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AFTER THIRTY YEARS

A VISIT TO DR. MONTESSORI'S SCHOOL

AT LAREN , AMSTERDAM

by

Mortimer Standing , B.Sc.

Dr. Maria Montessori has been described , by The Times , as "The Most Interesting Woman in Europe " . The first lady-doctor in Italy and a former leader of the Feminist Movement , now - and for thirty years - the apostle of the Rights of Childhood . Founder of a world-wide method of education based on true liberty and independence (not license) Left the uncongenial atmosphere of Fascism to settle in Spain . Driven thence by the Revolution , at the age of 68 founds a new school in Holland .

Indefatigable still at 70 she flies from country to country to speak on behalf of the Child . Leaves for a lecture tour in India this Autumn .

Ranks with Pestalozzi and Froebel as one of the greatest educators of all time .

Still breaking new ground and making fresh discoveries in Education as this article shows .

MATCHING LEAVES or BOTANY FOR BABES

d) Little girl discovers "needle-shaped" leaves on a fir tree to match the leaf on the card .

Vulgar Fractions have no terror for this child even at 6 years of age

Vulgar Fractions , served up a la Montessori , are much appreciated - even by children of 5 to 6 years .

What's going on here ? No , it is nothing to eat ! They are looking for the square root of the number 5,329 , and they have nearly found it .

Three little patriotic Dutch maidens working together on a map of the Dutch East Indian Colonies .

Dr. Montessori , who is nearly 70 , about to leave her school at Laren , near Amsterdam , and fly to England to lecture in London the same day .

Dr. Montessori taking leave of her chief assistant , Signorina Paulini

A new and absorbing Geography game . Sticking

A new and absorbing Geography game . Sticking in the flags of the various countries of Europe into their appropriate countries on a map . Each flag is attached to a pin .

MATCHING LEAVES or BOTANY FOR BABES

a) Table with cards spread out , each with a typical leaf form painted on it .

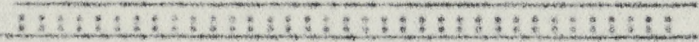
MATCHING LEAVES or BOTANY FOR BABES

b) Small boy setting off to find in the garden a heart-shaped leaf to match the one on the card in his hand .

MATCHING LEAVES or BOTANY FOR BABES

c) Finds a corresponding leaf floating on the pond : comparing it with the card .

AFTER THIRTY YEARS



A VISIT TO DR. MONTESSORI'S SCHOOL

AT LAREN" AMSTERDAM

Dr. Maria Montessori " The most interesting woman in Europe " (The Times) . First Lady- Doctor in Italy . Formerly Leader in the Feminist Movement , now , and for thirty years , Apostle of the Dignity and Rights of Childhood. Founder of a world-wide method of Education based on liberty and independence (not license). Left uncongenial atmosphere Fascism to settle in Spain . Driven thence by Revolution at the age of 68 founds a new school in Holland . Indefatigable still at 70 flies from country to country to speak on behalf of the Child . Leaves for India to lecture there this Autumn .With Pestalozzi and Froebel ranks with the greatest educators of all time . Still breaking new ground in Education as this article shows .

AFTER THIRTY YEARS.A visit to Dr. Montessori's New School at Laren in Holland.

Thirty years ago there took place in Rome, one of the most important events in the history of Education.

A young lady Doctor, (the first lady to take a medical degree in Italy) jeopardised a brilliant medical career to carry out an educational experiment with a number of poor children in one of the worst slums in the Eternal City. This was Dr. Maria Montessori; and thus came into existence the first so-called Montessori School - though at that time it was called the Casa de Bambini - the Children's Home.

Such wonderful things happened in that unlikely place; such amazing revelations came forth from those slum children of 4 to 6 years of age, that people began to come from all parts of the world to see them - like pilgrims to a new Mecca. All sorts of conditions of men and women came, from the King and Queen of Italy downwards. Ambassadors (including the British,) Society people, statesmen, University professors, teachers of course, but also Doctors, Psychologists - and they came from as far East and West, ^{as} Japan and America.

What was happening there? Whatever it was it was news, and soon the Press of every civilised country took it up. McClure's Magazine in the States ran into a second edition on the strength of it - an unheard of thing; in England the "World's Work" made ^a scoop - and before long the name Montessori was known from pole to pole.

What was all the fuss about? Why all this excitement over some 40 small children in a slum tenement?

Because in that dreary and unpromising environment, like a flower springing from a dung-hill, there had blossomed forth a new revelation of the spirit of childhood, of its possibilities, capabilities, its power and beauty, Dr. Montessori had discovered that the small child we usually see is not the real child; but a spoiled edition of him - spoiled by wrong treatment by adults, parents and teachers. ~~For~~ These children in the San Lorenzo quarter of Rome had revealed new characteristics. They showed that even children of four and six, love to work as well as play - ^{or} even better, that they have a passionate love of order; that they acquire the elements of culture (Reading and Writing etc.) ^{and} spontaneously; that they possess an astonishing self-discipline.

