

# **HOME OCCUPATIONS FOR LITTLE CHILDREN**

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Home Occupations for Little Children by Katherine Beebe

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FOR LITTLE CHILDREN

BY

KATHERINE BEEBE



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## Preface.

In this book the Kindergarten offers to the Home suggestions for the occupation of little children with simple materials. The author does not presuppose a kindergarten training on the part of the mother, nor an ideal environment. She simply takes for granted the child's ceaseless activity and the mother's desire to furnish him with material and opportunity for development.

The occupations here considered are of three kinds. The first are those which require the active participation of an older person; the second, those for which only occasional direction or assistance is necessary; the third, those in which the child can engage by himself. The first two sorts prepare the way for an increase in the number of the third kind of occupations, and all participation and help from the mother ought to be repaid in time by an added power and independence on the part of the child in contriving and carrying on games, plays and childish work by himself. K. B.

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## Chapter I.

### "WHAT CAN I DO?"

**I**T is a well-known fact among kindergartners that many children who are restless, turbulent and unruly at home are absolutely happy and good during the morning hours spent in the kindergarten. Some mothers do not understand why this is so, but to the close observer of children its explanation is simple. Children must and will be active. If enough of the right material and opportunity is not supplied them, they will make use of the wrong, to their own and others' disturbance, for they are usually punished or reprimanded for indulging in activities which are unapproved by their elders, in spite of the fact that approved opportunities for activity have not been furnished.

In the (ideal) kindergarten, for three happy hours, the child has a place, a time and



an opportunity for a natural growth, during which time he expresses himself freely in play. He has materials with which and playmates with whom to play. He has the sympathy and participation of his elders. He has the help he needs in carrying out his ideas. He is allowed to work in his own way, and he is never heard to say, "What can I do?" As a consequence, he is both happy and good.

Could some such conditions prevail at home during the rest of the day, many a household would be more comfortable, and many a little child transformed from a "troublesome comfort" to a constant delight.

The child wants something to do, and he must have it. Even after the hours which can be spent out of doors are added to those during which he occupies himself with his toys, and to those when he can be directly amused by mother or nurse, and their sum subtracted from the whole number of his waking hours, there still remains that aching void filled too often with the fretful

cry, "What can I do?" and a mother's unaccepted suggestions.

"Play with your blocks," she says.

"I don't want to; I don't know anything to make."

"Well, why don't you play with your horses?"

"I don't want to play with my horses!"

"Run down into the kitchen a while and see Maggie."

"I don't want to! There isn't anything to do down there." And so on, the result of such conversations being all too often that he stays with his mother and her guest, either destroying the comfort of both by his restlessness, or sitting quietly listening to conversation which introduces him before his time into the adult world. Surely, anything which will tend to keep him at such times in a child's world of play is worth considering.

Mother and nurse must supply themselves with resources for these hours. There is always a supply of food in the pantry, of clothes in the closets, of remedies in the

medicine chest, and of other things necessary to physical comfort and well-being, but there needs to be as well a supply of mental food and stimulus, if the child's mind is to have the power of occupying his hands in a way to keep him normally happy and good. The time is coming when mothers will no more fail to supply the cry of "What can I do?" than they now fail to satisfy that other cry, "Mamma, I am hungry!" The time is coming when a kindergarten training will be a part of every high school, seminary and college course. It is in the hope of placing something in the play-larder that the following chapters are written.

If a child is to play, it goes without saying that he must have a place in which to play; and yet we know that in many houses there is little or no space which he can call his own. Remembering that a child's development, physical, mental and moral, comes to him through play, it seems strange indeed that so little regard is paid to play-space in our domestic and civic economy. Even out of doors the children are not very