



**Watsche-Kuchen.**

„Mag auch wohl ein höh'rer Sinn  
 In dem Watsche-Kuchen liegen?—  
 O, wohl liegt er Har darin:  
 Willig muß sich Meßes fügen,  
 Jeder auch zur rechter Zeit  
 Sein an seinem Teell bereit,  
 Soll das Werk gelingen  
 Und uns Freude bringen.“

**XIII.**

**PAT-A-CAKE.**

SURELY there is nothing hid  
 In this little game,  
 That is not quite plainly told  
 By its name?

Search a moment—you will find  
 Something deeper taught;  
*In the world's work each must help,*  
 As he ought.

Like the Target, Pat-a-cake is a familiar nursery game. It is played not only in Germany but in England. It is said to be the only representative in the latter country of the hand and finger games of which Germany possesses so rich a collection. Its wide diffusion points to the fact that simple mother-wit never fails to link the initial activities of the child with the everyday life about him.

What the natural mother does incidentally, intermittently, and disconnectedly, we must learn to do with conscious intent and in logical sequence. We must recognise the reason implicit in instinct, learn its methods, and, without losing its *naïveté* develop into a systematic procedure its incidental suggestions. The human spirit is a living unity, and should never be content with a

fragmentary expression of its wholeness. Hence "the sweet reasonableness" manifested in the simple intercourse between mother and child must not be suffered to remain forever a blind impulse. It must unfold, on the one side, into conscious and spiritual motherhood, and, on the other, into that ideal childhood whose love and yearning and prescient hope testify that it holds the "all" in its heart. For the immanence of the whole in feeling is the necessary presupposition of the penetration of the whole by thought.

On its external side Pat-a-cake is so well known that only a few hints need be given with regard to the manner of playing it and to its physical effects. The child stands or sits in front of her who so tenderly cherishes his life. Holding his hands in an upright position, with the palms touching each other, the mother claps them energetically. The physical points of the game are the attitude of the whole body, the position of the arms, and the exercise of the elbow-joint.

I have already said that this game had its origin in an effort to make the impulsive movements of the infant the means of introducing him to a knowledge of the activities about him, and to their reciprocal relationships. The bread, or, better still, the little cake which the child likes so much, he receives from his mother; the mother, in turn, receives it from the baker. So far so good. We have found two links in the great chain of life and service. Let us beware, however, of making the child feel that these links

complete the chain. The baker can bake no cake if the miller grinds no meal; the miller can grind no meal if the farmer brings him no grain; the farmer can bring no grain if his field yields no crop; the field can yield no crop if the forces of Nature fail to work together to produce it; the forces of Nature could not conspire together were it not for the all-wise and beneficent Power who incites and guides them to their predetermined ends.

Doubtless the little children in our picture, who are playing "Bake bread, eat bread," have been taught to feel this inner unity, connectedness, and harmony of life. Do not disturb their ingenuous play. Rather avoid noticing it, unless your own heart responds to the devout feeling which inspires it. These children are not profaning what is holy; they are nurturing the impulse out of which shall spring the consecration of secular life.

How shall your child, either now or hereafter, cultivate his sense for what is holy, if you nip that budding germ of devotion which seeks child-like expression in serious play? Such play, however, must be spontaneous, artless, and free from all attempts at show. Beware, therefore, of any look or word that may destroy the simplicity of an action which originally springs unsummoned from that holiest of holies, the young child's heart.