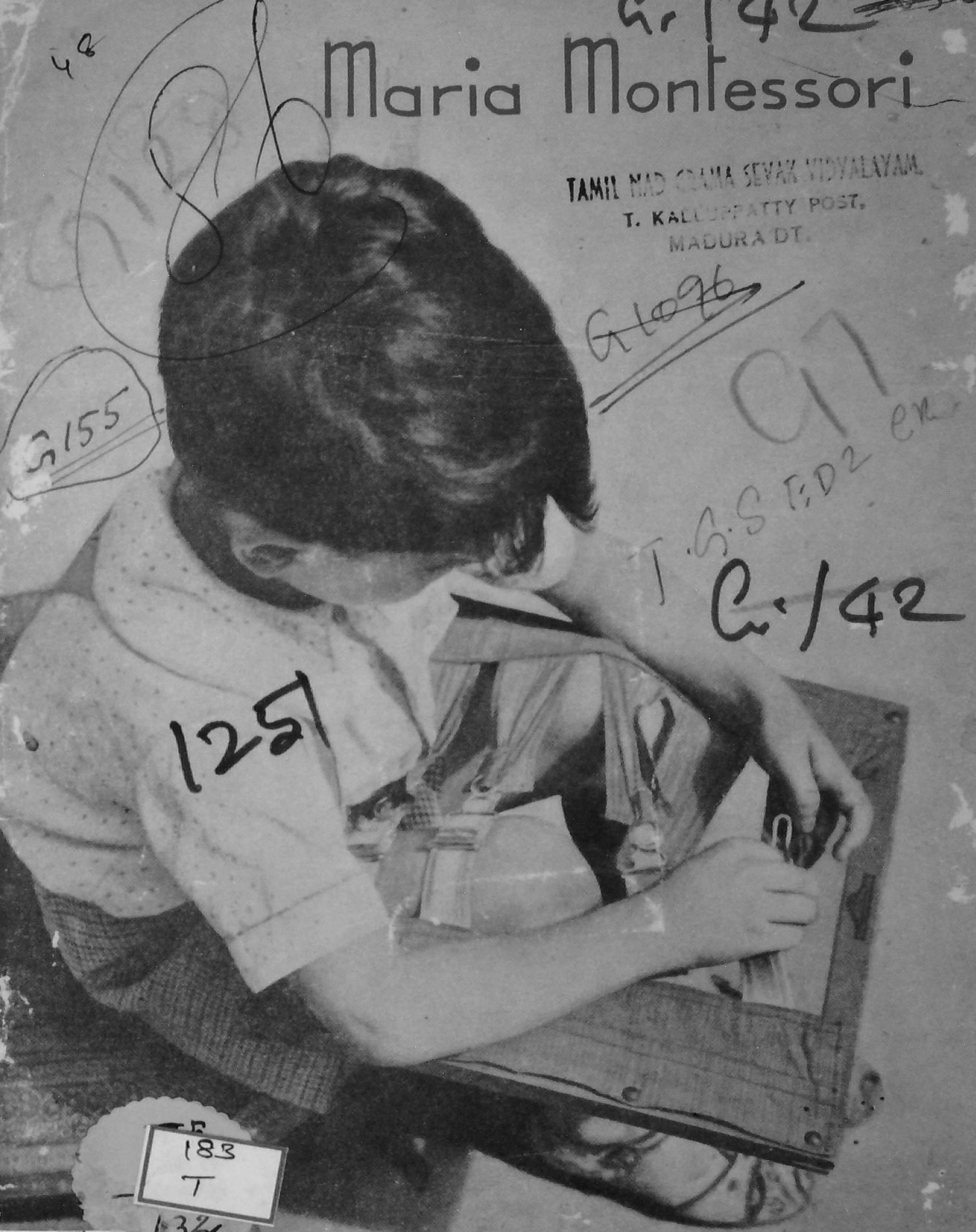
Maria Montessori



CHILD TRAINING

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MARIA MONTESSORI

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

" It is the mothers and fathers who must be illuminated as to the greatness of their little ones ; we are going to have Montessori Schools for children, but before we can tackle children we must have the understanding and the collaboration of the parents. " In these words the Minister of Education at Barcelona persuaded Dr. Montessori to publish her ideas on Child Training and Education for the benefit of the public. This was in 1936 and Dr. Montessori undertook a series of broadcasts from Barcelona directed to mothers and fathers. Her broadcasts made a great impression on the minds and in the hearts of the Catalan people. Later developed by Dr. Montessori in a larger book, *The Secret of Childhood* they have brought light to mothers and happiness and understanding to children of the English, Spanish, Italian, French, Swedish, Portuguese and Finnish speaking countries. Today through AIR, Dr. Montessori for the second time in her life has come personally to speak her words, this time for the child of India ; for hers is the VOICE THAT SPEAKS FOR THE CHILD.

MARIO M. MONTESSORI

THE SOCIAL QUESTION OF THE CHILD

A SOCIAL movement in the interests of the child has now been afoot for quite a number of years. It has lacked organization. It has lacked leadership. It has bubbled up here and there like the ebullition of scattered centres of eruption in volcanic territories. Thus it is with all movements of importance. Now the deliberate aid of science has entered the field ; it was science that initiated the crusade, because hygiene was the first to enter the lists against child mortality. First of all we were shown by hygiene how the school overworked and victimized the child ; she revealed him as immolated upon the altar of labour, an unrecognized martyr, as undergoing a sort of life sentence in a cruel reformatory : the school—yes, life sentence ; for he suffered this servitude as long as childhood lasted. And when school days were over, he was no longer a child. Scholastic hygiene showed him as a joyless creature —with a contracted soul, listless of mind—a being warped, round-shouldered, narrow-chested, predisposed to tuberculosis.

And all this—not in consequence of the hard labour of a worker ; but just as a result of the hard sentence that lay so heavy on him as a child.

Lastly we came upon the scene about 40 years back and pointed him as the forgotten citizen. He had been consigned to neglect and oblivion by mankind not only by the very ones who loved him, who had given him life, and were preserving him in existence. The child—what is he but the disturber of busy adults, who are absorbed in urgent and ever more hurried activities ? What room is there for a child in modern city homes, where space is increasingly restricted, and families are herded in ? What space for him in streets, where vehicular traffic is ever denser, and whose sidewalks are blocked with crowds of bustling pedestrians ? Under pressure of work, when both parents are employed, how should they find time to devote to their children ? And if they are out of work, things are even worse, for the children are involved in penury together with their elders.

Where more favourable economic conditions prevail, the child of wealthy parents is banished to his nursery—entrusted to strangers who are paid to attend to him—and is not allowed to trespass into that part of the house exclusively reserved for the authors of his being. Where is he to take shelter ? Where will his spiritual needs be understood ? Where can he find scope for

his activity? He is expected to keep still and make no noise; he must not touch anything, for things about him are not his; they belong to grown-ups and he must keep his hands off them; to him, they are taboo. Where is there anything made for him, his very own? Nowhere! Only a few decades back, not even chairs for children were to be found. The fact gave rise to such famous sayings as "I held you on my knee, when you were a child" or "It was at your mother's knee that you learned that". A child who climbed up to the seats of his elders was reprimanded; if he sat on the floor, he was reproved, scolded for sitting on the stairs; so that it was only when grown-ups condescended to take him on their laps that children got any chance of sitting down at all.

This then is the position of the child living in grown-up surroundings. He is a disturber; one who seeks, without finding it, something of his own; who enters only to be driven out. It is the position of one with no civil rights, no territory, nothing!—the condition of one outlawed, to whom nobody owes respect. He may be insulted, buffeted, whipped by anybody, everybody considering that he has a natural right to use the child as he pleases—the natural rights of grown-ups.

By some mysterious psychic phenomenon it happens that the adult has omitted to prepare any environment for his own child; the organizer of society has been oblivious of his own offspring. The creator of law after law has neglected to do justice to his successor and has left his heir an outlaw. He has handed over the child, stripped of all his rights, to that tyrannous instinct which lurks in the heart of every adult. We are forced to admit that this is the case with the child.

Now has this forgotten creature suddenly emerged from oblivion and from age-long neglect dating perhaps from the beginnings of human history. He has become visible to society which ignored him. Suddenly hygiene rushed up, taking upon her to combat infant mortality.

Hygiene, hygiene of infancy, being now recognized as science and accepted as dealing with a matter of vital importance, has shown a new child-life ever since the century began.

Schools have been transformed; the schools of a few decades ago seem outdated by centuries. Concepts of education follow out the new trend of gentleness and forbearance both at home and in school in dealing with the children.

But not only do we see these consequences of scientific progress, but a new feeling has arisen here and there; so that very many reformers of our day are showing consideration for the child. When

cities are planned, public gardens for children are not forgotten ; when open spaces are reserved, playgrounds are laid out for children.

With the idea of class organization has come that of organizing the young, and this is seen in the principal organizations of childhood —boy-scouts, child republics and so on.

The child is no longer just part of the family group, the being whom Sunday saw walking out in holiday garb hand in hand with his papa, a creature so quiet and well behaved that he might not spoil his Sunday best. All this is changed. The child has gained importance and a standing, he has made his way into the social life of mankind.

We are confronted with an immense, a portentous problem in this social question of the child.

It is advisable that we should understand the full scope and trend of such a social movement ; it is enormously important for society, for civilization, for the whole of humanity.

