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# THE CASE FOR SCHOOL NURSERIES.

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## School Attendance of Children under Five.

TILL quite recently it has been the practice in England and Wales for children between three and five to attend school if their parents so desired and for school authorities to make regular provision for such children. "During the fifteen years previous to 1907 at least a third of all such children were on the registers of public elementary schools."\* Soon after the passing of the Education Act, 1902, however, the question as to whether school attendance for very young children was desirable began to be much discussed. It was pointed out that the compulsory age limit was lower in England than in any other country, and that the methods employed in most of our infant schools were unsuited to the needs of such very young children. Enquiries were set on foot by some of the new education authorities and by the Board of Education, with the result that in the Code for 1905 the following clause was inserted:—

"Where the Local Education Authority have so determined in the case of any school maintained by them, children who are under five years of age may be refused admission to that school."

Accordingly no obligation rests at present on local education authorities to provide for children under five. There are in England and Wales three hundred and twenty-seven such authorities, and of these thirty-two wholly exclude children under five from their schools, one hundred and fifty-four retain all children between three and five who are sent to school, while the remaining one hundred and thirty-six take a middle course, retaining some and excluding others.†

## Reasons for Excluding Children under Five from Elementary Schools.

The reasons given for this exclusion are of two kinds ; some have reference only to the ordinary infant school as it exists at present in England, others to any kind of public provision whatever. Among the former may be mentioned:—

### I. THE VENTILATION DIFFICULTY.

It has been urged that under existing conditions of air space proper ventilation is almost impossible, and that the air has been actually found to be more impure in schools than in the dwellings of the poor.‡ It is argued that in the case of older children the risks

\* Report of the Consultative Committee upon the School Attendance of Children below the age of Five (Board of Education, July 2nd, 1908), p. 12.

† Ibid. Appendix I. and V.

‡ Ibid. Appendix III.



from bad air are less while the advantages of education are greater, that it is a heavy and needless risk to herd very young children together in bad air. Such objectors take for granted that the present unsatisfactory conditions as to ventilation are to be looked on as inevitable, but, "it certainly seems anomalous, to say the least, that elementary schools should be allowed to remain as the classical example of bad ventilation, and that children should thus be taught by practical example to tolerate foul air."† It must be remembered, too, that the bad smell and intolerable stuffiness of the ordinary schoolroom, which are the outward and sensible sign of injurious air conditions, are due rather to dirt than to actual deficiency of air. "Far more could be done by cleanliness than by ventilation. The floors and walls should be capable of being properly cleansed, and the children themselves and their clothes kept clean and tidy."\* Now in the nursery school cleanliness would always be specially insisted on, would indeed take the very first place among subjects of instruction, so that it may be hoped that the air would in them be less laden with impurities than in the ordinary elementary school. It must be noticed, too, that the children in such schools ought to spend a large part of their school time out of doors, and that no day nursery or nursery school is complete without ample playgrounds, both roofed and open, with facilities for resting out of doors in good weather.

## 2. THE DANGER OF INFECTION.

"In proportion to the number of children, the spread of infectious diseases caused by school attendance is greater before five than after; but it must be remembered that if more escape *before* five, the greater will be the incidence of the disease *after* five."\* It is also noteworthy that "with the better training of teachers on the hygienic side and the appointment of school medical officers, a state of things will arise, and, in fact, is arising, in which attendance at school will become a means of decreasing the diseases (more especially diphtheria and scarlet fever)."†

## 3. THE DANGER OF PREMATURE MENTAL STRAIN.

"The question of overpressure has been rather exaggerated. Practically it does not exist in infants' schools, except in the case of children with defects to start with, children highly nervous or badly nourished, for whom the work is too much. At the same time, much of the instruction now given is without doubt unsuitable. . . . Play is the best way of educating young children; let them follow their natural instincts as in the nursery. . . . Above all, avoid any idea of enforcing discipline. Fine muscular movements (as of the eye or fingers in reading, writing, or sewing, etc.) should be post-

\* Ibid. Appendix III. Memorandum by Dr. Haldane on the air in schools.

† Ibid. Evidence of Dr. James Niven, Medical Officer of Health, Manchester, pp. 80 and 81. Dr. Niven has since furnished statistics showing that over a period of five years in Manchester the case mortality was substantially the same amongst children attending and those not attending school.



poned until the child has obtained a fuller control over its muscles. . . . Drill is very important, and should consist of 'coarse' movements as contrasted with the 'fine' movements mentioned above. Organized games can be made into a very severe lesson ; their value is much exaggerated." \* This danger of overstrain through unsuitable treatment is of the utmost importance ; and it is the special claim of the nursery school to avoid it by providing just that atmosphere of freedom and kindly encouragement which a sensible mother gives to her child, avoiding alike over stimulation and needless restraint.