We do not intend to re-write this story, which is a generation old, for we have a new one. Since that time Dr. Montessori Schools have sprung up all over the world, not only for children in Europe and America, but also for woolly headed piccaninnies on the banks of the Congo, for yellow almond eyed bambini by the Yangste; and brown ones by the Ganges. Even amongst the Eskimos, ^{the} ~~Dr.~~ Montessori's new system has found its way, and in tropic islands in equatorial seas.

When these striking things happened, ^{30 years ago} as described above, Dr. Montessori, like Byron, woke up to find herself famous. ~~But what did not happen to Byron~~ - People came thronging from all over the world asking her to teach them her secret - that secret which unlocks the soul of the child.

In consequence, she was reluctantly obliged to give up her more immediate contact with the children, to give courses for teachers. During the past 25 years she has given 24 of these International Training Courses; and has trained some 3,000 teachers who have gone back to over 40 different countries.

(~~She has just finished July 1939, her 24th given at London~~)

Many of these Courses were given in London but others in Rome, Berlin, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Buenos Ayres Chicago, San Francisco etc. But wherever she has ~~been~~^{gone} she has taught the same message

in one form or another - that we must liberate the child from the oppression exercised over it - albeit - unconsciously- by ~~we~~ adults,

by parents, nurses, teachers etc., This can only be done by establishing a new sort of relationship between Child and Adult. We adults must stand back and give the child room to grow. This does not mean we must abandon the child, ~~and~~^{or} leave it to its own resources.

It means we must help the child to help itself. As in every other living being so in the child growth comes about through certain powers placed ^{there} by Nature ~~in the individual~~, powers which lead through self-^{and} activity to growth - development.

No one can grow for another; and we adults try to do too much for the child, and in the wrong way. Every time we help the child when that help is not necessary we not only do no good to it, but we actually hinder development.

The child has immense powers of apprehending knowledge spontaneously; and our best way to help him is to arrange his environment that he can "take" in knowledge by his own God given powers- directly from things ~~prepared materials~~ - by his own self activity.

Our part as Educators is to stand by, and help the child to become a self-directing, independent personality - one who can act for itself, choose for itself, decide for itself, govern itself, think for itself.

Such being Dr. Montessori's aim, it is not surprising that her system has not found enthusiastic support in the totalitarian countries - where independence and thinking for oneself are not encouraged, (to put it mildly!).

So Dr. Montessori left Italy and settled in Barcelona, Spain, where she worked for several years. When came the Spanish Civil War, and the Revolution in Barcelona. It was only through the help of the British Government that she was enabled to get away, (at half an hour's notice) on a British battleship. She then went to settle in Holland, where her system has been much appreciated and ^{has} received much government recognition. This was one might say, her second exile. So now at 68 years of age, well past the age when most people retire, she found herself with straitened means - in a strange country. But she felt that her destiny was not yet accomplished. She had more yet to give the world. So with the indomitable spirit of the true genius ~~at the age of~~ ~~thirty~~ thirty years after the first school in Rome - she started a new school at Laren - a residential suburb of Amsterdam. Fancy starting a new school at nearly 70, and in a foreign country, and in a language she did not know! Such is the power of genius to rise above obstacles!

This new

I had heard so much about ~~the~~ school from some of Dr. Montessori's students that I determined to see it for myself. I was not disappointed - "Greenendaal" stands in its own grounds, and is simply a residential villa converted into a school. To judge externally it is not nearly so imposing as many of the Montessori schools which have been specially built by the corporations of Amsterdam and Rotterdam etc. Nor is it a large school - it does not contain more than 40 children. Immediately on entering however one realizes that there is something special about the atmosphere of the school. I have visited numberless schools but have never been in one where the children seemed so entirely natural and at ease, so much "at home" yet, at the same time, so orderly and disciplined.

To describe what the children are doing in a Montessori School by its very nature baffles description within the scope of an article. For all the children are doing different things - each working at the particular subject he has chosen. ~~For~~ Dr. Montessori believes with Shakespeare, "There is no profit where no pleasures taken". In brief, sir, study what you most affect".