All these scattered activities that have sprung up apart, and which have in themselves no constructive importance, are yet proofs of a real and universal urge, symptoms of a force that is sweeping us forward to great and universal social reform.

This reform is a vast one. New times are at hand ; a new era of civilization is dawning. We are now entering another age—an epoch in which we shall have to work for two humanities—that of adults and that of the child. The stage of civilization now beginning exacts from us the preparation of two social environments—two different worlds—the adult's and the child's.

The task before us is not merely the frigid, purely external linking-up of the social movements here enumerated ; it has nothing to do with co-ordinating the various public and private social providence societies interested in childhood. No. The matter lies within, and the social question of the child must go deep into our inmost lives, stirring our conscience and renewing our hearts. The child is the beginning of our very existence, the actual constructor of adult manhood.

The good and the evil that bear fruit in men have their origin in childhood ; the child is humanity to be ; he is also the thing of our making. Of all our mistakes it is he who bears the burden ; he is branded indelibly with our errors. We shall perish but our children will endure, bearing for ever the marks of what our deforming influence has wrecked upon their nature. This cycle is continuous ; it cannot be broken. He who touches the child touches at its most sensitive point, something rooted in the remotest past, something that reaches out into the farthest future. One who

touches a child touches the delicate vital spot where all decisions centre, from which all may be renewed.

The matter of the child is not unlike a tender sapling, attractive in its freshness of youth, just emerging from the soil. We must dig for it—dig ever deeper and deeper—only to find that its roots form a universal network branching in every direction.

And here is a symbol of a most impressive fact ; he who would fain bring this plant to light, roots and shoots and all, must needs dig and dig till the whole earth has been stirred to its foundation.

For these roots symbolize the subconscious in the history of the race. What has to be stirred up is that which has remained stationary in the human spirit, that clogging influence, which has rendered man callous and incapable of recognizing the soul of the child. The adult's startling blindness, his strange insensibility towards his own offspring, the fruits of his own life, have certainly roots that reach deep down into the life of the generations. The hidden sufferings of the child whom the adult consciously loves and unconsciously despises serve as a mirror in which we may view our own mistakes and find living criticism of our adult existence.

All this testifies to the universal conflict between the adult and the child which is still going on around us. By the social question of the child confronting us, we are being led deeper into the laws of man's formation ; we are being helped to develop within ourselves a new consciousness and to acquire fresh enlightenment regarding our social life.

THE NEW BORN BABE

A weak and tremulous voice
For the first time made itself heard on earth
The throat that never yet vibrated
Gave utterance. . . .

A man, they told me,
Lived once in deepest darkness ;
A man whose eyes had never seen
The faintest gleam of light,
Lying as it were at the bottom of an abyss.

A man, they told me,
Lived amid silence ;
No sound, no faintest murmur
Had ever reached his ears.

I heard them speak of him . . .
A man living immersed
In waters of strange warmth,
Who suddenly sprang forth
Into bleak bitterness of ice.

Sudden dilate
Lungs that had never tasted air ;
Oh, struggle to breathe ! Ah ! torment
for a Tantalus !
He gasped, he triumphed
And gave a cry . . .

This man had known repose ;
Who can conceive a rest so absolute ?
Repose : no need to eat ; for why make effort
When others feed for you ?

Relaxed in every fibre,
For other living tissues
Laboured to give the heat of which his life had need
Warding off poisons and bacilli ;
Since other tissues did the work for his,
He breathed not ; yet, favoured above all else that lives,
Oxygen was not lacking.

The heart alone, laborious,
Beat, ere he came to birth.
The heart alone pulsated
While he was yet was not ;
And for each beat of every other heart,
This heart gave two.

This heart was the heart of a man,
Now it is he who takes upon him to labour ;
He is wounded—by shafts of light and the piercing of sound ;
He is weary—to the last delicate fibres of his being ;
The cry he utters is : Why, why forsake me ?
Thus does man, the newly born, reflect for the first time
The Christ of the Cross
And the Christ of the Ascension.

It is not a natural environment that the child comes into at birth ; no, he finds himself in surroundings created by civilized

man in which we live: It is really a supernatural environment, a superstructure raised above at nature's expense, so that human life may be aided in every detail of existence and the work of adaptation be rendered easier for man.

But for him who was made the greatest of all efforts of adaptation—passing from one mode of living to another at birth—what aids have been prepared ?

Surely there should be suitable scientific assistance ready to receive the babe which has passed through that tremendous upheaval we call birth—a struggle and a painful conflict which nothing in life can be compared to ?

Those who defend themselves with the gratuitous assertion that the child does not feel, that he is unconscious of sufferings, have not allowed themselves to remember the care we lavish upon sick persons lying unconscious and in danger of death ; they ignore the fact that what calls for our respect at every other stage of human life, what evokes our feeling and elicits the attentive care of medical science, is not the consciousness which the patient has of needing help ; it is the help itself.

In the history of civilization there is a space unfilled—a blank page leaving the earliest period of life undealt with. Nothing has been inscribed here, because no one has really studied the earliest needs of the newly-born. Yet not a day passes without our becoming increasingly convinced of a striking truth constantly proved by experience ; and it is this—that all the existence following is influenced by hardships undergone in infancy and even before birth. The fact is known to us all today ; it is in the life of the embryo and of the infant that all is fatally decided about the future health of the adult and of the race. Why then do we pay so little attention to birth—the most arduous crisis that life can face ?

Up to the very moment of birth the child's growth proceeds in a shelter where shocks are unknown, and where a mild unchanging temperature prevails; that his repose may be absolute, he floats in a liquid element which yields but never changes. No faintest gleam of light ever penetrates here, nor sound, however slight. Then from this liquid retreat, he is thrust into the outer air in the abruptest way ; without any of the stages involved in the metamorphoses, for instance, of a tadpole. The sensitive orbs never smitten by light, and the hearing that only silence caressed, suddenly find themselves in the crude world of man. The body that knew no bumps or jolts is brought into harshest contact with solid outer things. Hands lacking a soul, the fingers of the adult, take hold of him—a hold that ignores the delicacy of a thing he should revere.

Not alone these two utterly opposed conditions of life are the cause of anguish to the child at birth, but the fact that one cradled in repose has had to labour in order to get born ; as a thing caught between pestle and mortar in a pressure that would distort his very bones, he has had to get free by his own exertion and he reaches us utterly weary with the inconceivable effort following upon that unimaginable repose. He arrives as a wounded pilgrim coming from afar, weary and worn out.

And in his dire need what reception does he meet with ? What aid ? What succour ?

Everyone is busy looking after the mother.

The medical man just runs his eye over him to see if he is hale and likely to live ; as if he would say " all right, you are alive ; now look after yourself ". The relatives offer him the welcome of their own egoism ; moved and touched, looking upon him with hearts full of joy they can hardly express, glorying in Nature's gift to them of such a fine child—a son of their own.

All those who were waiting for him to be born are eager to enjoy the pleasure of admiring and of touching him. The father tries to get his eyes open so as to see what colour they are ; impatiently scrutinizing, joyfully regarding the tint, imagining the day when that glance will fall upon him and recognize him as the father.

But one thing is seen by no one in the babe new born, the sufferings of a man, the vision of Christ the pure, Christ misunderstood.

We are accustomed to saying that all this is natural, that nature foresees and saves, and that after all everyone has to go through the same ordeal. But what we say to the child we might even more justly say to the man : "You are alive and well ; look to yourself, then ; by nature you are able to fend for yourself nude and defenceless in the woods". And this being so why has man then made so many shelters for himself ? Why does he wear clothes and have warmed houses ?

Death itself is a natural thing ; all that lives must naturally undergo it. Why then, one might ask, should we seek to alleviate and reduce the dolorous symptom of the dying by all the means at our disposal, since we know death cannot be mastered and every man must die ?

For all—save the new born babe—civilization has some comfort ; for him silence—and a darkening mien.

When this word is uttered, the vision is evoked of a babe new born, viewed as a spirit which in order to live its life upon earth took upon it the garb of flesh.

Science, for her part, regards the newly born as a thing sprung to life out of nothingness. It is incarnate, but from her point of view there is no question of incarnation ; there is merely something developed into tissues and organs to form together a living whole. Mystery again ! for how did this complex whole emerge from nothingness ?

Such, however, are considerations which do not concern us here. Rather we are desirous of penetrating a little into realities, of diving a little deeper below the surface than has hitherto been done.

We start with this strange arresting figure of the new born babe. Inert at birth and for long after, he is unable to stand erect ; and he depends entirely upon assistance, just as the sick and the paralysed do ; he is incapable of speech, has no language but a cry, and that a dolorous one ; we come to him as if summoned by an appeal for urgent help in need. Before this little baby can rise and walk much time must pass—months, a year and more ; then it will no longer be inert as one infirm ; it will have become the body of the man child. Still more time must elapse, months and years, before his voice will be capable of human speech.

The word ' incarnation ' is used by us, in order to refer to the psychic and physiological facts of growth. Incarnation : the word expresses the mysterious emergence of an energy which will animate the listless frame, confer upon limbs of flesh, upon organs of speech, the power for acting as the will dictates. It is in this way that man is made incarnate.