But, in addition to these special and more or less avoidable dangers, general objections are raised against making any public provision for little children which would facilitate their removal from home. There is, for instance :—

#### 4. THE DANGER THAT PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY MAY BE WEAKENED.

Experience has shown over and over again that the parental burden is too heavy. All observers agree that children attending school are better looked after by their parents, kept cleaner and tidier, than they would be if they stayed at home. A marked difference may be noticed in almost any poor district in the appearance of the children on Saturdays and during the holidays. It would be much nearer the truth to say that any arrangement which involves the child's being periodically submitted to outside inspection would raise the standard of parental responsibility, and that this influence would be greatly increased by teaching and illustrating what the needs of young children really are. The hollowness of this objection is apparent when one considers that the wealthy ladies who think it so dangerous to relieve the hardworked mother of any of her duties to her little ones find it necessary to depute all such duties in their own case to a nurse. This fact furnishes an answer also to another objection which is often urged, viz., that little children require such constant individual and loving attention that they are better looked after by their mothers than by anyone else. Let us look at the facts. How does the rich mother who has free choice in the matter act ? Does she keep her three year old child constantly with her when she is reading, writing, talking to her friends, or eating her meals ? No ; she devotes, perhaps, a few hours in the day to it when she can give it a fair share of attention, and for the rest of the time she places it with a skilled attendant either out of doors or in an airy, sunny apartment, where it can play about freely under due supervision. What does the poor mother do ? If she is able to remain at home, she will allow her three year old to crawl about the kitchen floor or play in the street, or, perhaps, if he be a venturesome child, will tie him to the leg of the table, so that he may not tumble into the fire, while she is busy with the dinner, the housework, or the family washing. If, on the

\* Ibid. Evidence of Dr. Kerr and Dr. Hogarth, Medical Officers of the Education Department of the London County Council, pp. 63 and 64.

other hand, she has to go out to work, she will leave him with a "minder," usually some old or feeble person who is not able to do more active work, or, if she can manage to hoodwink the attendance officer, with an elder brother or sister kept at home for the purpose. Can it be seriously alleged that it would be a disadvantage to the child to be removed from the minder, or even from the home kitchen and the tail of his mother's eye, to a nursery resembling that which the rich mother provides for her own child, but shared with a number of little neighbors of its own age? It is just because little children require constant and watchful attention that collectivist nurseries are so much needed. One capable, motherly, experienced woman, with a suitable number of trained assistants, can superintend the tending and training of a large number of infants; while one woman with a house to clean, a family to feed and clothe, and the washing to do, cannot properly care for one.

##### 5. THE DANGER OF ENCOURAGING BOTTLE FEEDING.

But though this dread of lightening the responsibilities of motherhood may for the most part be dismissed as sentimental, yet there is one aspect of it, affecting our dealing with infants of only a few months old, the importance of which cannot possibly be exaggerated. The right place for a suckled infant is with its mother, and in a well ordered State no woman would be allowed to undertake work away from home until her child was nine months old; but any legal prohibition of this kind seems, unfortunately, a long way off, since it would necessarily imply State maintenance for nursing mothers. Meanwhile, as long as husbands are liable to be underpaid or unemployed, mothers who should be nursing their babies will accept laundry work or charring; and when this happens the unfortunate baby will fare better in a crèche, where it will receive pure milk, suitably diluted, out of a clean bottle, than with the casual minder. It does not necessarily follow, however, that the crèche baby should be hand fed. After the first few months, when the feeding has become less frequent, it is quite possible for nursing mothers to visit the crèches at suitable intervals. In French and Belgian crèches a room is usually set apart for this purpose.

##### The Need for Public Provision for Children under School Age.

It seems clear, notwithstanding all difficulties and objections, that public provision must be made for some children under school age. Even if we decide with the Consultative Committee\* that the proper place for such children is at home with their mothers, yet we are bound to admit, as they do, that the home surroundings of large numbers of children are not satisfactory, and that children from these homes should be sent during the daytime to places specially intended for their training.\* No responsible person in London, for instance, is prepared to recommend that the children under five now at school should be turned into the streets.

\* Ibid. P. 57.



### Kind of Provision Required.

We have already said that of actual teaching, in the ordinary sense of the word, children under five ought to receive very little. Information should be given very sparingly and only in response to awakened curiosity. Restraint, compulsion, and punishment should be almost unknown; but there is one kind of education which must take place in these early years if at all, and on which health and efficiency in after life largely depend, I mean the formation of physical habits.\* People are apt to forget that breathing, walking, eating, speaking and sleeping have to be learnt, and that there are right and wrong ways of doing each. They are all difficult arts to the baby learner, and he may be much helped in acquiring them by an expert and watchful guardian. As soon as a child is born one may begin to teach him regularity and periodicity in sleeping, eating and the evacuations of the body, and by the time he is a year old he is ready for one or two new lessons. Every year a little more may be done in the way of checking injurious habits and encouraging useful ones; and it must be remembered that these nursery lessons are not less but far more important than the reading, writing, and counting that are taught in the ordinary infant schools. If we consider what are the differences that distinguish a well-bred person from an ill-bred one, we shall find that they depend for the most part on habits acquired in babyhood, modesty, refinement, consideration for others shown in such everyday matters as eating, drinking, and moving about, accurate and distinct utterance, and little points of personal cleanliness. Training of this kind should find a place in the crèche and the nursery school, while it is almost impossible that it should be given by the overworked mother in a workman's home.

