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Box 07, Folder 08 - "Acquisitions during the Sensitive Periods" (E.M.S.)

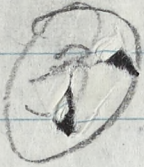
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After introduction (1)

Quote A.
6666666

The child makes a number of acquisitions during the Sensitive Periods which place him in relation to the outer world in an exceptionally intense manner. Then all is easy, all is eagerness and life; and every effort ~~is~~ ^{brings} an increase of power.

When some of these psychic passions die away, other flames are kindled; and so infancy passes from conquest to conquest in a continuous vital vibrancy, what we have called its joy and simplicity. It is through this lovely flame, which burns without consuming, that the work of creating the mental world of man takes place.

SEARCH

A SENSITIVE PERIOD LIKE A SEARCH LIGHT

Quote B

These inner sensibilities determine the selection of necessary things ^(necessary means to development) from this many faceted environment. This inner guidance is exercised by making the child sensitive only towards ^{only} even as a radio seizes certain vibrations and is certain things while leaving it indifferent to others, thus ~~thus~~ ~~indifferent to others~~.

When he is made sensitive to something it is as though there is a light coming from within him which illuminates just those things and no others. The child has a unique capacity for profiting by these periods in order to grow; for it is during the Sensitive Period that he acquires certain mental faculties - like that for instance of orienting himself in his outer environment.

Quote C

HOW A SENSITIVE PERIOD STARTS

We ^{can} imagine this marvellous creative activity as a series of keen emotions rising up from the unconscious, and which ^{by} contact with the outer world build up human consciousness. It can be compared to what happens to a person in love. Such an one, in the midst of a ~~crowd~~ ^{crowd} will at once be able to single out his beloved, or distinguish her voice amongst a medley of others.

In fact we can say The inner drama of a baby's life is a drama of love. Love in the widest sense of the word is the sole

from the many that surround it
over
→

reality, which evolves in the hidden recesses of the soul, and from
time to time fills it wholly.))

How different all this is from the cold and dutiful
acquisition of knowledge ^{at} ~~through~~ the external command of
another ^{gone} - who not only has chosen what the child must attend to
but enforces that attention with the whole weight of ^a ~~his~~ more
powerful personality.

Another Argument from The Steeles
to M. M.

a WORD ABOUT SENSITIVE PERIODS

1 It is probably true to say that outside the immediate circle of Montessori's followers there are as yet comparatively few people -whether parents teachers and lecturers on education - who realise completely the nature and mpower of these Sensitive Periods , not their immense ~~xxxxxxx~~ potential value in education . For it must be remembered that the Sensitive Period for language is only one amongst many others . Those persons , however , who have seen for tmeselves the almost " heroic " labours performed by the children - quite spontatneously - under the influence of these sensitive periods are just the ones who have no fear whatever of such children becoming unduly precocious and dangerously fatigued by ~~seven~~ prolonged mental concentration . For the remarkable thing about these activities ~~xxxxxxx~~ WHICH ARE THE result of this "love for the envornment " (see below) is that far from the children being fatigues at the end of them they appear more calm and rested than at the beginning, ^{running one} (Like ^{from Montessori} St Augustines " Love is never at rest until it is at work)

A few quotations form Montessori's chapter on Sensitive Periods (from her Sevret of Childhood) will hlep to make this clearer .

2 quotes

((At this point come in the quotes on the other paper which the typist can copy direct)

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When some of these psychical passions die away, other flames are kindled; and so infancy passes from conquest to conquest in a continuous vital vibrancy, what we have called its joy and simplicity. It is through this lovely flame, which burns without consuming, that the work of creating the mental world of man takes place.

A SENSITIVE PERIOD LIKE A SEARCH LIGHT

These inner sensibilities determine the selection of necessary things from this many faceted environment. This inner guidance is exercised by making the child sensitive only towards certain things while leaving it indifferent to others. even as a radio seizes certain vibrations and is thus indifferent to others.

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We imagine this marvellous creative activity as a series of keen emotions rising up from the unconscious, and which contact with the outer world build up human consciousness. It can be compared to what happens to a person in love. Such an one in the midst of a crowd will at once be able to single out his beloved or distinguish her voice amongst a medley of others.

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A few quotations from Montessori's chapter on Sensitive Periods (from her Secret of Childhood) will help to make this clearer.

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MORE ARGUMENTS FROM THE HISTORY OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD

As indicated above the Montessori method (as it came to be called) was first applied to small children between the ages of 4½ to 5 years. But as time went on the Montessori "leaven" as you might call it became active in the education of children at other ages. And it developed in two ways :- a) in helping the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ total development of children of later ages and b) in working backwards to the "neonate" or the new born child.

