

MY METHOD OF TEACHING ENGLISH TO BEGINNERS

BY ELLA BAKER, *Teacher, Neah Bay Indian School*



THE life of men consists of a series of actions and reactions which constitute the experience of the man. The former is the furniture of his insight; the latter of his conduct. By the former the man is wise; by the latter he is virtuous. This experience furnishes the material for wisdom and virtue, which hold all worthy objects of education.

The principles of the Pestalozzian education apply especially to the Indian child while acquiring his language work. He says "things before words," "things before ideas;" first the thing and then its symbol." Too often we depend upon the organs of speech which express ideas in words, rather than upon the hand to express these ideas. It is oftentimes overlooked that the more or less plastic expression of ideas by the hands, with the help of suitable material, holds to their formulation in words very much the same relation that things hold to symbols; that in expression, too, it is necessary to bring things before symbols, things before mere words. So in learning language, the child, as much as possible, should be given the object to hold in his hands and examine before he is given the name.

Thus, in studying the cube, he will see the cube, handle it, use it in his games, and thus gaining many impressions concerning its shape. These may be expressed in words, or better, in clay. Both modes of expression will react on the child's idea of shape; yet there is no doubt that the child's efforts with the clay will be more effectual.

Again it may give a child a fair idea of a square by showing him square pieces of paper or square objects, yet this is nothing compared with the actual handling of squares and by using them in the construction of other forms, by drawing squares and cutting them, or by fashioning them from clay.

It may be seen that the hand training has wider aims than just industrial training, and that it must necessarily come before words. But this little industrial training must be of such nature and so easy that it does not worry the child. Such materials as these are suggested by Froebel.

But the chief medium of all the beginning work in English is language. There are three things always to be kept in mind regarding all language work: First, "Keep the children from becoming self-con-