### Children must be Taught:

#### HOW TO WASH.

Cleanliness is, perhaps, the most important aspect of the question. The wish to be clean is not born with us. It has to be taught and trained. If a child can be induced to feel uncomfortable when he is dirty, a great step has been taken towards civilizing him and towards the establishment of a higher standard in living for the next generation. This is a point that needs emphasizing, for there is no doubt that we rank lower in regard to cleanliness of clothes and person than other European countries. One's nose testifies to this fact if, after travelling in crowded workmen's trains in England, one does the same thing in France or Germany.

\* "Habits, whether they be born in us or are subsequently acquired, constitute man's whole nature, and they are the results of experience or education. Our education does not begin when we commence to learn to read or write, nor does it commence when we learn to breathe or suck. It has been steadily going on ever since our first foundations were laid in the immeasurable past. The education of the infant consists in teaching it how to acquire good and useful habits which are not born in it, and which will enable it to live a complete life, and take full advantage of the opportunities of its surroundings or environment."—"Infant Education," by E. Pritchard, M.A., M.D. (Oxon.), M.R.C.P. (London).



In England the crusade for cleanliness in the schools is only just beginning. The first step was taken when nurses were appointed to examine the children's heads. Some teachers insist on clean hands and faces, but investigations have seldom proceeded further. Now that medical inspection is at length instituted, terrible disclosures are being made of verminous bodies and diseases engendered by dirt. Now cleanliness is a lesson that can be taught. Few lessons are easier to teach, provided that necessary appliances are at hand, and none bring to the pupil a more immediate and obvious blessing. None certainly are more important if the first aim of our schools is to extend to the children of the poor the opportunity of leading a decent life. But this important lesson is not one that can wait for the school age. The evil results of dirt affect the health of a young child even more than of an older one. A child of two or three years old preyed on by parasites is an object so deplorable that nothing could be more absurd than to permit children to remain in this condition till they are five years old and then expend large sums on teaching them the three R's, often without any cleansing process at all.

In any public nurseries which may be established in England the bathing apparatus would have to play a very important part, and clothing would have to be rigorously inspected and, when necessary, replaced. A time may come some day when English mothers, like French ones, may be required to provide clean underlinen twice a week for their children and a clean pocket handkerchief every day; but to anyone familiar with our schools in poor districts such a time seems remote.

#### HOW TO SLEEP.

The children of the poor suffer almost as much from want of sleep as from want of food.\* The regular midday rest, which is such an important feature in the régime of the nursery, is a luxury of the rich, and in a two roomed household it is almost impossible to put the little ones to bed early enough at night. Undisturbed sleep at regular intervals is in itself invaluable, especially as the means of forming a periodic physical habit which will last a lifetime. Any schools for children under six should be provided with suitable and sufficient sleeping accommodation. "The babies must be allowed to sleep when they want to, and should all be trained to sleep during the day."\*

#### HOW TO EAT.

Another very important nursery lesson is the right way to eat. Recent experience in organizing school feeding has amply proved the need for it. That we teach children to read and write before they know how to eat is an example of our topsy turvey methods. If we instructed them early in the use of their teeth, and were careful to provide suitable materials for that instruction, we should need to spend less later on in dentistry. The dinner table, too, with its code of manners, founded on consideration for others, pro-

\* Report of the Consultative Committee upon the School Attendance of Children below the age of Five, pp. 90-96.

vides an admirable field for moral instruction and for laying the foundations of civilized life.

### HOW TO TALK.

Second only to the importance of learning to wash, to sleep, and to eat, is that of learning to talk. Speech, the widest and most distinctively human of the arts, must begin in the nursery; and much depends on whether it begins there well or ill. Nothing is more noticeable and more distressing to the visitor in our schools than the inarticulateness of the children. One has to delve deep to reach a response. To receive an answer prompt, fearless, and distinct is so rare as to be absolutely startling. There are many reasons for this, but the most obvious is an actual difficulty in utterance. The children have never been taught to speak, and most of them make very clumsy attempts at it. Of course, they soon acquire a code of half articulate sounds, which serve to express their more urgent needs and emotions; but their ears are not trained to recognize nice distinctions of sound, and as they grow older the possibility of such discrimination is lost. The vocal organs, too, having no demands made on them, lose their flexibility and become unmanageable. Bad habits of breathing, too, pass unnoticed, which are difficult to cure and have very bad results.

