

PLAY LIFE

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PALMER

PLAY LIFE IN THE FIRST EIGHT YEARS

BY

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PREFACE

We purpose in this book to suggest the development of the *spirit* of play rather than the development of games. Under "spirit of play" almost every waking moment of the child's life could be considered. To cover such ground is, of course, impossible; there are limits to knowledge, patience, and necessity. The first five chapters (Part I) deal with the way a child may play-educate his body, his mental life, his means of expression, and his ideals. The last four chapters (Part II) discuss the influence upon the child's life of his different surroundings — home, nature, playground, institutions.

An arrangement of plays under these headings will not result in lists which are mutually exclusive. The two parts necessarily cover the same ground, grouping the same plays into two classifications. In the first part they are arranged according to their similarity in response to some need of the child, in the second according to the circumstances in which they may arise.

Even the material in the different chapters overlaps, especially in Part I. At the beginning of life, activity has but one expression; it is only gradually that it becomes complex and capable of being differentiated into well-defined channels. Growth in one part of the organism necessitates change in all parts. A child cannot exercise his body without affecting in some way his mentality and morality. It is only possible in the various chapters to group games which seem to lay an emphasis on some particular aspect of play life.

Where the classification is made according to years, it merely implies that the average child of such age has reached the stage of development when he will enjoy the listed plays. During infancy, the first period of development — from birth to four years — a child generally plays alone and in an impulsive, unorganized way ; during early childhood, the second period of development — from four to eight years of age — the plays gradually demand more cooperation and organization.

L. A. P

INTRODUCTION

Some years ago it was my privilege to know Miss Palmer, first as a student in Teachers College, and later as director of the experimental kindergarten in the Speyer School under my supervision. Here Miss Palmer proved her ability to work with a genuine experimental attitude of mind. In her studies under others she was truly the student in the intellectual hospitality which she offered to her instructors ; but this was always accompanied with a sincere desire to put her own theories as well as those of others to the test of demonstration with the children under her care. In this work with the children all experiments were most carefully guarded, observed, and analyzed, and no one was readier than she to forswear her own theories, or to acknowledge the validity of those held by an opposing point of view, when put to the test of practice and demonstration.

The materials presented in this volume have been drawn from the most catholic sources and give evidence of an almost incredible amount of patience and labor in going over a wide field in her search for the best. As a result, Miss Palmer has brought together from these widely scattered sources a goodly array of songs, games, stories, nature materials, and manual arts. These have been carefully sifted and arranged with reference to the development of the child from early infancy through the period of early childhood. Such an attempt demands a good knowledge of the growing child as he passes from one stage to another, together with a critical judgment of materials suitable to each stage, if

continuity in development is to be maintained throughout. In this arrangement of materials with reference to the needs of the growing child, I believe Miss Palmer has made a helpful contribution to all who have the care of young children. While no one may agree with the author as to the age when the different materials are required, or with her judgment and taste in the broad selections offered, an earnest and painstaking effort has been made to provide materials of worth for those who have the care of young children in the home, the kindergarten, the school, the playground, the settlement, or the church. However, as the immense variety of materials offered is greater than any one person may use, ample room is left for the judgment of the mother or teacher, thus throwing upon her the responsibility of selecting just those best suited to the children under her supervision. This method, it is hoped, will stimulate the study of children in the light of materials which best fit in with their mode of growth.

The author of this volume does not send it forth as in any sense a complete or faultless solution of the problem it attempts to solve. On the contrary, it is put forth in a spirit of humility as well as courage, modesty as well as conviction, with the sincere hope that it will serve its day, and, in turn, stimulate further study in meeting the varied requirements of these fruitful years of childhood.

If this volume is used in the broad spirit in which it is conceived, its suggestions will not be accepted in any passive, servile, or literal attitude, for the materials chosen are but types and samples of what may be done. If studied and used in this spirit, I have no hesitation in recommending it to mothers, mothers' helpers, nurses, kindergartners, primary teachers, playground directors, and church and social workers.

PATTY SMITH HILL

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PART ONE
THE INDIVIDUAL

CHAPTER I

PLAYS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BODY

The baby new to earth and sky,
What time the tender palm is prest
Against the circle of the breast,
Has never thought that "this is I";

But as he grows he gathers much,
And learns the use of "I" and "me"
And finds "I am not what I see,
And other than the things I touch."

So rounds he to a separate mind
From whence clear memory may begin,
As thro' the frame that binds him in
His isolation grows defined.¹

The tiny baby does not know the difference between himself and the outside world; he only feels himself a mass of comfort or discomfort. Accidentally a finger or toe finds its way into his mouth, a double sensation results, from his mouth and from his finger, and his training is begun in limiting the extent of his body. Later a spoon happens to be in the path of the aimlessly moving fingers; it is carried to his mouth and he has started on the road to the discovery that, although his sensations and feelings are bounded by his body, he has certain means by which he can control things beyond that limit. These are the simple beginnings

¹ Tennyson, *In Memoriam*.

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in lifelong education, whose aim is to know the self, the world, and the relation between them.