It is a striking fact that the human child should be born, and should so long remain in this state of feeble helplessness, whereas the young of other mammals are able to stand, walk, find their parent for themselves at birth or not long after. Other creatures do employ from the first the utterance of their kind though may be something plaintive and appealing in their use of it ; the young kitten actually mews, lambs bleat as best they can ; and the foal really neighs—piteous voices that hardly break the silence ; new born animals do not wake the echoes with their cries and laments. In their case, then, the stage of preparation for living is soon over ; it is easily passed through. But in man the process is slow ; it takes time. The inner work must be no copy of any fixed type : such work must aim at active creation of a new

type, something no one can foresee, an enigma whose solution can only be guessed at. Long does the work go on in secret.

It is the work that forms the human personality which constitutes the secret process of incarnation. The inert being we have alluded to is to us an enigma, in that of him we know nothing except that he is capable of all. But we cannot tell what the infant before us will be or do.

In this respect we are all born equal: musicians, sublime singers, those to whom we owe all the masterpieces of the fine arts, dancers, swordsmen, sportsmen; and not only those but saints too, and tyrants, heroes and criminals. All are alike in this: each has within him an enigma whose meaning will only be deciphered as he works out his development through activity in the outer world.

A mistaken conclusion has been reached, that not merely are the infant's muscles passive, not only is his flesh inert, but that he himself is inert, a purely passive being, a creature devoid of psychic vitality. And face to face with the phenomena of expansion, slow indeed but magnificent in its progress, the adult has persuaded himself that he had been the means of infusing vitality into the inert by his care and his assistance. This, he thought, brought with it duties and responsibilities. He saw himself in a false light as the plasmic creator of the child's being, the actual constructor of his psychic existence. The power he attributed to himself was indeed almost divine; he ended by seeing himself as godlike with regard to the child; as Genesis has it, he said, "I will create man in my own image and likeness".

Pride! That was man's first sin—it was man's putting himself in the place of God that brought about all the misery of his descendants. Now if the key to his own personal enigma is within the guidance required for his development, the attempts he makes at self-realization are of a potential nature and hence extremely sensitive, so that any untimely interference with them on the part of the adult, strong-willed and carried away by a false conception of his own powers, may be the cause of the marring of the psychic plan, the deviation of the hidden forces that are developing within the child. The adult may actually succeed in blotting out, from the very beginnings of life, what was the divinely inspired plan for it to follow. Where this is done, the effects are deformity of incarnation handed on from generation to generation. Among all practical problems concerning mankind, is this not the greatest of all and the most fundamental?

A child incarnating is a spiritual embryo; as such, it needs to draw upon its environment or means of subsistence. Just as the physical embryo requires a special environment within the body

of the parent, so does the spiritual embryo require to be protected by an environment corresponding to its vital needs, and by surroundings made genial by love, enriched by nourishment, not bristling with obstacles.

The adult, when he becomes really aware of all this, must perforce take up a changed attitude towards the child. We are brusquely awakened to a realization of new responsibilities by this vision of the child as a spiritual embryo progressively incarnating. That delicious little body on which we dote, and upon which we lavish a purely physical tenderness of care, making of it a kind of plaything—what a new aspect it now assumes ! It inspires us with feelings of reverence. *Multa debetur puero reventia.*

Hidden and secret is the labour of incarnation. It constitutes a whole drama, unrecognized, unregistered—a blank page hitherto in the book of human history.

SENSITIVE PERIODS

The recent discovery in biology of what are known as sensitive periods—periods closely connected with the phenomenon of development—has for us a very special interest.

What does development depend on and how does a living creature grow ? To speak of development is to mention a fact externally recognized, but only very recently and quite insufficiently investigated as to its inner mechanism. In this work of investigation, modern times have made two contributions. These are : the study of glands and internal secretions affecting physical growth, a matter that immediately evoked wide interest on account of the influence it had upon the care of children ; and the study of sensitive periods, which opened up new prospects of comprehending psychic growth. It was De Vries, the Dutch scientist, who discovered sensitive periods in the life of animals but that such periods existed in the growth of children, we were the first to discern ; and we turned our discovery to practical use in education.

The point of the matter is that, in the early stages of their existence, beings in process of evolution become possessed of special sensibilities. These sensibilities are only transitory and they are confined to the acquiring of well-defined characteristics, and disappear when these have been reached. By means of an impulse, of a temporary opportunity, each characteristic is fixed and made stable. Growth is therefore, it is clear, no vague event, no inherited destiny inherent in living creatures ; growth is active work, carried out in its minutest details in obedience to periodic transitory instincts,

and is directed by those instincts inasmuch as it is they which give the vital urge towards specified activities. There are certain marked differences between child activities and those of an adult.

Sensitive periods were first recognized by De Vries in the life of insects; the fact was obvious in their case, since insects undergo metamorphoses which lend themselves to observation in experimental laboratories.

Let us take the example given by De Vries—a lowly creature, the poor grub or a common species of butterfly. Now we are aware that caterpillars grow very fast, are voracious feeders and therefore very destructive of the plants they feed on. The caterpillar in question is not able, in his infancy, to browse upon the larger foliage of trees; he needs instead the tender leaves that are to be found at the extremities of their branches. But the instincts of his parent have led her to deposit her eggs in the crook where the branch grows out of the trunk; which is just the other end from the one he wants, his good butterfly mother having at heart the safe sheltering of her offspring. Who is going to tell the young caterpillar as soon as he comes out that the young leaves he is in need of are right away at the opposite end of his branch? The answer is, that he is endowed with extreme sensitiveness as regards the light, which attracts and draws him like a charm; so that he goes looping his way, with the gait peculiar to caterpillars, towards the brighter daylight and the tip of the branch, where his hunger is appeased by the young shoots. The strange thing is that no sooner has he passed through and outgrown this stage, no sooner is he capable of absorbing other nourishment, than the sensitiveness regarding light becomes a thing of the past. He is indifferent to light; his instinct turns a blind eye upon it, now that the stage at which it served him is over; henceforth he will seek out other paths, different surroundings and means of life. He is not blind, however —only indifferent.

By all this we may be guided towards a better understanding of an essential point closely concerning the child. We are shown the difference between a vital impulse that can perform marvels which are hard to credit and a state of blind, inept indifference. Such conditions cannot be created by anyone acting from without; no adult has the power to create them. On the other hand, a child who has been thwarted in one of its sensitive periods, prevented from behaving in accordance with its inner promptings, has lost and lost for ever that particular chance of natural expansion.

The marvellous achievements—as extraordinary as miracles—which the child attains to in the course of his psychic development are viewed by us without emotion, merely because we are accustomed

to them. But this creature coming from nowhere, how does he manage to find his way in our labyrinthine world ?

Who teaches him the difference between things ? By what miracle does he master all the subtleties of a language untaught—unaffected, joyously, unweariedly—whereas an adult who finds himself in new surroundings needs so many aids ? A grown-up person learning a foreign language must drudge and toil and never achieve the perfection possessed by the native who learned it in infancy. Those various conquests are made by the child in his various sensitive periods. We might compare the process to the kindling of a lighthouse from within or a state of electricity producing active phenomena. It is by the aid of such sensibility that he is able to get into marvellously vivid touch with things outside him ; no difficulties exist for his enthusiasm ; all is a thrill with life, and his capacities grow with every effort made.

One flame of passionate psychic endeavour sinks down and dies ; but another succeeds. Childhood passes constantly from triumph to triumph, living in that prolonged condition of vital thrill which is peculiar to childhood, which we recognize and call the happiness which only childhood knows. It is in the glow of this beautiful flame, ever burning but never burning out, that the spiritual creation of humanity is carried on. But when there is an end of sensitive periods, every conquest costs the intelligence and voluntary activity, an effort of the will, the labour of research ; and it is the torpor of indifference that makes the worker weary. We see the great, fundamental, essential difference between child psychology and the psychology of the adult.

The miraculous natural achievements of the child spring from a special inner fount of vitality. But let his activity during a sensitive period come up against an obstacle, he is not only shocked and distressed but permanently deformed by it ; he undergoes that spiritual martyrdom which is unrecognized as yet, but of which, though they are unaware of the fact, the majority of men bear the indelible traces.

Hitherto, this work of growth—that is, this active acquisition of characteristics—has proceeded without being noticed ; yet long experience has shown how much the child is distressed, how violently he reacts when he meets with obstacles to his vital activities. His reactions are called irrational by those who do not know the reason for them. When we find we cannot soothe them away, we talk of the whims and fads of children. Various phenomena of different nature are classed by us under the vague and general appellation of *naughtiness* : it includes all the reactions we see no apparent cause for, and which seem to us illogical, and which

we cannot cope with. Certain forms of naughtiness, we see, tend to get worse and worse, which goes to prove that there are underlying causes which continue to act and for which, it is clear, we have found no remedy. Now the existence of sensitive periods may help to explain many forms of what seems caprice on the part of the child. Many, but not all ; for the causes of inner conflict are various, often resulting from abnormal states aggravated by wrong treatment.

" Naughtiness " connected with inner struggle during a given sensitive period is transitory, as the period itself is, and leaves no trace in the character, unless indeed it causes an irreparable loss in the stability to be achieved in the psychic life. The whims and fads of each sensitive period are the outward expression of special needs unsatisfied ; they are symptoms revealing a dangerous condition—manifestations which, if they are understood and appeased, immediately subside ; agitation amounting even to illness at once gives way to calm. It is therefore absolutely essential that we should investigate the causes of all naughtiness on the part of children, of behaviour which we dub caprice merely because we find it inexplicable.