To impart some familiarity with spoken language, the child should be taught to pronounce very simple words correctly and delicately; and his vocabulary should be extended gradually as his field of observation widens. This should be the chief educational aim of the nursery school. No child can think to much purpose till he can speak, or make any real use of information till he can frame his thoughts into sentences. The power of expression is absurdly neglected throughout our schools. We proceed to teach children to read while they are still, to all intents and purposes, dumb, which is like forcing food on a sick man who can't digest.

But though speech is the most important of the nursery arts, it is not the only one. Much can be done to assist that long, unwearied, ingenious campaign which any healthy child will devise and carry on for himself, and which has for its unconscious aim the control of his own nerves and muscles.

### Limit of the Nursery Period.

It is impossible to make hard and fast rules as to the dividing points in a child's life. One child will be more developed at four than another at six, and it is difficult to decide at what age the sort of training sketched above should give place to ordinary school methods. There is much to be said, however, for fixing the break at six or seven rather than at five; and in this we may, perhaps, be guided by the practice in well-to-do households, where children migrate from nursery to schoolroom at about that age. For it is well to bear in mind that what we are pleading for is, after all, a peculiarly English institution. Those very advantages, unfortunately, on which the English middle class specially pride them-



selves, they are the least eager to share with their poorer neighbors. We boast of the playing fields of Eton, and of the admirable training in self-control and esprit de corps to be gained in them, and leave our elementary schools with a wretched square of asphalt, where nothing can occur but a disorderly scramble. We are proud of our English cleanliness and our cult of the daily morning bath, and yet we are content to allow our school children to remain the most filthy and ragged in Europe. So though England is the home of the nursery (the word being untranslatable), and the wealthy mother in Russia or Italy makes a point of securing an English nurse for her children, yet a nursery for the children of labor is a notion of foreign growth, and we must turn to France, to Belgium, and to Hungary to see anything like an adequate realization of it.

In all these countries the school age is six, and provision is made for children below it in two separate institutions, the crèche and the école maternelle or école gardienne, as it is called in Belgium.

The following account of these institutions is compiled from reports published by the Board of Education :—

### The Crèche in England and France.\*

In Paris the first crèche was opened in 1844 by private enterprise and supported by charity. Mothers paid twopence a day per child, emphasis being laid on the intention of helping those who were obliged to earn their living, rather than merely of feeding and sheltering the children of the indigent. In 1847 the Society of Crèches was inaugurated at the Hotel de Ville, and in 1869 it was recognized as an institution of public utility. In 1904 Paris, with a population of two and three-quarter millions, had sixty-six crèches accommodating two thousand four hundred and ninety-one children under three years old. It is instructive to compare these figures with those for London, where, with a population of four and a half millions in 1904, there were fifty-five crèches, accommodating one thousand six hundred and ninety-three children under three. "In other words, London had crèche accommodation for one child in every two thousand five hundred, Paris had crèche accommodation for one child in every thousand. The crèches in London are private, with no aid from State or municipality, while those in Paris have received both since 1862. London has no registration or system of State inspection. Paris has both, the crèches being inspected daily by doctors. Lastly, the London crèches are distributed quite irregularly, some of the poorest boroughs having none at all, while Paris crèches are evenly distributed among twenty arrondissements. Even more startling are the differences outside the capitals. France, not including Paris or the Department of the Seine, has three hundred and twenty-two crèches. England, not including London, or greater London, has nineteen."†

\* Report of Miss M. B. Synge, published by the Board of Education in July, 1908, together with the Report of the Consultative Committee previously quoted.

† The French statistics are taken from the Report of the Chief Officer of Public Control.

English crèches, or day nurseries, are, for the most part, organized by committees of ladies. They are mostly parochial and supported entirely by voluntary contributions. Few of them are in houses built for the purpose: most are in adapted premises.\* Any private person may open a crèche in England without leave from any public body; crèches are unregistered and under no inspection.

The crèche in France, though not State supported, is generously subsidized. In the year 1904 Paris crèches received from the Minister of the Interior £1,468, from the Ville de Paris £67,045, and from the Conseil General des Départements £1,376.

No crèche may be opened in Paris without leave from the prefect of the department. In order to receive a grant it must be subject to inspection, conform to certain rules, and be administered by a council presided over by the mayor of the locality.

At the head of every crèche is a directress. Under her there is a berceuse to every six children and a gardienne to every twelve children under the age of one and a half years. In a large crèche there are also a cook and a laundry maid.

Each crèche has twenty or thirty "dames patronesses" or managers under a lady president. They are appointed by the mayor. Each lady has certain days or weeks in the year allotted to her and is definitely responsible for certain duties of management.

Children are admitted at the age of fifteen days and kept till the age of three. The mother is requested to bring the child clean. While she is feeding it herself she must come regularly to the crèche at least twice a day. She must pay her contribution, twopence for one child, threepence for two, every morning, and she must show that she is obliged to go to work or is incapable of attending to the child at home.

Illegitimate children are admitted after due investigation.

