



# The Preparation of the Child for Science

*M. E. Boole*

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## **The Preparation of the Child for Science** M. E. Boole

An excerpt from the beginning of the first chapter:

### THE SCIENTIFIC MIND

The present volume is specifically concerned with the preparation of the child for science. It offers suggestions as to means by which the scientific condition of mind can be induced. Each mother must decide for herself whether, and to what extent, she wishes to induce this condition. The first desideratum is that parents should form a clear idea what is the scientific condition of mind; the next is that they should know in what consists the preparation for it.

The typically scientific mind may be described as one which stands in a definite relation to As-Yet-Unknown Truth, and especially to that portion of the As-Yet-Unknown which is just below the horizon of knowledge. In proportion as a mind is non-scientific, the occurrence of an unfamiliar phenomenon stimulates it to form some immediate classification or judgment. A new statement is hailed at once as 'true' or 'false'; a new fact is classified as 'good' or 'bad,' 'nice' or 'nasty'; an unfamiliar action as 'right' or 'wrong,' &c. In proportion as a mind is scientific, the occurrence of a new phenomenon tends to set it vibrating with a consciousness of coming revelation, and to start a certain cycle of mental attitudes, a cycle of the following kind :—

Homage.

Attention.

Observation.

Analysis.

Antithesis.

Synthesis.

Contemplation.

Effacement.

Repose.

Judgment or Classification.

The cycle varies in duration; each phase may occupy a few seconds, or many months, or even years; but the tendency to fall into some such sequence as that above described at the touch of a new fact is what constitutes the essentially scientific condition.

It would, of course, be impossible to direct the studies of a child strictly in accordance with any such sequence as the above, but a good deal may be done towards inducing scientific elasticity by setting up the habit of rhythmic alternation of attitude. And, if the child is to be prepared for science, something of reverence should always accompany the impact of the As-Yet-Unknown.

That delicate sensitiveness to the touch of the illogical, to the limits of knowledge, and to the Presence of the As-Yet-Unknown, which it was the object of great mathematicians to confer on automatic mechanism, is too often destroyed in the human brain by rough and ready processes, adopted, sometimes for the purpose of fixing the opinions of young people, sometimes for that of enabling them to pass examinations successfully in subjects which they do not really understand. To cultivate it in the young child is the object of some of the

precautions recommended in the following pages. None of them, however, are intended to be slavishly carried out.

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