There were four rooms - all opening from one to the other, one being assigned to the smallest children, from 3 - 4½ yrs One to the oldest from 7 to 8 years, and one to the stage between. The fourth room was devoted to "The Exercises of Practical Life" ~~There~~ was a cupboard with *delft*. a sink for washing up; a little dining table; a miniature ironing board with an electric iron, small brushes, dust-pans, dusters etc. - everything on a most diminutive scale. Three or four children - their ages from

In this last room

3½ to 5 years, were busy preparing a meal. ^{the way} It was the quaintest sight in the world to see ~~how~~ they set about ^{it} quite by themselves - for the Teachers did not even go into the room. ^(from m)

One tiny girl was shelling pea-nuts; and ^{next to her} a boy was grinding them in a little machine; ^{little} another girl was cutting and buttering some bread.

I watched them for a while and then passed on to observe in another room. About half an hour later when I peeped ^{in again; and now} in, in the same unhurried but undeviating way, they were laying the table. ^{looked in} Next time I ~~came that way~~ they were all seated in solemn

dignity enjoying the fruits of their labours. But even that was ^{the end of it; for when the meal} not ~~at~~ - ^{was over} for the meal ended - ^{Part} the best ^{am sure} as Browning says, was still to come - viz; the washing up.

^{proceedings} This I ~~think~~ they enjoyed as much as the meal itself. The whole ~~affair~~ ^{and all that} must have lasted an hour and half. ~~All the time~~ no adult came near them, or interfered

with them in any way. ^{over the pass} This was perhaps the most astonishing ^{thing I should}

And all this in school time! What a waste of valuable ^{time} ^{to let the children do all these things} some people would say! But not so Dr. Montessori, for she has found out by experience, that in these early years - up to 5 or ^{5½} 6 - nothing

is more important for the harmonious development of these tiny personalities, than ^{such meal & similar} these "Exercises in Practical Life". For all

^{These} ^{body} ^{towards} ^{ne} ^{is} ^{because} ^{they} ^{help} ^{to} ^{bring} ^{about} ^a ^{more} ^{perfect} ^{which} ^{can} ^{only} ^{come} ^{with} ^a ^{proper} ^{co-ordination} ^{of} ^{the} ^{muscular} ^{system} ⁱⁿ ^a ^{new} ^{results} ⁱⁿ ^a ^{right} ^{relationship} ^{between} ^{body} ^{and} ^{Soul}.

That these Exercises of Practical Life are not a waste of time is clearly shown by the fact that these same children ^{also} are more advanced in their intellectual development under ~~this system~~ ^{than} than

And what was perhaps the most astonishing
thing about this whole astonishing spectacle
was the fact that all that time I never
saw an ~~adult~~ adult come near them
or interfere with them in any way

ordinary children of the same age ^{ordinary} ~~as~~ ^{other} schools,

Indeed it took ones breath away to see what work these little children were capable of doing - all be it remembered work quite freely chosen and ~~carried on as freely~~. For the principle on which a Montessori School is run - very briefly - is this;- To surround the children with an immense number and variety of interesting materials or occupations, each calling forth some activity on the part of the child; and each material so designed that in using it the child will learn something. *And the child.* ~~He~~ is allowed to choose his own work and remain at it as long as he likes.

in
As/Dr. Montessori's School 30 years ago in Rome, so now in Holland, she has discovered that when you give children this sort of freedom in a Prepared Environment, the most surprising things may happen. *Here is one of them.*

During the past 2 years, Dr. Montessori with help of her callaborators, prepared some new materials for teaching History, Geography and Nature-study on these same lines. She gave this material to the elder children thinking it most suited to their mentality. Thus for instance she prepared a map of Europe divided

into its several countries; but, instead of putting the names, ^{or on them} she stuck on to each country a picture of its national flag. ~~Then she~~ *This was to act as the key map. In addition she prepared* ~~had~~ another such map divided into countries, but blank. *Then she also provided* ~~had~~ a pincushion into which were stuck pins each bearing a flag of one of the countries of Europe. The exercise consisted in

affixing the pins with the ^{flags on them into the} maps in the corresponding countries *in the blank map - helped at first with the control map* ~~helped by the control map.~~

(Each country had a little hole for to pin to stick in)

(they were left for blank)

Then a curious thing happened. The small children from the ^{adjams} Babies' Room came in and watched what was going on; and then, when the occasion offered, quickly took away the material and did it themselves.

I saw one of these tiny ones - a boy of 4½ years put ~~in all~~ the flags of Europe into their ^{right} countries and saying their right names, and he did it as easy as winking. "That's England" he said to me "Where you come from!" - "That's Holland where I live" (see illustration.) The very same thing happened with the other materials Dr. Montessori made for teaching Geography, History and Nature-study. ^{tsongom} ~~These tiny creatures from the other room had insisted on doing these things themselves.~~

Thus Dr. Montessori ^{made} the discovery that ^{small} children prefer doing ^{the most} difficult things to easy ones. I saw, for instance, some very small children (about 5 years) enthusiastically studying the ^{materials} ~~different~~ forms of various kinds of leaves for teaching the various ~~leaf-forms~~ leaf-forms.