The cost per day per child at the Paris crèches averages about one shilling, so that the mother's payment covers only one-sixth of it.

The children are supplied with clothes. These are changed when they arrive and again at night.

There are usually seven or eight doctors attached to a crèche, one of whom visits it every day. In many cases these doctors, who give their services entirely free, form a committee to decide all questions connected with hygiene.

To some crèches is attached a "School for Mothers," to which infants not in the crèche are brought for weekly inspection, and tables are kept of the weight and progress of each child.†

The forty-five crèches in Paris receiving municipal grants are subject to inspection. In addition to the ordinary inspectors, a lady inspector of crèches has recently been appointed.

\* A movement towards a better condition of things has been recently made by the National Society of Day Nurseries, founded in 1906 with the object of assisting local committees and affiliating existing nurseries.

† For further details consult "The Nursling" (see Bibliography, page 19), Lecture X., and translator's preface.



All the Paris crèches can be visited by anyone who is interested in them without introduction.

### The Crèche in other Countries.

The chief characteristic of the Belgian crèche is that it is nearly always run in connection with an école gardienne or nursery school, which admits children up to the age of six.

The crèche system is not by any means so widely developed in Belgium as in France (outside the capital the only town at all adequately provided being Liège, which has six crèches), but in the poorer suburbs of Brussels there are one or two crèches admirably installed and managed which far surpass anything of the kind in England.

Crèches or Krippen exist in most German and Swiss towns,\* and are usually separate from the kindergartens or nursery schools. The krippe admits children from six weeks to three years, and is intended only for the children of mothers who are out at work. It is open from 5.30 or 6 a.m. till the factories close in the evening, or sometimes till 8 p.m. The charge is usually about twopence a day; sometimes, to nursing mothers only, one penny a day. Illegitimate children are not excluded. Krippen are, as a rule, in the charge of Sisters (Catholic or Protestant), with voluntary helpers, who have nearly always been trained in the management of infants. The krippen are not municipally organized or supervised, but they receive in many towns municipal grants varying a good deal in amount. The cost varies from sixpence to tenpence a head.

### Nursery Schools.

Between the crèche and the elementary school there is obvious need for a half-way house. This is already supplied, after a fashion, in some parts of the country by the baby class in the infant school, but nowhere in England is it sufficiently recognized that what is needed is not a school at all in the ordinary sense. Children under five (or, as I should prefer to say, under six or seven) should receive little or no definite instruction. They need plenty of freedom for spontaneous activity among wholesome surroundings under the guidance and supervision of attendants who have been trained in matters relating to health, to conduct, and to the growth of intelligence. Large rooms, well lighted, well aired, well warmed, and a pleasant open air playground where, if possible, plants and animals can be watched and tended, not too much interference, but the constant care of kind and watchful nurses; these are the requisites for a nursery school. In England, although a kindergarten here and there comes near to this ideal, no attempt has been made to supply the need for them all over the country. For anything of the kind on a national scale we must turn to France, Belgium, or Hungary.

\* See Report by Miss May published with that of Consultative Committee.

## THE ECOLE MATERNELLE (FRANCE).

Yet it is consoling to our national vanity when we look up the history of the French écoles maternelles, from which we have now so much to learn, to find that in their origin they owe a good deal to an Englishman and a Socialist.

For their first germ, indeed, we must go to Switzerland and to the year 1771, when Pastor Oberlin started his first école à tricoter in the Vosges. Mme. Pastoret transplanted the idea to Paris in 1801 when she opened a salle d'hospitalité, where the children of working mothers could be taken in and cared for; but it was not till 1826 that anything approaching the modern maternal school was opened, and by that time Mme. Pastoret had learned all she could about the infant schools which had been started by the English cotton manufacturer, Robert Owen, in 1812.

It was in the blackest hour of English child slavery that these schools appeared like a dawn of hope, an illusory dawn unfortunately. Robert Owen, roused by the pitiable condition of the poor children collected together from public charities and poor houses in order to work in the cotton mills, put a stop in his own mills to the practice of employing them from the age of six, and persuaded the parents to send them to school at two and keep them there till ten. Of these eight years the earlier were, in his opinion, even more important than the later. His reasons for thinking so are to be gathered from the very interesting evidence which he gave in 1816 before the Select Committee of the House of Commons to Enquire into the Education of the Lower Orders in the Metropolis. In describing the treatment of the infants, he says:—

They were perpetually superintended, to prevent their acquiring bad habits, to give them good ones, and to form their dispositions to mutual kindness and a sincere desire to contribute all in their power to benefit each other. . . . In fine weather the children are much out of doors that they may have the benefit of sufficient exercise in the open air. . . . The children were not to be annoyed with books, but were to be taught the uses and nature or qualities of the common things around them by familiar conversation, when the children's curiosity was excited so as to induce them to ask questions. . . . All rewards and punishments whatever, except such as nature herself has provided . . . are sedulously excluded. . . . A child who acts improperly is considered an object not of blame, but of pity. . . . No unnecessary restraint is imposed on the children. . . . The dress worn by both boys and girls is composed of strong white cotton cloth of the best quality that can be procured. It is formed in the shape of the Roman tunic, and reaches in the boys' dresses to the knees and in the girls' to the ankle. These dresses are changed three times a week that they may be kept perfectly clean and neat. The parents of the older children pay threepence a month. Nothing is paid for the infant classes. . . . The infants, besides being instructed by sensible signs—the things themselves or models or paintings—and by familiar conversation, were from two years and upwards daily taught dancing and singing.\*

Owen had some difficulty in finding teachers who would adopt his views and could carry them out.