The facts here dwelt on may guide us to a better understanding of what occurs in the mysterious recesses of the child's soul. They may enable us to make ready for a future in which comprehension and peace may prevail in the relation between adult and child.

FURTHER EXAMINATION OF SENSITIVE PERIODS

Incarnation and sensitive periods—these give us, as it were, a glimpse of what happens within a soul in process of construction, into the functioning, so to say, of inner organs, busy working out the psychic growth of the child. We are shown that psychic development is not achieved haphazard, nor has it its origin in stimuli of the world without ; it is no chance or casual affair, but is guided throughout by temporary sensibilities presiding over the acquisition of real characteristics. Although it is with the aid of external surroundings that this proceeds, still it is not the environment which possesses constructive importance ; the environment merely furnishes what is necessary for existence. Something analogous happens in the case of the body, which takes to itself vital elements from the surroundings through nutrition and respiration.

It is inner sensibilities which act as a guide in selecting necessary things out of a multiform environment, and in choosing situations as favour development. How do they serve as guide by rendering sensitive to certain things, and indifferent to the rest ? In each period of sensibility, it is as if light shining out from him illuminated for him certain things leaving the rest in darkness ; the things it shows him constitute his universe. Not only is he filled with the intense desire to be in certain situations, to take to himself certain elements ; but there is in him at such a time a unique and special possibility of turning them to profit, or using them to grow by. It is during these sensitive periods that he enriches his psychic being, gets the bearings in the external environment, imparts animation of the profoundest and subtlest kinds to his instruments of motion. The child's sensibility to his environment furnishes the clue to those depths of mystery wherein the spiritual embryo performs its miracles of growth.

This marvellous creative activity of the child may be pictured as a succession of intense and keen emotions surging up one after another in the subconscious ; it is those emotional waves as they break against the environment which are the constructors of human consciousness. There is chaos at first ; distinction follows ; then comes the creation of activities. This we can see for ourselves if we picture to ourselves the process of learning to speak.

In this process, the sounds heard abroad in the environment sound at first to the child as a mere medley of elusive and chaotic noise. Then suddenly—high presto!—individual sounds pop out of this chaos ; they attract and fascinate the hearer. As yet they unite to form an incomprehensible though articulate language ; and the child-ear, incapable of thought as it is, still bends itself to the audition of a kind of music that fills his world. His very being thrills to it—not in all its fibres—but certain fine and hidden regions which till then only vibrated into the utterance of wild discordant cries ; these fibres now awake to a rhythmic movement ; they obey discipline and follow an order which changes their manner of vibration. All this prepares a new epoch for the cosmos of the spiritual embryo but the embryo lives intensely in the actual present, concentrating upon that ; it little guesses the glory that is to be ! Little by little the ear reflects on what it hears ; the tongue too begins to move under a new impulse whereas it had been sucking till now ; it is stirred by vibrations which send it round exploring throat, lips and cheeks, as if some irresistible inexplicable force were taking possession of it. For these new vibrations, purposeless as yet, are vital impulses, which afford him endless delight. The child's whole body testifies—by contracted limb,

clenched fists, erect head reaching out towards the speaker and eyes earnestly fixed upon the moving lips—to the noble joy new born within him. This is a sensitive period through which he is passing ; the divine command is breathing on what was inert and infusing into it a soul.

All this then takes place silently and secretly, as long as prevailing conditions in the environment correspond sufficiently to the inner needs of the child. Let us consider, for example, the facts of speech ; it is acquired in secret fashion.

The only thing giving external testimony to a sensitive period is in this case the child's smile, his obvious delight when we speak a few words directly to him, or the rapturous peace he is plunged into by the singing of his evening lullaby, with its repetition over and over of the same words, which sends him deliciously sailing out of the world of consciousness into the repose of dreams.

Here we have what we might call positive proofs of the creative sensibility. But there are other proofs of negative value which are much more apparent. When anything in the environment frustrates the inner functioning of the child the existence of a sensitive period may be testified to by violent reactions, uncontrollable distress with no apparent cause and classed as a temper, tantrums or naughtiness. The cause of this is the trouble and perturbation felt by an inner need at its tensest when it meets with opposition ; it is the appeal and act of defence of the thwarted soul.

There may be violent agitation owing to trifling causes in connection with the exceptional sensibility of the child. Such reactions have always been noted ; in fact, the fact of the child's " tantrums " appearing almost as soon as born has been interpreted as proving the innate perversity of the race.

These facts have been observed because it is the pathological facts which are by way of noticing first. No problems incitive to thought arise when things go on smoothly and quietly ; so that no one takes note of the imperceptible external signs accompanying the creative work of life. Facts remain hidden.

The statement is perhaps shocking, but not absurd, when we say that the adult has succeeded in knowing the child as he is in disease, not as he is in health. The healthy child-soul has been beyond his knowledge, like all the other undiscovered forces of the universe.

If so, it is that healthy childhood is among the hidden forces which have remained unknown to us ; if psychic existence is really surrounded in all its unfolding by functional upset and disease,

then oh ! what an enormous number of deformed natures must perforce derive from such beginnings !

We lack psychic hygiene for the child. We have nothing prepared in the environment to protect and save it. We ignore the very existence in him of hidden functions athrill in their work of creating spiritual harmony.

From slight causes, existing in close proximity to the beginnings of life, may spring the gravest deviations. Humanity then grows up and comes to maturity in a spiritual environment alien to man's nature ; he lives, as tradition has it, a life of banishment, excluded from a paradise lost.

ORDER

Among the various sensitive periods, one of the most important, one of the most mysterious, is that in which the little child is specially sensitive to order. Sensibility to order appears already during the first year of life ; and that period lasts well into the second year. So persuaded are we that children are naturally disorderly that this may seem a fantastic assertion. It is hard to form, any judgment at all about so subtle a condition especially about children who live in a restricted environment such as that of a town house full of things both large and small, which are moved and removed by the adult to ends of his own that do not concern the child. A sensitive period regarding order, assuming that such a thing exists, will assuredly be the period most certain to meet with frustration. Abnormal conditions will result ; indeed we often see the young child crying and refusing to be comforted without our knowing what can possibly be the reason.

I may quote something that really happened ; a little scene of family life in which the principal role was played by a baby six months old ; most of whose life was spent in the nursery. One day a lady visitor came into the nursery, and she laid the parasol she was carrying on the table. The child seemed suddenly upset, not by the lady, but by the parasol ; for she stared at it for a long time and burst out crying. Thinking that she wanted to have the parasol, the lady made haste to move it towards her, accompanying the action with all the smiles and coaxing ways that we use with children. But the child pushed the parasol away and went on crying, and, in spite of all attempts to soothe her, she got more and more distressed. What was to be done ? It was one of those precocious fits of passion that children fly into almost as soon as they are born. The child's mother, however, who knew something

Dr. Maria Montessori at AIR, Madras

"Certain games that tiny children play show us that such things constitute a vital pleasure. These games appear to us surprisingly irrational." (See page No. 18)

" Nature implants in the child sensibility as regards order." (*See page No.* 19)

" This sort of child is a weak and feeble creature dependent on the help of others .... He is peevish, he is seared by everything..... He has constantly to be amused, entertained, enlivened." (See page No. 27)

" It is perfectly obvious that no object was achieved, nothing useful done in the sense of external utility, by the efforts of the child but they were a training for life." (See page No. 29)

"He takes delight in his own effort to act independently." (See page No. 35)

A Montessori class at the Besant School, Adyar, Madras. Our photograph shows children learning about shapes and sizes

It will be of interest to mention that Dr. Maria Montessori, stayed at Adyar for a number of years and was personally interested in the teaching of her system at the Besant School

A Montessori class at the Besant School, Adyar, Madras

about the psychic manifestation we have been speaking of, suddenly took the parasol from the table into the next room. Immediately there was a lull and the child quieted down. It was the parasol on the table that had caused the disturbance ; it was not in the proper place there ; things as the child was accustomed to see them and as she needed to remember them had been violently disarranged.

Our next example concerns a much bigger baby—one, a year and a half old ; and I played an active part in the story I am about to tell. I formed part of a group of visitors to Nero's grotto at Naples, and there was also among us a young mother with her child. The grotto passes from side to side of an entire hill, and it was much too long a walk for such a tiny child ; in fact she soon got tired of walking, and her mother took her up and carried her. But she had miscalculated her own strength ; so, being both hot and exhausted, she stopped a minute to take off her coat, which she hung over her arms once more to carry it. The child began to cry ; she cried louder and louder. Her mother, who was evidently worn out, was getting worried and naturally tried to help. One after another took the child, but coaxing or scolding only made matters worse.

Thinking that such a reaction is always brought about by some inner sensibility, I then tried what I could do ; approaching the mother, I asked her if I might help her to put on again the coat that she was carrying. She eyed me in utter bewilderment, for she still felt too warm ; but in her confusion agreed to put it on. Hardly had she done so, when the tantrums subsided, the tears ceased, the distress vanished, and the child said more than once, " Coat on ! " (Mummy must have her coat on). She seemed to be thinking : well, at last they have seen what I meant. Holding out her arms to her mother, she let herself be taken with a smile ; and our walk proceeded in perfect peace.

