

CHAPTER II

THE SECOND PLAY

THE whole activity of the child shows that he experiences a special joy when he passes from what has hitherto been given to him to that which is at once like it and contrasted with it. The saying—"The child seeks ever something new" embodies the same idea. But the opposite, and yet like, of the soft ball is the hard ball or globe. This, then, is the next plaything required by the child in the natural course of his development.

The globe is more perfectly round and smooth than is the soft ball, and so it moves more freely. On the other hand it is heavier, and therefore when at rest remains so more steadily. Because of its greater weight it makes greater demands on energy and skill. By the louder sound it produces it shows both its greater weight and the greater force required to move it. All this, as fresh proof of his increasing strength, adds pleasure to the child's games with the globe.

It is clear that this progressive presentation of playthings is in so many ways in accordance with nature, that it gives the true means of development. It is equally clear—and, indeed, is expressed in the phrase "in accordance with nature"—that the progression is not arbitrary, but necessarily determined, as it includes both likeness and contrariety, both progress and constancy.

The globe, then, is the second companion plaything

with the soft ball. It should not replace the ball, for the child loves both. Indeed, no new plaything should banish an earlier one. For the value of the former is intensified and made more definite by the latter. No doubt, the modes of playing—or occupations, as we may call them—with the globe are very similar to those with the ball, because the globe is the opposed similar to the ball. But the movements are more decisive and more definite than in the earlier games.

As each plaything is, in a sense, a complete whole, it has a definite part to play in the child's development. As the ball by the variety of its colours should train in harmony and concord, so the globe, especially in its many turnings and twistings, which yet all show the perfect globular form, should lead to a clearer apprehension of unity.

Again, while the ball especially exercises the powers of perception and so trains character, the globe by its various movements primarily trains body and limbs. We may here say, once more and once for all, that in games with this and all subsequent playthings, words, talk, song, and verse, should bring clearly to the child's mind, and in a way suited to his age, all that is being done, and thus facilitate his progress towards an all-sided development. Sound is to the child a still higher sign of life than is movement. So he loves to hear sounds and speech. Yet more does he long to be told about everything—how it lives and what is its purpose—especially how it is related to himself. By accompanying movement with speech, then, we make the globe a means of showing the relation between the plaything and the child's life. And this the more easily as playing with the globe develops the general capacity for hearing, and at the same time the first attempts are made to learn to talk.

Another point connected with playing with the globe should be noted. As the colours of the balls symbolized, as it were, the joys of life, forming a plurality united in the bond of a common nature, so globes coloured half black and half white represent the opposite poles of life—its light and shade, its day and night. As they are rotated, on the one hand the black dissolves into grey and that passes into white, while, on the other the white gradually darkens into black. These small and almost imperceptible changes add much to the child's pleasure in playing with the globe, and the symbolism of real life is so clear that the value of this means of aiding the development of children of every rank must be obvious to every unprejudiced mind. Moreover by these gradations of shade the relations of number, form, and rhythm are shown in a new light, even as the beauties of a landscape are brought out by suitable shadows.

What, now, is the necessary transition to the next plaything? The globe has but a single surface and is round. Its opposite must have corners and edges. This, then, is the contrast which must appear in the next plaything. But it must also show the needful similarity. The globe has three equal axes which cut each other at right angles, and these properties, as well as the contrasted ones just named, must be sought. These requirements are only satisfied by the cube. So the cube is necessarily the child's third plaything.

Though as solid bodies globe and cube are similar, yet in all that relates to form they are contrasted. While the globe can be regarded as the physical expression of pure movement, the cube expresses pure rest. The soft ball is the link which connects the two. For not only is it intermediate in mobility, but, when moderately elastic, it can easily be moulded so as to approach it