I had therefore [he says] to seek among the population for two persons who had a great love for, and unlimited patience with, infants and who were thoroughly tractable and willing unreservedly to follow my instructions. The best to my mind in

\* "An Outline of the System of Education in New Lanark," published, 1824, by Robert Dale Owen (Robert Owen's son); see "Life of Robert Owen," by F. Podmore (London: 1906).



these respects that I could find in the population of the village was a poor simple hearted weaver, named James Buchanan, who had been previously trained by his wife to perfect submission to her will, and who could gain but a scanty living by his now oppressed trade of weaving common plain cotton goods by hand. But he *loved* children strongly by nature, and his patience with them was inexhaustible.

This man was afterwards sent to London to superintend the first English infant school, which was opened in Westminster under the patronage of James Mill and other distinguished men. Owen gives an amusing account of his disappointment on the occasion of a surprise visit to this school :—

On entering the school, the first object that I saw was Mrs. Buchanan, whom I had never seen in the New Lanark school, brandishing a whip and terrifying the children with it. Buchanan I saw in another part of the room without authority or influence, and as much subject to his wife as the children.

Owen was full of ideas, and none of them were more original and valuable than those as to the education of infants ; but, as one may judge from the above extract, he does not seem to have had the knack of gathering round him the people who could satisfactorily carry out those ideas and render permanent the institutions which sprang from his warm heart and fertile brain. But England was deep in the trough of *laissez faire*, and one need not wonder that here Owen's preaching fell on deaf ears and produced no permanent results.

France, quickened by a stirring of revolt and intellectual awakening, offered more hopeful soil ; and there, as we have seen, the seed germinated when the first *salle d'asile* (or *salle d'essai*, as it was at first called) was opened in the Rue du Bac in 1826. Seven years later the *salles d'asiles* received their first recognition by the State, and in 1837 a commission was appointed to draw up rules for their conduct. These rules were revised from time to time, and a special training school for infant teachers was opened ; and at last, in 1881, the old name of *salles d'asiles* was changed to *écoles maternelles*, and the rules as to admission and the program were settled and codified.

At the head of every *école maternelle* is a directress, a certificated teacher, whose salary, paid in part by the State, in part by the commune, begins at one hundred and sixty-eight pounds a year, and rises gradually to a maximum of two hundred and eight pounds, with a right to a pension at the end of twenty-five years. She is helped by a number of assistants (one for every forty children), whose salaries begin at eighty-eight pounds, and rise to one hundred and twenty-eight pounds. There are, in addition, a number of nurses or servants chosen by the directrice and paid by the commune, whose wages vary from forty pounds to fifty pounds.

The directress has various registers to keep, which must be at the disposal of the inspectors.

On the arrival of the children in the morning, she must ascertain by personal inspection that each one is in good health and clean. She also inspects their baskets, and sees that each child has brought a pocket handkerchief. She receives the pence and keeps a list of those who are fed free of charge, and she supervizes the school canteen.

The assistants must be over seventeen and certificated. Each has a separate class, and a great deal depends on the ingenuity and child love of the teacher. They help with the midday meal if required. The school hours being very long, they take it in turns to stay overtime.

The nurses, or *femmes de service*, are a most important addition to the staff. There is one, at least, in every school; two, if the numbers justify it. Their duties are very various. They sweep out the school every day, and open it at eight in winter and seven in summer for any children whose mothers go early to work, taking charge of the children till the directress and assistants arrive at nine o'clock. The *femme de service* superintends the children at the water closets every morning and again at one o'clock. This, from a hygienic point of view, is most important and is much neglected in English infant schools. She also washes the children's hands and faces twice a day and, in some schools, gives them a weekly bath and helps to wait on them at the school dinner. As in the case of the *crèche*, the general superintendence of the school is in the hands of a committee of ladies presided over by the mayor. Members of this committee visit the homes of the children.

The *école maternelle* is optional and free. Children between the ages of two and six are admitted on producing a note of admission from the mayor of the commune. Mothers are specially asked to bring the children clean and to pack in their school bucket a spoon, a dinner napkin, some bread and wholesome drink.

The schools are entirely paid for out of public funds, the cost being divided between the State, the department, and the commune.