From these examples we can judge how intense the instinct is ; and it is the fact of its being so precocious that astonishes us, too, since it is less acute in a child of two, who has already found an outlet in active and tranquil occupation.

One of the most interesting phenomena to be observed in our schools is that when anything is out of its proper place, it is the child of two who sees and sets it right, being still at an age where one is sensitive to right details of disorder overlooked by grown-ups and even by older children than he.

If a piece of soap is on the table instead of being in the soap dish, if a chair is placed away or right out of its usual place, the one who notices the disorder and sets it right is the little child of two.

It would seem as if disorder acted as a spur, a stimulus, an active appeal. Yet it is more and we have there undoubtedly one of those needs whose satisfaction gives actual vital enjoyment. Thus we see in our schools children well over three, even children of four, who will put back in the proper place the things they have used after an exercise is over. In fact, this is one of the things they do most gladly, most spontaneously.

Everything in its proper place means that one knows just where everything is; one remembers the actual place where every individual thing is to be found. The mind can be said to possess its environment when it thus knows it; when it could move in it with closed eyes and find each thing it seeks. If we are to enjoy tranquillity in life, it is such an environment that we need.

Certain games that tiny children play show us that such things constitute a vital pleasure. These games, which to us appear surprisingly irrational, are based upon the sheer joy of finding things in their place. I will give you an illustration of this.

I was greatly amazed once when I joined in the so-called game of hide-and-seek of children between two and three years of age. They seemed enrapt in the game, in high delight and anticipation. But the hiding was as follows: one of their number, in full view of the rest, crept under a table-cloth reaching right down to the ground; others then left the room. Presently returning and lifting the table-cloth they found the first child hidden there, when they all shouted with joy. They did this over and over again. Every time someone got under the table saying: "Now I will hide".

One day I joined their game. I found a group of little ones shouting and clapping their hands in high delight, having just found one of their number hidden behind a door. They came towards me saying, "Do play with us! You hide!" I agreed, and they all ran conscientiously away as we do when we do not mean to see where the other hides. I did not hide behind the door but in a corner hidden away behind a cupboard. When the children came in again, they all went together to look for me behind the door. I waited a little; but as nobody looked for me, I at last emerged from my hiding place. I found them disheartened and disappointed; and "Why would not you play with us?" they asked. "Why did not you hide?"

If it is pleasure we seek in play (and the children were certainly gay enough as they repeated this strange performance of theirs) we must admit that pleasure, for children of a certain age, consists in finding things in their proper places. Hiding is understood

by them to mean moving things through hidden places and finding them again where they are not visible from outside ; as if they said to themselves : " Though it cannot be seen from outside, still I know where it is ; I could find it with my eyes shut, I am so certain of the place ".

All this shows how nature implants in the child this sensibility as regards order, building up in him an inner sense which is not the power of distinguishing thing from thing, but of distinguishing the different relations existing between things ; so that the environment is linked up into a whole, whose parts are interdependent. It is in such an environment, realized as a whole, that one can get one's bearings so as to move about and achieve what one aims at ; otherwise the very foundation of life of relations would be impossible. It would be like possessing furniture and no house to put it into. What end would it serve to accumulate external images if the order which linked them into an organization were lacking ? Knowledge of objects together with ignorance of their rapports would leave man in a chaos with no way of getting clear. The child it is who has elaborated, in the mind of the man-to-be, a power seemingly conferred on him by nature, the possibility of self-orientation, self-direction by which to find his way through life. It is in the sensitive period of order that nature gives her earliest lesson, just as a teacher begins with the plan of the class-room, which is to lead on later to maps of the world's surface. Or it is a mariner's compass, one might say, given by Nature in this period to man, that he may be able to find his way about the world. She gives him this, as she gives him the power of exactly reproducing the sounds composing speech —speech to be endlessly developed by man through the ages. Not out of nothingness does it spring, the intelligence of man. No, it is built upon foundations worked out during his sensitive periods by the child.

THE INNER ORDER

The sensitiveness to order in the child is two-fold. Two sensibilities exist in him contemporaneously. One of these has to do with the relations between the various parts of the external environment ; the other, which is internal, enables him to realize the parts of his own body which act in movement and the position they take up ; to this we might give the name of inner orientation.

This inner orientation has been studied by experimental psychology. It has recognized the existence of a muscular sense. This sense gives the realization of the position of one's limbs ;

it is at the same time the registrator of a special mode of memory —muscular memory. The explanation furnished by psychology constitutes a purely mechanistic theory. It is, moreover, based upon conscious experience of movements performed. If the individual has moved his arm in order to get something, he perceives his movement, memorizes it and can repeat it, so that he ends by acquiring his orientation through which he can resolve to move his right or left arm or turn to one side or the other ; all this through successive experiences of activity promoted by the reason or the will.

But the child, however, has revealed to us that long before his movements are free and therefore previous to his being capable of experimenting on these lines, he passes through a period of keen sensitiveness regarding the positions of his own body. It is nature that prepares in him this special sensibility towards its positions and attitudes. The old theories referred to nervous mechanisms. But the sensitive periods are related to psychic facts ; they are epochs of spiritual gleams and thrills preluding consciousness, of forces out of the non-existent, creative of fundamental elements destined to construct a psychic world. It is nature's bestowing of a gift which makes this possible ; and all that conscious experience does is merely to develop what was already there.

Negative proofs that this sensitive period exists, and that it is extremely acute, are to be found whenever some circumstance in the environment thwarts the steady unfolding of creative powers. The child is then keenly troubled ; his reactions are often violent ; characterized not alone by the familiar features of persistent childish tantrums but often by symptoms of illness which nothing can alleviate so long as the thwarting circumstances remain. Once they are removed, tantrums and ailments vanish altogether and immediately—a clear proof that it was these circumstances that caused the abnormal phenomenon.

A clear instance, and therefore an interesting example of what has been said, may be quoted from an English nurse. During a short absence from the house where she had the care of the baby, she had put another equally competent nurse in her place. The new nurse found everything go smoothly as regards the child except when she had to bathe it. This was the occasion of great agitation and distress, and a reaction not only of screaming and crying but of struggles and attempts to get out of the nurse's grasp. All her scrupulous care was in vain. Little by little the child turned completely against her. The former nurse then returned, and the child was perfectly quiet and good, let himself be bathed and showed as he was pleased. Now the nurse being one who thought upon

the lines we have traced here was very curious to know what could have caused all this; she was interested, as a Montessorian, in seeking for the psychic element productive of the phenomenon. She made patient attempts to get at the explanation through the imperfect means of expression so young a child possessed. Two things she arrived at. The baby considered the other nurse as "naughty". Why? Because she bathed him all wrong. The two nurses then compared notes. It appeared that whereas the one had been accustomed to hold the child with her right hand at his head and her left at his heels, the other had turned him round the opposite way to bathe him.

Another case I may quote. The distress was more acute in this instance and reached the point of actual illness, while the causes were harder to detect. I was myself concerned in the affair, a witness to the whole proceeding of the case, though in no directly medical capacity. The child in question was not yet a year and a half old. The family had just returned from a long journey. Every one thought that it had been far too exhausting for so young a child. But they said that, on the contrary, everything had gone off perfectly; they had passed the night in excellent hotels, engaging their rooms beforehand, and seeing to it that the baby's cradle and proper food should be ready. On their return they had taken comfortable furnished apartments, where the child slept with his mother in a large bed, there being no cradle in the house. The child fell ill; the first symptoms were restless nights and digestive trouble; he had to be carried up and down and his crying was attributed to stomach ache. Child specialists were called in. One of them prescribed modern foods based on vitamin; these were prepared with scrupulous exactness. He was ordered sun-baths and outings and the most modern physical treatment, none of which did him any good; he only got worse. No one in the house got any sleep, the nights were most distressing; finally the child developed fits and it was shocking to see him as he lay writhing upon the bed. He had these fits two or three times a day. It was decided to call in the greatest specialist in children's nervous diseases, and a consultation was held at which I was present. From what his parents said, the child had been healthy and untroubled all through the journey; he was to all appearance still healthy; so that these developments might be owing to some psychic cause; such was my impression. Now the child was lying at the time upon the bed, violently agitated as usual. I took two chairs. I placed them together so that they formed a kind of crib or cradle bed that the arms enclosed; inside it I arranged sheets and blankets. Without saying anything I moved it close

up to the bed where the child lay. He looked at it, stopped crying, rolled over and over till he reached the edge of the bed, then let himself tumble into the cradle I had improvised for him repeating the word "bed . . bed . . . bed". He fell asleep there at once ; nor was there any return of his agitation and distress.

Obviously the child was sensitive to the contact of a small bed in which he felt himself wrapped closely round and his limbs rested against the supporting sides. The big bed had seemed to him no shelter. Hence the upset in order, affecting his inner orientation, a sense of disorder provoking a most distressful conflict and this having landed him in so many forms of health treatments. Such is the potency of these sensitive periods, like lightning in the hands of creative nature.

Order is not felt by the child as we feel it. We are enriched by abundance of impressions and have become indifferent to them. The child has none of our rich abundance. He comes from nothing ; what he does, he does out of his nothingness. The labour of creation is known to him alone. But we are his heirs. We are, as it were, the sons of one who became rich by the sweat of his brow ; and we realize nothing at all of what effort and labour he has had to undergo ; we are ungrateful ; we are unappreciative and unfeeling and we fancy ourselves better than he by the fact that we are well provided for and have our place in society. We are content to make use of the reasoning powers he has welded for us ; he gave us the power of orientating in the world, he formed in us the power of feeling, or we should never have felt. If we are rich, we owe it to the child, who worked to lay the foundations of our very existence.