Through the chance results of random movements and those movements which are instinctive and reflex, the newborn baby must build up the knowledge which gives power to understand and control himself and his surroundings. It is through constant repetition that movement and result become associated and the fund of knowledge grows. Some unexpected variation in the result may attract the child's attention and lead towards further discrimination. This is the method of sure progress—repetition, then variation. If the fumbling baby hand can find the bottle and put it into the mouth, then he knows that his eyes have told him the truth—that this object could be grasped and could be touched with the lips. If the warm milk does not come as expected, then there is something that he does not know about bottles—that they may be empty.

The first plays can hardly be classified under definite headings as movement and sense plays, so closely are the two related; we can only in an indefinite way separate those which might lead towards emphasis on movement or on sense training.

SENSE PLAYS

In sense plays a child tries to test his power of interpreting his material environment. They are of value not only because they make the senses keener but because they train the mind to pay attention to the impressions gained through eye, ear, and hand, and also train the body to respond to these with intelligence, quickness, and accuracy. A person keen to the nature of his environment lives not only in greater safety but with more enjoyment and efficiency.

PERIOD OF INFANCY

Until nearly four years of age, most of the sense games are extremely simple. They consist of the mere activities of seeing, hearing, touching, yet they are very important because it is at this period that the most rapid progress is made in sense training.

First year

The first year is largely devoted to the development of the senses. The little newborn baby does not see objects or hear sounds. By the time of the first birthday he can distinguish flat surfaces from solid objects, can tell from what direction a sound comes, knows his body as related to himself, can connect object as seen with that as heard or as felt.

The mouth is the part of the body most sensitive to touch; opportunities should be given for the young investigator to learn about his toes and his fingers, about balls and spoons, yet no object should be constantly in his mouth. Constant sucking of a "pacifier" irritates the gums and mucous membrane of the baby's mouth, and may cause respiratory and teething difficulties.

Fumbling hands should be supplied with articles smooth and pleasantly rough, soft, and even hard though light, like a celluloid ball. (Care must be taken with celluloid toys as they are very inflammable.) These may be fastened by cords to the edge of the baby basket or top of the carriage, or to the edge of the stocking, so that they will be within easy reach to be grasped and pulled.

Although direct sunlight or bright light of any kind should be kept out of the child's eyes, as soon as he seems to notice a candle it may be moved a few times from side

to side to induce him to follow it with his eyes. A shiny object such as a watch may be held within reach until the little one becomes proficient in grasping it; then it can be slowly swung. This is training in marksmanship as much as the later shooting at a target; it requires coördination of eye and hand, and also perseverance.

Different pleasing sounds with bell or piano can be made and repeated when a child begins to show a tendency to pay attention to them. Adults must devise a patent muffler for their ears, as a baby should be allowed to pound with a spoon or other object upon wood, tin, or some resounding substance. Mrs. Hall¹ states an instance where a child of nine months was surprised at the difference in sound between a cup and a saucer when struck by the spoon. Opportunities might be given to notice contrasts. Occasionally when baby is striking the floor with his rattle push a pie plate within range and watch the sudden attention.

Very excellent suggestions are given with regard to the sense training of babies in Miss Shinn's "Biography of a Baby."² She suggests that a child should be allowed to gaze without interruption when paying attention to an object. A baby should be carried around so that it may grasp different things. He should have rubber objects near at hand to play with, and as he delights in grasping objects which resist, hard things should be provided when a sympathetic caretaker is near by. Objects should be hung from above, within reach, or fastened to the stocking, or placed on tables and floors so that the baby can pull and push. A baby's surroundings should provide objects contrasting and yet pleasing, stimulating but not exciting.

¹ *Child Study Monthly*.

² Millicent W. Shinn, *The Biography of a Baby*. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Second year

During this year babies direct their principal energy towards walking. They are thus able to carry on their investigations throughout a wider range. They are still interested in seeing, hearing, and feeling, and all the objects within reach become possible material for sense training.

Besides the furniture, spoons, and other familiar things which the child delights to use in his search for knowledge, he can be supplied with toys, such as a red and a blue ball, a wooden ball and a soft ball, a gong and a hammer, a bottle with flaked rice and, later, a box with stones. These two latter articles will afford endless amusement if the children are allowed to empty and refill and shake them. A newspaper is a very good plaything if an adult is watching; a baby likes to hear and feel the tearing. Only a few toys are necessary, as sliding a bureau drawer in and out, dropping a toothpick through a cane-seated chair, or folding and unfolding a towel, will play-educate a child of this age.

Third year

Within this year children make very rapid progress in language; it is the time when the words can be given which will clarify the sense impressions that the children have already received. It takes much patience on the part of the adult to try to understand the never-ending, topsy-turvy questions and to give replies which can be comprehended by a limited childish experience. Things are still the best teachers for the senses. The child should have placed within his reach, as far as possible, objects which will help him to learn the contrasts of his environment, and opportunities should be given to test these extremes. Familiar objects will teach him such opposites as hard and soft (chair and cushion), rough and smooth (carpet and