Since

The conviction of those persons who have worked with children using the Montessori approach is not that Montessori children are precocious but that the children in most schools are kept back through a combination of circumstances which prevent their true capacities from revealing themselves. This is very similar to what happened nearly half a century ago when Montessori was working with a group of backward children - "imbeciles" they had been called by the authorities. They responded so well to her methods that they did as well in their examination tests as the normal children from the public elementary schools. "Whilst every one was astonished by the "miracle" of my children doing as well as the normal children I could not help thinking that there must be something very wrong with our ordinary methods of teaching which kept back the more intelligent children to the level of my poor idiots."

This is exactly what Montessori teachers think when people say that the Montessori children are too precocious. They know it is not a question of precocity at all: it simply means that the children of the same age groups in the Kindergarten and earlier grades are so treated that they have no opportunity to reveal the more advanced possibilities that are in them.

The present writer had a singularly vivid proof of this actually since the beginning to write this article. I am acquainted with a lady who teaches a First ^{Grade} class in a ~~government~~ public school who is keen on Montessori principles and had introduced them - as far as she was able - in her class of 22 children. She had supplied them with a certain amount of home made material for the Three R's and had encouraged them to work individually and choose their own occupations.

The children had responded with eagerness to this approach but after six or eight months they had come to the end of the materials they which had been prepared for them . (For you cannot expect to have spontaneous concentration and prolonged individual work without the right kind of materials which act as " the point of contact " between the intelligence of the child and the real ^{external} reality or truth which is being studies)

Oneday with the teachers premission I introuced a lot of new materials for teaching various operations in Arithmetic to the children . Though I have been accustomed to Montessori children for nover forty years I could not help being impressed with what happened . The children acted exactly like what Montessori described in one of her books when she ~~says~~ relates how children who had been mentall starved from a lack of didactic materials ^{the right kind} , when gien them " flung themselves upon them " like hungry lions ,

For instance . To two of the boys in the class - who had never who were quite unacquabited with the very idea of the multiplication tanies I introduced a material by which they could work out the tables for themselves . I started them (working separately @ on the 2 times tbale . That doen I asked if the would like to do the three times . which they did . The the 4 times table - then the fives times .

At various intervals I askedthem if they were not tired and would lie to ~~to~~ andfinish their work aon anothe day . but they both pushed steadily on until - after working continuously for 2½ hours they had worked out all the tables up to the ten times - and coplied each one down in a blank for for THE TABLE OF PYTHAGORAS .

I started another and youner boy ona amterial showing how to do short division . In the same way he worked ttheadily - doing all the sums prepared nd others of~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ besides , working without a break for over two hours .

To typist ,Now begins disc 3 Side I ...It begins in the middle of a sentence from Disc 2 side 2 which runswill make things easier later on "(now begin) when she begins to do addition and subtraction etc of fractions ---not much later on by the way . She may not yet be acquainted with the terms numerator and denominator but she knows experimentally what they are so that already she has a world of experience to which these labels can be attached when the right moment comes .

THE SECRET OF THEIR INTEREST

The secret of the concentrated interest which these little ones show in these exercises which were made for the older ones lies in the brilliant way in which Montessori has transformed the business of acquiring knowledge from an enforced motionless passivity while the children listen - all together - to the " talk and chalk " of the Teacher , into a joyful spontaneous grasping or apprehending " by each individual child by means of a precise activity with a material . This material acts as " the point of contact " which links the intelligence of the child at the " Centre " to an external reality by means an activity at the ~~the~~ " periphery " of the child's personality .

A GRADING DOWN OF THE MATERIALS

The little ones having appropriated to themselves much of the material which was made for the older ones (as recorded above) Montessori now set about creating more advanced materials for the latter . She argues thus with herself : if the small children prefer unexpectedly difficult things why should n't the same thing apply to the older ones too. She acted on this supposition and the resu

please . This she did , giving them half a dozen more numbers which they at once proceeded to work out and work correctly in the same manner , and with just the

please . This she did , giving them half-a-dozen more numbers, whereupon ~~They~~ They at once began to search for the square root of each ~~in the same manner and~~ with just the same sort of eager zest which I had previously noticed in the children outside in the garden ~~as they~~ ^{ed} in ~~their~~ search for leaf-forms . $\sqrt{\quad}$ The last number she gave them was quite a formidable one ~~74,529~~ ; it was 74,529; but - quite un-daunted by its size - ~~they~~ proceeded to tackle it along the same lines as they had done the others . Actually their work with the coloured symbolic pegs , ~~which led them eventually to the correct answer~~ , was based on the usual formula ~~for~~ $(a+b)^2$ and $(a+b+u)^2$ ~~a+b+e~~ except that these were special cases following the ~~usual~~ formula $(t+u)^2 = t^2 + u^2 + 2tu$.
 ~~t~~ and ~~u~~ standing for the tens ^{u for} and units in the number they were looking for .

