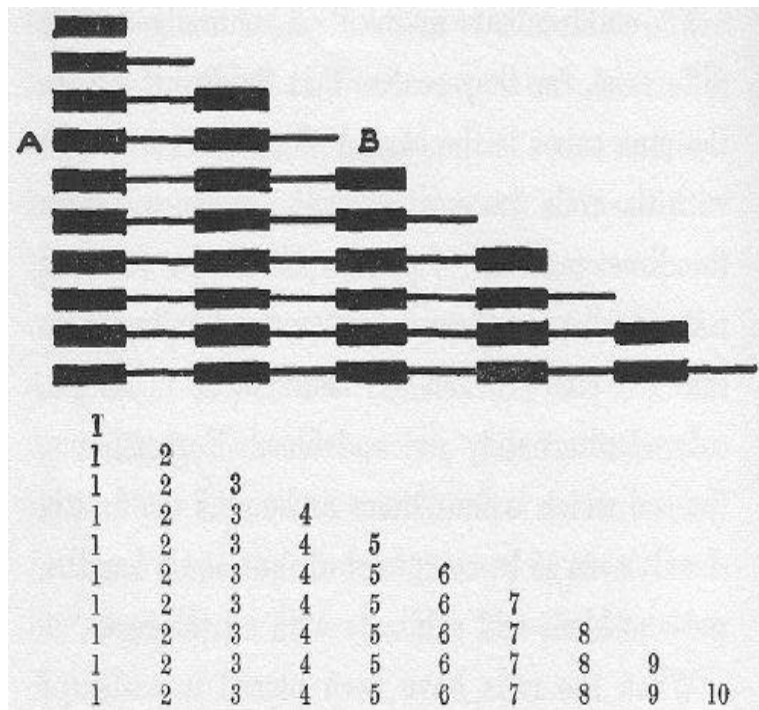


Fig. 39. Dumb Keyboard

The dumb keyboard is a most valuable instrument for practice. It is constructed so that each key produces the same note in whatever octave, and is graduated from the deepest bass to the highest treble. In this way the child can practice silently and can learn to read the music and to touch the keys with perfect correctness.

ARITHMETIC

The children possess all the instinctive knowledge necessary as a preparation for clear ideas on numeration. The idea of quantity was inherent in all the material for the education of the senses: longer, shorter, darker, lighter. The conception of identity and of difference formed part of each exercise in the material.

With the material for the education of the senses, we have prepared for the concept of number by the experience of series of ten objects in gradation. We have used series of ten objects arranged in order of size—the ten cylinders, the ten cubes, the ten prisms and the ten rods.

Among the didactic materials there is a series of ten rods similar to those already described, but colored alternately red and blue to indicate the different units. The child first learns the ten numbers by counting the sections of the rods as he lays them out; then he learns the signs for the numbers by means of the sandpaper figures. Then the rods and the figures are brought into relation.

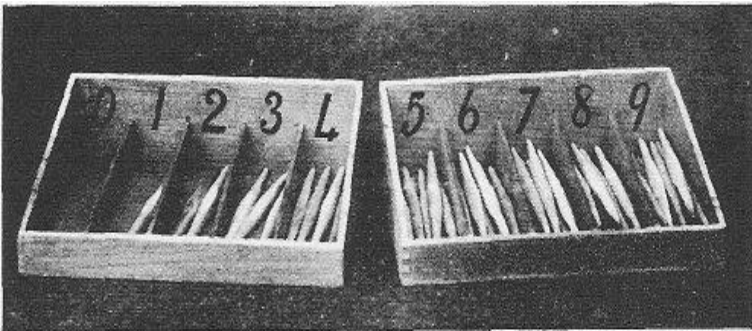


Fig. 40. Diagram Illustrating Use of Numerical Rods

In the material there is a box containing smooth cards, on which are gummed the figures from one to nine, cut out in sandpaper. These are analogous to the cards on which are gummed the sandpaper letters of the alphabet. The method of teaching is always the same. The child

is made to touch the figures in the direction in which they are written, and to name them at the same time.

