

**AN ESSAY ON THE CULTURE OF
THE OBSERVING POWERS OF
CHILDREN, ESPECIALLY IN
CONNECTION WITH THE STUDY
OF BOTANY**

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An Essay on the Culture of the Observing Powers of Children, Especially in Connection with the Study of Botany by Eliza A. Youmans & Joseph Payne

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ELIZA A. YOUMANS & JOSEPH PAYNE

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THE
CULTURE OF THE OBSERVING POWERS
OF CHILDREN.

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THE STUDY OF BOTANY.

BY
ELIZA A. YOUMANS,
OF NEW YORK.

EDITED, WITH NOTES AND A SUPPLEMENT ON THE EXTENSION OF THE
PRINCIPLE TO ELEMENTARY INTELLECTUAL TRAINING IN GENERAL,

BY
JOSEPH PAYNE,
FELLOW OF THE COLLEGE OF PRECEPTORS:
AUTHOR OF 'LECTURES ON THE SCIENCE AND ART OF EDUCATION' ETC.



*You study Nature in the house, and when you go out of
doors you cannot find her.*—PROFESSOR AGASSIZ.

LONDON:
HENRY S. KING & Co., 65 CORNHILL.
1872.

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PREFACE
TO
THE ENGLISH EDITION.

THE EDITOR'S ACQUAINTANCE with the valuable treatise which he now brings before the English public, is of recent date. He had undertaken to write a brief paper for the Leeds Meeting of the Social Science Association, on 'The Teaching of Elementary Science as a Part of the Earliest Instruction of Children;' and had completed the arguments and illustrations by which he endeavoured to show that, in the true order of things, the earliest formal instruction of children should be a *continuation* of that which they had already unconsciously received from Nature and Fact, when Dr. Youmans, of New York, put into his hands the 'First Book of Botany,' and the little treatise, which is here republished, 'On the Culture of the Observing Powers of Children,' written by Miss Youmans. He was at once struck with the remarkable correspondence between the views taken by Miss Youmans and those which

he had presented in his own paper, and proportionally interested in the fact that these views had been realised in successful practice. It therefore occurred to him that he should be doing a service to the cause of education by bringing them under the notice of English teachers, and of all who take an interest in the improvement of elementary instruction. He has a profound conviction—which many others share with him—that what is demanded by the present times is not so much extended machinery as better teachers—teachers more thoroughly acquainted with the nature of the mind with which they are professedly dealing, and capable of making their knowledge of the processes of education more productive in results; and, moreover, that the improved teaching which is needed, must begin at the beginning. As things are, we adopt conventional opinions respecting the essentials of instruction—frequently confounding the means with the end—and entrust the most delicate and difficult part of the process—the early development and training of the mind—to teachers who have no other idea of teaching than that it is a sort of mechanical grinding, which is somehow or other to produce the desired result. We all recognize the usual product of such grinding in countless examples of children exposed to it, who grow up to manhood and pass their lives in the possession of eyes that do not see, ears that do not hear, and minds that

have never been taught to think. The teaching, however, which ends in such results as these is, to speak strictly, no teaching at all.

It fails altogether as an agency for quickening intelligence through the acquisition of knowledge. The teacher has not done what he engaged to do. He professed to be an artist aiming to secure, through the resources of his art, a definite end; that end he has not secured. He undertook—what nature left alone does not undertake—to teach his pupils not only to think, but to think with a fixed purpose in view; not only to set their minds in motion, but to direct that motion so as to make it effectual for (1) the acquisition of exact knowledge, (2) the formation of good mental habits, (3) and consequently, the attainment of a consciousness of power applicable to all cases of mental action. His work has proved inefficient in all these respects, and he has therefore failed in the very object of his existence.

The didactic method—the method of endless telling, explaining, thinking for the pupil, and ordering him to learn—has had its day. It is, then, worth while to consider whether it may not be superseded by one which recognizes the native ability of the human mind, under competent guidance, to work out its own education by means of its own active exercise.

Miss Youmans' method, by providing for the exercise