The enormous effort it costs to take the first step, the labour of passing from nothing to the beginning of something, whose was it ? The child's. Being as close as he is to the very source and spring of life, he acts for action's sake ; for so it is in the plan of creation . . .

And we . . . do not feel . . . nor do we remember . . .

The child is passing up to the time when he is five years old through a prolonged sensitive period during which he is endowed with a perfectly astounding capacity of absorbing images from the world without. He is an observer who takes to himself in active fashion through his senses the images of outer things. An observer, mark, not a recipient as a mirror might be, which passively reflects. An observer is urged from within himself, is moved by some special taste or liking; an observer, therefore, exercises choice with regard to images. Inexperienced as he is, the child pursues his path of activity alone.

I may now quote other examples of much older children. A seven months old baby was seated on a rug on the floor playing with a cushion. There were flowers and figures of children upon the cushion, and the child was smelling the flowers and kissing the children in high delight. An ignorant maidservant who was looking after the child, concluding that the child was pleased to play the game of smelling and kissing everything indiscriminately, hastened to provide her with all kinds of things, saying to her " Smell this, now kiss that " and so on. But the child's mind was only confused. It had been organizing itself; recognizing images and fixing them through movement, working steadily and joyously upon the task of inner construction. The uncomprehending mind of an adult had erased this mysterious effort towards inner order; it was like the washing away by the tide of castles and drawings in the sand upon the shore of the sea.

It has been proved up to the hilt by innumerable experiments that within the first year of life children already possess such clear sensorial impressions of the environment that they are capable of recognizing the things they have seen around them, represented in the plan of the picture according to perspective. But we may add that by this time the child has already gone beyond such impressions which no longer have much keen interest for him.

As he enters upon the second year of life, he is no longer fascinated, as he was in the earlier sensitive periods, by showy things which catch his eyes or by brilliancy of colour; rather is he now attracted by minute things which we pass by unnoticed. The invisible seems to interest him now, and things upon the far fringe of consciousness. . . .

This sensibility to tiny things first came to my notice in a child fifteen months old. I heard her laughing aloud, an unusual thing in such a tiny child. She was out in the garden alone, sitting on a brick-paved terrace; close beside her was a trellis thick with geraniums in gorgeous blossom under an almost tropical sun. But

she had no eyes for them ; she was gazing on the ground where for my part I could see nothing at all. One of those enigmas which childhood offers. I came up noiselessly ; I looked ; I saw nothing. She explained in her half articulate way : "Little tiny running about". I then saw, with this indication of the child, something almost imperceptible, so minute it was, and almost the same colour as the ground, running about hither and thither at a great rate. The child had been struck to see that anything so tiny could exist and move and run, and her astonishment was expressed in more clamorous delight than children generally give expression to—a joy which neither flowers, colours, nor the sun had been able to inspire.

I once received a similar impression from another child of about the same age. His mother had made for him quite a collection of coloured postcards. The child seemed to want to show them to me and brought me his big bundle of postcards. He called in his own fashion, " Ban ban ". I understood from this word that he was going to show me the picture of an automobile. The collection comprised a great variety of pictures and it was obvious his mother had wished to combine pleasure and instruction by giving them to him. There were exotic creatures such as giraffes, lions, bears, monkeys, birds, domestic animals, sure to interest a little child, and sheep, cats, donkeys, horses, cows, little scenes and landscapes in which there were animals, houses and persons. But strange to say, the one thing lacking in so rich a collection was precisely the automobile ; and I said to the child, " I don't see automobile". He then looked for it and drew out a postcard saying in triumph, " Here it is." The card represented a hunting scene ! But the central thing in the picture was a fine pointer. In the middle distance was the sportsman with his gun over his shoulder. Far away in a corner of the card was a little house leading up to a winding line that seemed to be a road ; and there was a dot upon this line. To this dot the child's finger pointed : " Automobile ", he told me. In fact one could just make out, but only just, that the dot was actually meant for an automobile. What made the picture interesting to the child and deserving to be shown was, then, precisely the difficulty of seeing the automobile at all, and the fact that so small a representation of it was possible.

One would say that the child in his second year passes through a period in which nature, wishing him to get acquainted with all sorts of things, urges his intelligence along stage after stage of successive development.

I will give you a few examples from my personal experience.

I once wanted to show a child about 20 months old a beautiful book intended for grown-ups, the Gospels, with illustrations by

Gustave Dore. Among the pictures were reproduced certain classical canvasses, such as Raphael's Transfiguration. I first picked out a picture of Christ calling children, and began to explain the following :

" Jesus has one child in his arms and other children leaning their heads up against him. They are all looking at him and Jesus loves them ".

Not a sign of any interest on the part of the child. So to save appearances I turned the page and tried to find something else ; and as I turned, this was what the child suddenly remarked : " He's asleep ". I was smitten by the disconcerting sense that here was some enigma of the children's soul. " Who is ? " I asked. "Jesus is ", said the child emphatically, making a sign to me to turn back to the place that he might show me.

There was the face of Christ who, tall of stature, was looking down as from a height upon the children below, and the lowered gaze made the eyelids look as if they were closed in sleep. The child had observed a detail that would have escaped an adult.

What can they think, the children, observant as they are of real tiny details, about ourselves, the grown-ups, who see nothing in pictures but what are inaccessible to them, namely, our own mental synthesis ? For them, are we not inferior beings, incapable creatures who don't know the right way to look at things ? Perhaps they consider us as careless and inexact, since we pass by such interesting things without an intelligent appreciation. Of one thing we may be certain, that if we could plumb their mental world, bringing to light what lies there unexpressed, we should find that they distrust us. So do we distrust them, such an abyss separates our way and theirs of conceiving things.

There is no mental comprehension between the adult and the child when teachers in infant classes and nursery schools make such efforts to drum in information about some everyday familiar object to children of three and four, as if they had only just come into the world and knew nothing of what was in it. Do these children not feel something like the man who was mistakenly supposed to be stone deaf ? He understood all that was said to him, and still people went on driving it home with emphasis. He made no reply and only protested at last : "But, my friends, indeed I am not the deaf man you are mistaking me for !"

The term naughtiness embraces two forms of resistance on the part of the child. One of them is more easily recognizable than the other, and it is this : resistance to our attempts to help him, and the sturdy but insensate determination to act alone. If we consider it as a kind of effort to achieve independence, this kind of resistance is very interesting ; it is the child's active endeavour to get free of grown-up assistance in order to take upon himself, as regards the environment, the functions which appertain to the life of relations. This effort towards detachment leads one to reflect that his birth, too, was a detachment ; becoming separated from the body of his mother, which till then functioned for him, he took upon himself at birth the tasks of respiration, digestion and circulation, and the driving of his blood through the valves of his own heart. So that when the young child makes fresh effort towards detachment and tries to take upon himself tasks he has never performed before, it is a kind of second birth into life—his birth into social existence—and he starts it with an effort towards independent action.

It is not unlike the effort of the butterfly struggling to break out of its chrysalis and use its wings; its emergence from the egg was birth ; this is a sort of rebirth when he flies out of nest.

It is a singular fact that this tendency, this will to act alone, is found in young children all the world over ; and it is positive that the tendency depends upon no process of reasoning or any conscious wish for emancipation but upon the urge of an instinct.

As we stated, naughtiness has two ways of resisting the adult, and this is one. The other consists in wanting to touch everything, or, in more exact terms, it consists in the child wanting to touch his elders' things. In vain does one attempt to deter a child from touching ; it is futile to lecture him or bribe him with gifts of toys ; nothing moves him from the persistent desire to touch. He wants this, he wants that ; he wants just the things he should not want at all ; the things not intended for him are just those he touches and takes. Well, just as the other incorrigible urge to action has its own interest, so it is with this one, which is an impetus to work, an impulse bound up with the very existence of the child. Flight is for the bird, swimming is for the fish, but work for the child.

Every new-born creature turns to the activity proper to its kind ; and what is proper to mankind is work. The earliest revealing traces of prehistoric man we possess are not the nature of his bony structure, but the kind of polished stones and chipped flints he worked with . . . It is strange how all the children

in the world tend to touch everything they can ; but this tendency cannot be the result of reflection nor proceed from an acquaintance with prehistory and the study of man's destinies ; it is an urge that nothing can coerce and the moving power is not reason but instinct.

It is these two instincts—the effort for independence and the urge to work—that guide the child in building up his own personality. The purpose served by his movements matters more than the movements themselves, and it is towards the unification of personality that he is really working, it is towards the complete welding of his inner forces with the means of movement that he is actually progressing when he exerts himself to act upon the things in the environment. Should he be allowed no opportunity of so acting, he will become, from the age of three onwards, the prey of psychic deviations ; conflict in everyday life and the lack of comprehension on the part of the adult will but intensify such deviation.

Let me illustrate.