The "*Caisses des Ecoles*" is a benevolent society subsidized and controlled by the State. It originated in 1849 and has grown into an organization of great importance. It covers much the same ground as our newly established Care Committees, its object being to provide clothing, boots, and food to necessitous children. It also provides for country holidays and vacation schools.

About a third of the children in the *écoles maternelles* pay for their food and the rest have it free. The list of the latter is kept by the mayor. The food consists chiefly of milk, vegetable purées and other soups, macaroni, semolina, and tapioca, with very little or no meat.

Many of the large towns in France are spending great sums in feeding the children in the *écoles maternelles*. Marseilles has made all the feeding in them free. St. Etienne charges three halfpence, for which wine is given.

The *écoles maternelles*, like the other French schools, are inspected at least twice a month by the medical inspector; but besides these there is a large staff of special lady inspectors.

With regard to medical inspection of Paris schools, it must be remembered that in every district there is, under the *caisse des écoles*, a free dispensary for children subsidized by the municipality. Here children from the schools can have baths, hair cut and washed,



medical advice with regard to teeth, eyes, ears, etc.; while a free distribution of cod liver oil is made to necessitous children in the winter.

It is difficult to give any idea of the school program in a few words. It includes games, manual work, such as building with bricks or cards and making artificial flowers, the first principles of moral education, knowledge of everyday things, drawing, and lessons on language. Reading is taught to children over five, but not much insisted on. The little talks on familiar subjects are, perhaps, what strike one most. Take this, for instance: "The house, the kitchen. Let the child describe it. What can we see? Kitchen fire, table, etc. The use of each object. What does mother do? Each child? Cat? Children should help their parents without complaining." Or this: "The pocket handkerchief. What is it? What is its use? Blowing your nose, spitting. Each must have a handkerchief. How to use it. Unfold, refold."

Simple, familiar topics, such as these, afford the best opportunities for inducing children to talk; and nothing is more important in dealing with the little ones from neglected homes.

### The Ecole Maternelle in Other Countries.

France does not stand alone with regard to nursery schools. In Belgium an *école gardienne*, as it is called, is attached to every crèche, and is managed on much the same lines as the *écoles maternelles*.

Germany, Switzerland, Portugal and Hungary all have their maternal schools or kindergartens.

In Hungary\* they are excellent. Early in the nineteenth century, a Countess of Brunswick, having been much impressed by the infant schools of Owen's follower, Wilderspin, in England, came back to Hungary, and urged the claims of infant education just at the moment when reform was rife there.

A normal school for training infant teachers was founded so early as 1837, and in 1875 kindergartens were recognized by the State as a definite form of public instruction.

By an Act of Parliament, passed in 1891, attendance at a kindergarten is compulsory for all children between the third and sixth years. These schools were dominated at first by the German idea, but by 1899, when Miss Catherine Dodd visited the country, the language, songs, and games used in them were markedly national in character, showing the influence of Hungarian life and history. One game, for instance, represented the shepherds taking care of their herds on the plains, and guarding them from the wolves which came down from the mountains; while another showed traces of the Hungarian struggles with the Turks. Weary soldiers march to fight the Turks. The village rouses into activity; the baker, the winepresser, the housewife, the tailor, and the shoemaker, all set to work to feed, clothe, and house the soldiers.

\* Report on Hungarian Education, Special Reports, Vol. 8, p. 498.



"I visited a village kindergarten this year [she writes]. The village lay among vineyards in a celebrated wine district on the Danube. In front of the building was a large canvas tent covering a great patch of sand, and here, sheltered from the sun, were fifty bare legged mites playing. They played games which were characteristic of the district. There was a wind game, and the children imitated the wind which blew the boats along the Danube. There was a game of making wine casks. Groups of children formed the cask, and the other children walked round, hammering in imaginary nails; while other children cut down imaginary trees to make the casks. There were one hundred and fifty children in this kindergarten. They were all in charge of one qualified teacher and her little maid servant. Everybody admitted that the staff was small, but they urged that it was a poor district. The town kindergartens are well staffed and fitted up with all necessary apparatus.

"I found a class of five year old children, sitting on benches out of doors under the acacia trees, building with Gift III. They smiled at us and cried out, 'Tzzen hozta' ('God has brought you'); and they showed the bridges to cross the Danube, the wells to get water on the plains, the mills to grind corn, which they had built.

"All kindergarten teachers play the violin. In the games and songs the teacher is leader. She marches first, playing her violin, and the children follow, singing. . . . I spent a day in a kindergarten training school during the examinations. In the garden we found some twenty girls, with their violins, practising the national songs of Hungary. They marched round the garden, singing and playing in chorus, until they were called in to meet the examiner.

"All kindergartens in Hungary must have open playing places shaded with trees. Children under three may be admitted, but, as the regulation quaintly states, not in swaddling clothes."

Though Hungary is the only country where the attendance of children under five is compulsory, yet we have seen that in all, except England there is some recognition of State responsibility with regard to children below school age; and it is clear that something must be done in this direction before long. It is, therefore, most important that the question should be thoroughly ventilated.

