

AS TO "MOTHER GOOSE."

From a Private Letter.

You ask me what I think about nursery rhymes for little children.

We have to distinguish between nursery rhymes and nursery rhymes. There are some, especially among the very modern ones, which are amusing or clever or sentimental, without having much value. There are some among the older nursery rhymes, which, however, you may not find in any ordinary collections, which are not of much value and may be even coarse. In large collections of nursery rhymes, especially those gathered as a matter of folklore, you will find many that have political origin that would be of no use in our own nurseries, and you will find some which should become obsolete with the advance of refinements. But any good collection of nursery rhymes which includes many of the older well known ones, it seems to me has great value for our children.

For one thing, these little rhymes tell stories in very brief form. Before the child can take the complications of the longer fairy story it can grasp the distinguishing features of the little rhyme. The best of these rhymes are very condensed dramatic pictures of the life the child knows—the life that it is in contact with, with its mishaps, its adventures, and its satisfactions. Things tumble down, little animals get lost, there is a plum in the pudding, little boys fall asleep at the side or around the haystack. There are ecstasies in which impossible things are done, as the cow jumps over the moon. All these things are vivid pictures presented to the child in language that it can understand, with plenty of color and with delightful climaxes. There are kings and queens, just as in fairy books, but these ideal personages like eating bread and honey in the kitchen and counting their money, giving a glamor and a charm to our common life—to the things that later will become the expressions of greater idealism. At first the little child is right up against the floors and the chairs and the tables and the haystacks, and so on.

With our excessive daintiness we often try to talk to the little children simply about certain very lovely things. We are a little sentimental about it. We talk about the little lambs as if they always just had little blue ribbons about their necks and gamboled on the green. The nursery rhyme tells us about the little lambs running away. That is a good healthy dramatic act. The trouble with the kindergarten is that it is too often sentimental and goody-goody in its connotations. I think the Montessori system gives the intellectual counter-irritant. But both of them leave out, it seems to me, the simple dramatic values of our common life, and the appeal that they make to the imagination. Our sentimental preferences and logical analyses are not adequate for the child's demands.

The fact is that the whole of life is good. The children must run up against it all sooner or later, and we must begin while they still sit on our knees to stimulate an interest in the whole of it. I believe very much in beginning quite young with the great stories of adventure, of enterprise that have been told in all ages,—the Homeric stories, the Sagas, the Hindu stories, if you please. They appeal to the child's imagination, and they give a oneness to the human life and a brilliancy to it. They give radiance to the great enterprises of our own life, and finally to the great joy of our own life and to the great last adventure.

ALICE THACHER POST.



THE PROGRESS OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION.

The recent final passage of the House of Commons of the Irish Home Rule Bill, which provides for the election of the entire Irish Senate and of some of the members of the Irish House by proportional representation, is only one of many recent events showing that the reform is rapidly making its way round the world.

In *Holland* a Royal Commission, recently appointed to consider the matter, has reported unanimously in favor of applying P. R. to the election of both chambers of the Dutch Parliament and also to that of the councils of the "communes" or local governments.

In *Denmark* the Minister of the Interior introduced into the Lower House in April a bill for the election of that House by P. R. It is said that the bill has passed through all its stages in that House and is now, or very recently was, before the Danish Upper House.

In the *Transvaal* a recent vote of the Provincial Council has restored to Johannesburg, Pretoria and Roodeport-Maraisburg the privilege of using P. R. in the election of their municipal councils. The reactionary decision of the Provincial Council that is thus rescinded, which was made towards the end of 1912, was due solely to the desire of the Provincial Council, of which reactionaries were then in control, to prevent the Labor Party from electing its proportional share of the members of the municipal councils in question. The reactionary decision was received with disfavor generally by the press of all parties throughout South Africa.

In *Switzerland*, nine cantons of which already use the proportional system in the election of their cantonal legislatures, a vote is to be taken in the autumn, under the provisions of the Initiative, on the question of applying P. R. to the election of the National Council. The measure will probably carry by a very small margin. The reason why about half of the voters are expected to vote against the measure is that about half of