Here, we have, for example, a child in the best possible conditions of health and strength. He has a "wonderful imagination" as we are wont to describe the state, turns his attention from thing to thing unwearied, and personifies everything. A chair symbolizes for him a train, a stick an aeroplane. He is continually occupied in building and demolishing these castles in the clouds. Uncontrolled in movement, his clumsiness brings ruin in its train ; clambering everywhere, he cannot touch anything without knocking it down and breaking it. A child like this is commonly said to be smart, bright child. In such a case we have disconnection of two activities that should have become blended but have really never worked together at all. The intelligence has wandered into wildest paths of phantasy, turning its back upon the real ; while movement, her proper guide having abandoned her, plunges into abysses of unconsidered action and violence unrestrained. Both stray farther and farther from the practical ends of life and from each other ; co-operation is perfectly impossible between them. Such is the "escape" from reality into fancy and into play which has been described by Freud. Psycho-analysts know it ; it is a form of psychic deviation. In such a deviation, the psychic forces find their outlet into the void and their escape is into chance.

Let us turn to another type. This sort of child is a weak and feeble creature dependent upon the help of others—grown-ups or anyone who is stronger than himself. He is peevish, he is scared by everything, he is tied to his mother's apron string or clinging to some elder brother all the time, and never does he act upon

his own initiative. He has constantly to be amused, entertained, enlivened; he cannot play alone. He is over fond of good things to eat. He is bashful. He tells fibs. He is inert and indolent. Now it is clear that such a child has never managed to become an individual at all. He has never detached himself from others. He has never learnt to act for himself. To sum up: such a child has never gone through the process of self-liberation nor succeeded in realizing himself. As a human being, as a personality, he has never been born; he stagnates in a wretched condition of dependence upon others; his state is one of moral bondage comparable to the physical bondage of the Siamese twins.

When a child is hindered in the construction of the basical unity of his personality, he becomes predisposed to deviations. If he does deviate, he reveals the fact by some negative manifestations. There is a great variety of these. Some are very apparent, such as possessiveness, destructiveness, lying, cruelty and all the major defects of the bad child. As anomalies, others are less noticeable. Indeed they are considered as normal to children. Nevertheless they also are deviations. Laziness, disobedience, timidity, fear, boredom, plaintiveness, include some of these. There are others still so well disguised that they are considered assets rather than defects; very vivid imagination, turbulent vivacity, clinging attachment, love of stories, etc., are characteristics that render parents proud of their children. Yet these also result from circumstances adverse to normal development. These defects are found in all children. Some have many, others few. They develop either on a background of timidity or on a psychic plane of assertiveness; but both are outside the realm of normality. All these characteristics reveal themselves as abnormal, when the child is placed in those conditions which are necessary to the development of his normal activity. Then, in fact, all those characteristics disappear and give way to a new type of child.

TRAINING

We have become aware of the truth that stirs and thrills and it is this—the existence in the child of a guiding force. Tiny though he may be, he is urged by this inner guide to spontaneous activities by which he is constructing the future man.

Supposing this truth were realized, supposing that the adult or, let us say, supposing all mothers were to be convinced of the existence in their children of this guiding force, what practical results would the knowledge produce? What would come of it if they actually left the little ones at liberty to obey that inner call?

It has been done, and eloquent examples of such faith have not been lacking. I will quote a few examples from familiar everyday life.

A lady saw her child of one and half take a jug full of water which was really too large and heavy for his size and strength. Carrying it he proceeded towards her drawing room, which was full of eloquent furniture and precious carpets. Not only was the strain upon his powers excessive, but the little carrier was evidently intensely anxious not to spill a drop ; and as he trudged he repeated to himself, with many a puff and sigh, the words " Be careful ".

Another mother saw her child twenty months old go into the garden and march about the lawn hugging to her one of those large four-cornered loaves that are made in England. She had to lean back as she walked, at great risk of over-balancing, so as to support her load as upon a shelf ; and the house dog walked along behind her as if he were anxious about her and ready to help.

Another case was this. All the dinner napkins had been ironed and piled up neatly by the maid in a basket in a room almost empty of furniture. The basket was within reach of a little child of a year and a half. She very carefully took out the top napkin and without disturbing the folds carried it towards the opposite corner of the room, where she laid it on the floor saying: One. Returning across the room she fetched each in turn as carefully as the first, piled them all neatly up, always following the same diagonal course from corner to corner of the room and always repeating the same word : One. She finished doing this, and then started her work again, bringing them all back in the same way. Of course her pile was not as neat as the original one, but it was quite recognizable as a pile of dinner napkins newly ironed.

It is perfectly obvious that no object was achieved, nothing useful done in the sense of external utility, by these enormous efforts of the child, but they were a training for life. They were like the training of a boxer preparing for the ring, whose exercises are often so very unlike his final activities. These training exercises of the child are certainly apt to be very trying for the grown-up and risky for the environment ; and the idea of the brimming jug approaching the drawing room carpet, the enormous loaf roaming at large over the grass, the carefully ironed serviettes in danger of losing their folds—all show that the problem is not solved by letting the child act as he will nor by checking him. Its solution lies in preparing such things and circumstances as are suited to his hand of constructive activity or actually getting ready a whole

environment planned to this end. I have given a few examples—there are hundreds I might tell of—they all show that these needs of the child are neither met nor filled by setting him in a nursery with his toys and allowing him no possibility of spontaneous action. It is an extreme effort that the child is reaching after—an effort by which he is overcoming difficulties within him ; in the cases we have cited there was the difficulty of not spilling the water or not losing balance or not disturbing the folds of newly ironed serviettes as he carried them back and forth. The effort in this exercise is all directed upon himself. A man is there training for his life. And if he gets no training ? Fancy an untrained boxer in the ring. He would be done for. It is a thought that cannot but move us : the child is the man preparing himself. Now, man is not, by nature, a trifler, an idler or a looker-on ; he is a titan employing his strength to construct a world. We see it in man's offspring that it is not because of the driving of circumstances nor because of forcing from outer things that man is a worker ; it is because work is proper to man and the instinct that makes the race.

A grave problem this is. Man's character is created, it is actually formed, during an initial preparatory period ; but the social environment is thrown into disorder by the efforts at preparation, the unhampered activities which this entails. Either the adult's existence is to be made miserable or the child's ; then it is the parting of the ways. The problem is not only grave, it is insoluble, unless an environment can be created which so far is non-existent, unless the child environment can be prepared—a little world which shall contain such things, such possibilities, of action as are worthy of the man-to-be and that suffice his nature. That nature, as we have said, is not that of a reckless whimsical loiterer through life, nor is man satisfied if he can pass his time in rebelling and slumbering, a pampered creature whom others work to serve.

Now, if this formative energy is thwarted in childhood, it cannot work out its way against the obstacles that block it ; then what is the result ? A being nature never planned, a being warped and thwarted away from normal lines of growth—deviated, as we say.

We should give a false impression of such an individual if we were to describe him as being abnormal or pathological, for abnormal is what differs from the usual and customary, and pathological is what contrasts with the healthful, whereas here we have to give a name to what is considered to be *normal condition* inasmuch as it is usual, customary and everywhere to be seen ; we have to consider conditions thought to be *healthful* by everybody. " Deviation of character " we will call these conditions ; not abnormal, not pathological. Deviation is just that feeble imperfect

state in which man exists as we know him, as we ourselves are, as he is known all the world over. As to real normality, where shall we find it ? It is hidden away among the mysteries of nature, together with superlative beauty and physical health.

It is the child and he alone who can be the revealer to us of a natural, normal personality ; this he can do if we assist him.

I will end with a comparison.

Let us suppose a railway line which forks into two ; the two lines at first run side by side and are hardly distinguishable, and the engine driver has to be very careful not to mistake one for the other. But supposing he does, supposing the train deviates in consequence—what happens then ? Not merely the fact of ending up at the wrong station is important, but the other fact that it was only upon the right line that all had been prepared so that the right destination should be reached—signals, lights and the way free from impediments. The train that deviates may meet with disaster or it may simply turn up at the wrong station. And this is the most favourable conclusion it can reach—to have arrived safely in a place it never set out for ! Disaster on the line, the wreckage of a train, are comparable to pathology or abnormality, while mere deviation is like the progress of a train that moves in the dark towards the wrong station, along a way fraught with peril, but without running off the line.

THE NAUGHTY CHILD

It is as it were an unknown force—the activity of the child ; energy exploring an environment devoid of instruments it can utilize but containing things it can disarrange and upset. A fidgety, foolish and disturbing sort of energy it seems to the adult ; it must be stopped, he thinks ; he is tempted to try and put an end to it by all manner of corrective means, which avail him not at all. The child is incorrigible, and the judgment of guilt is pronounced upon him. He is called " naughty " ; naughtiness being distinguished from badness in languages like English which possess a special term for childish offences. Man is bad, but the child is just naughty. The distinction of meanings holds good, however, even in languages having but one term for both. In naughtiness no wrong feeling is implied—merely rebellion ; and the fact that it disappears as the child grows up is characteristic of it ; so that we should realize that it is a form of energy regularly occurring and of nature's own implanting, and that since it is transitory, it appertains to some sensitive period, and is allied to the acquisition of characteristics necessary to the construction of personality.

In fact, naughtiness is a phenomenon which is common to children of all nationalities and races.