The proposal made in the Minority Poor Law Report that the entire supervision of maternity and infancy, and the administration of whatever public provision is made for these services should be in the hands of the local health authority has, of course, a very important bearing on it. This proposal would, if fully carried out, remove entirely from the domain of the education authority any public day nurseries or nursery schools which may be decided on. The common sense view seems to be that throughout the life of the child its interests should be guarded both by the education authority and the health authority; but that the province of the latter, which would at first cover the whole field, would become gradually more restricted. At the stage when health considerations are predominant, the local health authority must undertake the administration, making use of the teachers of the education authority as required; at the stage when educational considerations are predominant, the administration must be in the hands of the education authority, making use of the doctors of the health authority as required. In the crèche there should be, as in France, daily medical inspection, and the management should be chiefly in the hands of doctors; but even here questions for the educational expert will arise with reference to the qualification of the staff and the training of the older infants. In the nursery school, the medical inspection required will be almost as frequent, but the educational point of view will need to be rather more adequately represented in the committee of management.



How this joint action of the local health authority and the local education authority can best be attained, at all stages of the child's life, is a question of administration with which we need not meddle here,\* but it seems desirable that there should be no sudden break at any age. The establishment of public crèches, under the direct control of the local health authority, would be an invaluable supplement to the system of combining the work of health visitors, either paid or unpaid, with that of the medical officer of health and his staff. This system, already successfully established in many parts of London, aims at keeping under observation every infant from the time of its birth by means of friendly visits of advice. As things are at present, a health visitor is often harrowed by the hopeless conditions into which a baby is born, and feels that her advice is little better than a mockery. Mothers are often quite unable, either from poor health or from the dire necessity of bread winning, to nurse their babies or attend to their constant needs; but there are worse cases still where, from sheer lack of any alternative, a new born infant must be left to the tender mercies of a drunken or dissolute mother, whose one precaution is to insure its life.

In cases of this kind, a public crèche, to which the medical officer of health had power to order the removal of any neglected infant, would be a great resource. Such enforced removal would never happen, of course, in the case of any decent home or of any mother who was nursing her child; but as an alternative for the casual minder, the feeble grandmother, or the ten year old sister, it would be invaluable.

The question of payment would have to be settled as in the case of school feeding, after inquiry into the family resources, and need not in any way interfere with the decision of the medical officer. The cases that would come before him may be classified as:—

### 1. Temporary.

Homes even of the best type are liable to be disorganized from time to time by the disablement of the mother or father, or by some other unavoidable misfortune; and the temporary removal of young children to a safe refuge affords invaluable help towards tiding over such a period, while it saves them from the evil consequences of neglect.

### 2. Wage Earning Mothers.

During the first three or four months of an infant's life, the mother might well be restrained by law from going out to work, home aliment being provided in necessitous cases; but as the child grows older, some mothers will certainly desire to return to their work, and provided that they are not in receipt of public assistance for the children, conditional on their devoting themselves to the care of the children, there seems no adequate reason why they should not do so.

\* Cf. Minority Poor Law Report (Official Edition), Note on p. 1224.

### 3. Homes that have been or ought to be Broken Up.

The widower or deserted husband has no choice at present but to pay a neighbor to look after his children, a service often most unsatisfactorily performed; but there are cases even more piteous. Bad health, bad habits, or merely unemployment on the part of the father, slatternly incompetence, or something worse, on the part of the mother, bring about a gradual and hopeless deterioration of the household which renders it unfit for little children to live in. Under such circumstances, it is essential that the medical authority should have power to order their removal to a public nursery, where they will be entirely under the parental control of the State.\*

#### Reforms to Work for.

1. That the age for compulsory school attendance be raised to six, with a corresponding addition at the other end, making the compulsory period from six to at least fifteen or even older.
2. That the medical officer have power to enforce the attendance at a suitable nursery school of any child under six who is not suitably cared for at home.
3. That every local authority be required to provide adequately for children from three to six in free nursery schools, with sleeping accommodation and ample open air and covered playgrounds, and no teaching of the three R's.
4. That at such schools suitable meals be provided at the expense of the rates, table manners being an integral part of the curriculum.
5. That every local authority be also required to provide boarding schools in the country to serve as convalescent and holiday homes for the children attending nursery schools who are found by the medical officer to need country air, and also for the reception of children removed from their parents by the order of the medical authority.
6. That sufficient accommodation be provided in every district for infants under three in small day nurseries under the control of the local authority, such nurseries to be entirely free.
7. That the feeding of the children at these day nurseries be under direct medical supervision, mothers being encouraged to attend regularly for the purpose of suckling their infants.
8. That in connection with every such nursery there shall be a "school for mothers," or "consultation for nurslings," where babies may be brought by their mothers for free medical inspection and advice, and where pure and suitable milk will be provided free or at cost price.

\* Minority Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, p. 825, par. 2.



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