$\begin{array}{r} 113 \\ 113 \\ \hline 339 \\ 113 \\ 113 \\ \hline 769 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 123 \\ 123 \\ \hline 369 \\ 246 \\ \hline 1463 \\ \hline 29 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 123 \\ 123 \\ \hline 369 \\ 246 \\ \hline 123 \\ \hline 15129 \end{array}$
---	--	--

$$\begin{array}{r} 22 | 74 \ 5 \ 2 \ 9 \ 12 \\ | 46 \\ \hline 2362 | 28 \ 5 \ 2 \end{array}$$

If there is a difference in what does it lie ? The answer is as simple and easy as falling off a brick'. The answer lies just in this --- that MONTESSORI STUDIED THE CHILD IN ITS FREEDOM) and so do her followers .

Of course every thing here depends on what one means by freedom . We cannot go into that here or we should never answer the question at the head of this chapter . But we can do something better : we can describe to the reader what actually happened not once but many times -- not in one place but all over the world something which bears directly on the criticisms that the Montessori system aims at producing too precocious children and in so doing puts an undue strain upon their mental powers .

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE FIRST MONTESSORI SCHOOL
IN ROME .

IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT one of the circumstances that aroused such universal interest in Mon first Casa de B was the fact that these forty or fifty ~~xxxx~~ poverty stricken children of 4½ to five learned spontaneously to write -- the famous Exp into writing . But what most people do not know is that Mon had no intention when she started of teaching them to write .

Quote here from the Secret of Childhood p148-50

It might be objected that this was a special case --- but witness the T.V. show the other day by Art Linletter -- has gone on ever since . And the surprises given by these small children have never ceased .

HO IT HAPEND THE TINY GATE CRASHERS

BACK HERE TO ORIGINAL MS. As indicated above the Mon Syst was first applied to small children

discussion

We shall proceed with our argument along two lines - walking as it were on two legs ; they are arguments from psychology and from history - the history of the method .

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE FIRST MONT SCHOOL

Let us begin by noting what happened in Montessori first Casa dei Bambini in Rome - 1907 . It is well known that one of the circumstances which aroused most interest - a world wide interest - was the fact that the forty to fifty slum children in that school learned to write at the early age of $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 years . This was the famous " explosion into writing " which seemed at that time nothing less than a sort of miracle . (For the description see M M Her Life and Work Chapt two Discovery pp or The secret of Childhood by M. pp) Most people , who know anything at all about Montessori have at least heard of this explosion into writing . But what most people have never realised is that when Mo ~~xxxxxx~~ started her work with these tiny mites she had no intention what ever of attempting to teach them to write - ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ What happened was this 9 (Here comes an extract from the Secret of Childhood)

pp
In fact she tells herself that at that time she shared the general prejudice that it was necessary to begin writing as late as possible - certainly not before the age of six . But the children themselves thought otherwise ; and some of them came to her and demanded to be taught to read and write . Even then she did not concede to his request but only gave in when her parents ~~xxxx~~ added their solicitations .

Even then Montessori did not actually teach the children to write . All she did (to use her own words) was

PRECOCITY AND SENSITIVE PERIODS

It was later on

Early exp in writing - fallowed as if ... later
↳ to even thing

it was only later on that Montessori came to understand more fully the significance of ^{these} ~~these~~ extraordinary happenings. And what threw light upon them was her discovery of ^{the sensitive} Sensitive Periods in the child's ^{mental} development. Then it was that she realised that the children's extraordinary fascination which the children showed - their passionate interest in the sounds of the letters and their written symbols, their delight in analysing words into their component sounds, and the pleasure they showed in composing words with the movable alphabet - that all these unexpected manifestations were all bound up with the Sensitive Period for Language through which the children were passing. This is one of the ~~most~~ longest of the Sensitive periods lasting practically from birth to about six or seven years of age. It is the disappearance of this sensitive period for language after this age which explains - a fact which has often surprised people - why children at a later age, say 7 yrs or later, show no interest in the sand paper letters and very rarely "explode" into writing as do the younger ones. Such children have "missed the bus": the sensitive periods for language and for touch have given way to new sensitive periods which have brought with them new interests and new capacities.

At this point I might mention an amusing but significant incident which was told me by Signorina Macherroni who was the Directress in the first Montessori Class in Milan about the year 1908.

"One morning about four or five little children (five-year olds) came up to me in a sort of solemn deputation each carrying an exercise book for writing in their hands. They stood in front of me in a sort of expectant silence - but without a single word being said. I wa

was a bit mystified as to what it was all about - until finally one of them said " We want to write "

But that in itself did not clear up the mystery for I knew that all of them could write already and had already covered pages and pages with their own spontaneous writing. After some further enquiry I discovered what it was all about. They wanted to do a special kind of writing - but they had no words to describe it. What they really wanted was a dictation lesson. So I began to dictate to them and they wrote two pages of it straight away without any sign of fatigue.

I think it can be safely said that outside the circle of M. followers there are as yet comparatively few people who understand the nature & form of her S.P.