Real badness, on the other hand, *does* occur in children, but these are special individual cases. There are children in whom bad moral tendencies are innate; we know there are child criminals; we read the collected biographies of the child life of abnormal persons, the hysterical, the insane or the criminal. And children have been known to become fatally corrupt from living in immoral surroundings. We might compare such striking and exceptional phenomena as these with what we see in the realm of physical pathology, I mean constitutional or hereditary disease, bound up with the constitution of the individual; or we might liken them to toxic diseases such as alcoholism or complaints caused by poisonous substances slowly absorbed from the environment which end in penetrating into all the tissues and poisoning the system in all its parts. But the great majority of illnesses, the complaints which may attack anybody whatsoever, these are caused by micro-organisms—tiny, imperceptible, and met with everywhere. For humanity as a whole, it is infectious diseases such as we are all liable to and capable of contracting that constitute the real and positive danger.

Well, then, the danger of dangers, the infectious germ, menacing humanity as a whole, so to speak, it is the thing which we call by the title of naughtiness, constructive energy, hurling itself against hindrances with a crash that shatters it. This clash of thwarted energy in the child and the warped nature of the man full grown are the two things intimately allied.

Disorderly, random and aimless movements are not formative; such activity constructs no personality at all. We see such movements in a naughty child. But constructive activity, on the other hand, is directed by purposive instincts; and it is when following the rigid, the implacable line that nature herself traces for the purposes she herself has planned that the child fights obstacles so unflinchingly. Our part is to find out what it is that he has got to do, what it is that he has to construct, and provide him with the means he needs for carrying out what he is impelled to by his inner guide. This being done, a state of calm ensues, the child is joyful and orderly; no longer the disturber and upsetter of things, but, on the contrary, a being busy in his own particular work of constructive energy, a creature of wonder that we must needs admire.

Since his activities manifest without, it is easier for us to unravel their laws. We can study them in practice and obtain actual proofs which can be verified by the facts repeating themselves. In the interpretation of an active tendency, ideas and opinions

must not suffice us, nor must we allow ourselves to soar into the realm of theory, philosophizing about the goodness or badness of human nature. What is needed here is a practical demonstration.

Now if we come a little nearer to the actual facts of the reactions of a naughty child, we note above all his acts of self-defence. He defends himself from the adult when the latter wants to help him or to do something for him. The invariable protest of the child is "No ! No ! I want to do it myself."

Another thing we shall see is how he wants to touch everything (especially the things he sees used by the adult) and the distress and weeping that ensues when he is thwarted.

The reactions of a child refusing help are certainly unreasonable inasmuch as he cannot act for himself, but they indicate that he is groping after what he will achieve later on. What he cannot yet do he is preparing to do.

Such a period of preparation exists in relation to every function of life. The long period of babbling is in no sense speech or actual, serviceable language ; it is the preparation, the formative exercise, preceding it. Before teeth are "out", as we say, and can bite, they are all there preparing ; this, too, is a formative period. No explanation is needed to convince us how important the periods of formation are ; without them we should have no perfect speech and teeth would be imperfect ; the work of elaboration by which future perfection is being actually carried on during these periods of formation.

Motor actions, in which there is such complexity of co-ordination of the voluntary muscles, and such close connection with the powers of reasoning, must have, too, their formative period. During this period there is not yet the power of executing the actions that are being prepared. It is because he wants to try for himself and to get experience that the child wards off assistance in taking things he is desirous of using and powerless to employ in action. He cannot as yet achieve anything of the kind unaided ; he is passing through the difficult stage of would-but-I-cannot.

Marvellous, astounding is the instinct which guides the child to future achievements leading him on, not by processes of reasoning, but by the spur of immediate utility, and which renders him the unflinching resister of all that the world can do to frustrate his efforts.

How clearly this shows us that there are inner guides, sensitive periods, by which the constructive development of man is guided and fostered in the child !

HOW TO SOLVE THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE ADULT AND THE CHILD

The psychic conditions of adult and children are extremely different; the child is not understood. And his development may be seriously interfered with by this lack of understanding on the part of the adult.

The real social problem arises when the child reaches the age of action; it is then that the conflict between the adult and the child really begins. The child now toddles; he clambers over things and touches everything—actions which the grown-up does all in his power to prevent. This presents a grave problem as regards the child's life in the family. Nowadays we hear a great deal about the child's acts of self-defence. But, to begin with, it is the adult who is on the defensive. He is defending himself against one whom he loves in spite of it; he is trying to keep off disturbances in his work; he wants to prevent his things being touched by the child. He also tries to keep the child from acting differently from the ways that he, the adult, has fixed for him. By what Freud would call " camouflage " he interprets what is actually a defence of his own peace and quiet way of living as his concern for the child, his duty towards him in the way of correcting him, all actions different from the adult's intention being classed as wrong on the part of the child.

On the other hand we have the child; he, too, is defending his " rights." He is defending his own activities. How can he renounce them? How can he abandon a rhythm of movement essentially his, the child's, different as it may be from that of the adult? Never! With energy that brooks no resistance he battles on, carrying out exercises he must perform if he is to develop at all. The adult defends himself; the child no less; the two defensives spell war. War! A conflict at the very foundation of the whole structure of their future social relationship; for this is a matter not confined to the family group; it concerns society.

The child's activities are thwarted by the adult. He is forced into obedience. But the adult has another way, that of allowing him to do nothing for himself. Others must wash him, dress him, do his hair for him, wheel him out in a pram, put him to bed. He is treated as though he were incapable of moving or willing. This creature, for whom action is a vital need—since if he is to develop it must be through continual action—is dubbed disobedient and treated as a rebel because he tries to act.

We must understand the child. We must recognize, for what it is, this vital activity. It is the constructor of personality; it

forms the individual. It is a formative activity. Here movement will not suffice—mere walking, running or clambering. This activity calls into play all his psychic energies they combine ; he knows his aim ; he wills to achieve it. He takes delight in his own effort to act independently—to wash and dress himself, feed himself instead of being fed, clean things and put them in their places. It is such actions as these, activities of his own independent choosing, of his own willing and purposing, which are the real, the actual constructors of the individuality of the child.

So that the adult, every time that he intervenes between the child and his activity, taking it upon himself to act for the child, is a hindrance to his development. This is the point whose importance must be grasped. We state it thus : Development is thwarted by every act of unnecessary aid.

We are all familiar with the child's disobedience, his resistance to the " Don'ts " of the adult. But just as they refuse to be kept from acting, so children refuse to be helped. They resist being washed ; they protest with tears against being dressed and washed and having their hair done ; they rebel at being put to bed. All this seems most unreasonable to the adult ; it is illogical, whimsical, and he judges it to be just naughtiness. He cannot understand why, when the child does not know how to do a thing, he fights against help in doing it, although he really needs that help. It is sheer nonsense ; the child is naughty, says the adult, and he forces help upon the child. We all know how futile it is to try and change the child, how his disobedience, his naughtiness persists in spite of all our attempts at firmness—the most usual method, the most dynamic coaxing, persuasive reasoning and appeals to reason. We achieve nothing by these means. And why all this ? It is because we are requiring of the child the impossible. We are exacting from him that he shall forfeit normal existence, cease growing, renounce developing as a human being. In this conflict between the adult and the child, who shall be the victor ? It can only end the day the adult realizes what childhood's vital needs are and, having realized what they are, provides for their satisfaction. The real problem, the only problem is this.

Left free to busy himself in useful work, the child calms down, becomes obedient, is happy. It is constructive work that he needs, this little artisan which is building for manhood. This is what is essential, a fundamental need, and the rest whether we call it firmness, coaxing or reasoning is of little importance in comparison. The gist of the matter is not whether strictness or tenderness should prevail in the relations between the adult and the child ; the thing essential is that he should be allowed, little by little, to

make himself independent of the adult and arrive at acting for himself. We are indebted to a child of three for an eloquent, if apparently contradictory, wording of what is to be done. As the child puts it: "Help me to help myself." It is exactly this. The child does not need our help in acting for himself; firstly he needs that we shall provide him with things suited to his size and strength and mental simplicity, and that belong to him and that he is free to use; secondly he needs to be shown how to handle them.

This he needs; no more . . .

What has a mother to do, supposing her child rebels against her aids, refuses to have her do his hair, for instance? The answer is: two things. She must firstly get him a little brush and comb that he can easily handle—small and light. Secondly, she must show him how to use them and let him experiment. In the same way, instead of taking a spoon and insisting on feeding him, she will get a small spoon of a convenient shape and easy to use and patiently teach him how to feed himself with it. And so on, until he can carry on active existence of his own in surroundings created intentionally for him in order to satisfy his need of action. The difficulty he is up against is not achieving some new, external purpose, as it would be for ourselves; no, it is the development in himself for certain movements not yet co-ordinated, so that his organs may require capacities they do not yet possess. Thus he is not learning in order to carry out something external to himself, but acquiring the use of external means for constructing his personality within.

He needs activity for developing his inner self. When he wants to wash or dress himself, it is not at all because he is concerned about being clean or interested in being clothed. As he babbled in syllables long before coming to speech or, in physical sphere, as his teeth went on forming with the gum before he cut and used them, so it is here.

There is a period of formative activity essential to the development of the child; this activity is within.

When his need of activity finds satisfaction, he is quiet, he obeys us, no longer rebelling when we act for him in matters where as yet he cannot act for himself.

Our meaning is summed up in these two sayings which can be applied to the whole education:

HELP ME TO HELP MYSELF—
UNREQUIRED HELP IS NO HELP BUT
A HINDRANCE TO DEVELOPMENT.