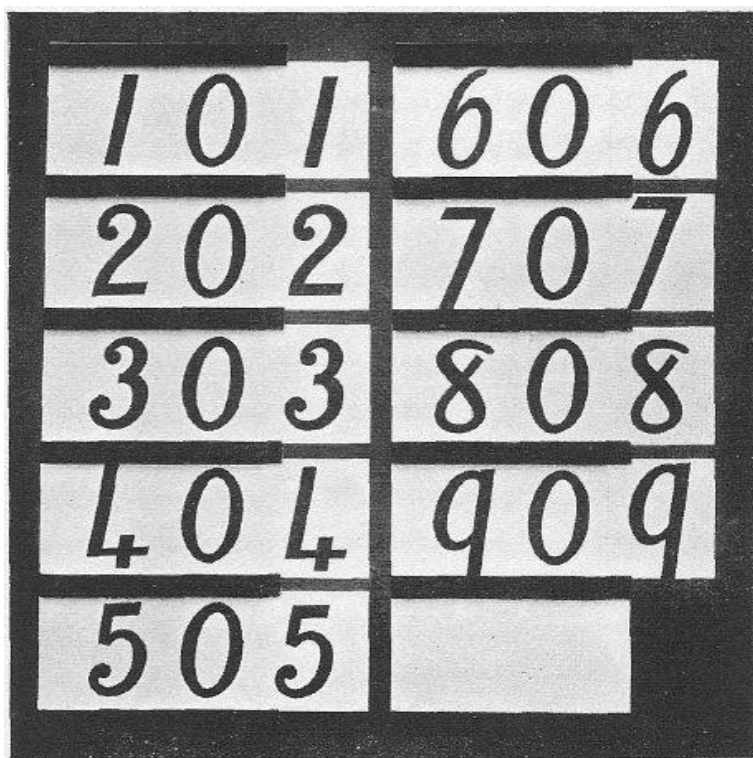


Fig. 41. Counting Boxes / Arithmetic Frame

This is only the first step, and it would be impossible here to speak of the succeeding lessons in zero, in tens and in other arithmetical processes—for the development of which my larger works must be consulted. The didactic material itself, however, can give some idea. In the box containing the pegs there is one compartment over which the 0 is printed. Inside this compartment “nothing must be put,” since zero is nothing.

For the beginning of this exercise with the cards marking the tens we can use the rods. As we begin with the first ten (10) in the frame, we take the rod 10. We then place the small rod 1 next to rod 10, and

at the same time slip in the number 1, covering the zero of the 10. Then we take rod 1 and rod 2 together, placing them alongside rod 10, and insert 2 over the zero.

MORAL FACTORS

A brief description such as this, of the means which are used in the "Children's House," may perhaps give the reader the impression of a logical and convincing system of education. But the importance of my method does not lie in the organization itself, but in the effects which it produces on the child.

The tendencies which we stigmatize as evil in little children of three to six years of age are often merely those which cause annoyance to us adults when, not understanding their needs, we try to prevent their every movement, their every attempt to gain experience for themselves in the world by touching, by handling things, etc.

The child who is working in our schools is serene and happy. The children, when left free, develop a kind of self-discipline which is far more profound and more perfect than the discipline which we are accustomed to impose upon them. This discipline springs from the very conditions of the environment in which they live.

Has not a similar phenomenon occurred also in the history of man? The history of civilization is a history of successful attempts to organize work and to obtain liberty. When work is well organized the man of the people obtains the two things most necessary to him: economic comfort and freedom of action, and peace reigns between employer and employed.

So also in the "Children's House" the child obtains what is necessary both for his comfort and for his development, and the calm and orderly life of the little community results. It is not therefore the teacher who produces this discipline, but the environment itself which is organized and furnished, not by the teacher, but through her care. It is therefore indeed true that this tranquil and orderly life proceeds

from a more profound source than any direct intervention of the teacher.

The education of the senses, which is the foundation of my method, has for its aim the refinement of the differential perception of stimuli by means of repeated exercises. There exists, therefore, no introduction to the new methods, nor any preparation to undergo: the child is put immediately into the practical experience, and the method consists in the gradual presentation of stimuli, always better adapted to call forth and to perfect his activities.

The single staff is used in the Conservatoire of Milan and utilized in the Perlasca method. See the chapters on Discipline in my larger works.