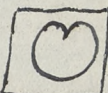
These tiny creatures ~~came~~ came in; stood quietly observing what was happening; & then - if you please - when the materials weren't being used quietly walk off with them to their own room ~~to~~ to do them themselves.

their interest of course

The secret of ~~secret~~ lies in the brilliant and living way that Dr. Montessori has presented^g the subject. ~~Yet it is~~ quite simple when you see how it is done, as simple as Columbus and the egg. *but no else ever thought of it before.* She had[§] prepared a set of about ten cards on each of which is a typical leaf form. (See illustrations) The child's attention is drawn to the peculiarities of each form. *Then particular form is selected, and* ~~The one is chosen out~~ *(or it chooses itself)* and the game - *if you can call it a game - into the garden and look for a leaf of the same type or form.* ~~is to go and find a leaf like it in the garden.~~ *That's* In this way ~~So~~ what would have been under the old system a dry-as-dust bookish classification is turned into a series of thrilling voyages of discovery all over the garden.

(page)

In the illustrations^g you see the cards spread out on a table, and two children, with different kinds of cards *in their hands,* looking for-
~~and finding~~ the corresponding leaves in the garden.

I gave the little fellow in the picture the card like this. 

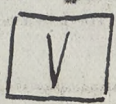
I chose it at random; and afterwards I rather wished I hadn't.

For he knew better than I what sort of plant it came ~~off~~ *from*, and made a bee-line towards a little pond. I followed him, and ~~got~~ *arrived*

there just in time to see him stretching out over the pond, at a

most perilous angle *trying* to pull out a leaf floating on the surface. *managed to do so without falling in, and I was able* To my relief he ~~did not fall in and I managed to~~ snap him by the

place it humpback on. water edge just before he rose to his feet to take back his prize ~~to the table, and get another form of leaf for the next trip.~~ *This done he selected another leaf form & set off on his next trip.*

To the little girl in the picture I gave a very different sort of leaf form -  *As she went to* picture, like this - *off* I followed in her wake, and she

~~went straight away to another part of the garden, and I just managed~~ *checked her steps* I ~~arrived~~ just in time to

to get her taking a "needle" shaped leaf from a small pine tree. It was a charming sight to see these tiny mites, in their pretty coloured dresses, running to and fro from the table to the garden and back again carrying their leaves - likes bees going and coming round a hive. The whole business was incredibly simple and

natural; so that when, a week later, in another part of Holland, a teacher said to me rather scornfully. "I dont approve of this new idea of Dr. Montessori's of teaching Botany to Babies, do you?" I simply smiled, and asked her if she had seen it herself, though I knew before she spoke, her answer would be in the negative, as it was.

The little ones, having gradually appropriated for themselves much of the materials made for the older children, Dr. Montessori set herself ^{to task of making} ~~to make~~ some more materials for the latter. And in doing so, she argued thus: ^{unsequenced} If the small children prefer ^{the same thing apply to} ~~difficult~~ things why shouldnt/the older ones too? So she acted on this

supposition; and the results were equally remarkable. Some of them ^{so} ~~seem~~

^{results} I was able to ^{witness} ~~see~~ with my own eyes. ^{To take an instance} ~~For instance~~ in the room ^{while} were the older children ^{witness} ~~worked~~ I saw a boy (8½ years) down on his knees busy with a great quantity of different coloured bead-bars

spread out on a rug on the floor. I asked the Directress what he was doing? "Positive and Negative numbers" she ^h ~~replied~~ [^]. Then she took a slip of paper and wrote on it. 12 - 7 - 4 + 3 - 5 - 8 and gave it to the boy, who looked at it and promptly gave the answer - 9.

"Now you make ^{one} ~~an~~ up, please" she said, ^{to him}. The young x fellow wrote

I noticed he

down a similar sum but [^] set himself a much harder one. He wrote -

38 - 60 + 10 - 56 + 39 - 76 =

While he was working it out

(in his head) the Teacher did also ~~but~~ ^{also} I tried ~~to~~ - but reckoning was never my strong point; I got muddled and gave it up!

The boy without any ^{visible} working simply wrote down - 105. The Teacher ^{meanwhile} had ~~got~~

produced

a different answer; ^{but} on doing it again she found the boy was right and she was wrong!

Then she went across the room, took

a bit of chalk, and wrote on the board $(7 + 3 + 5)^2 =$

and went to another boy of about the same age, and asked him if he would do it for her. He left his work and went straight to the

board and wrote as follows -

$$\begin{aligned}
 (7+5+3)^2 &= 7^2 + (7 \times 3) + (7 \times 3) + 3^2 + (7 \times 5) \\
 &\quad + (7 \times 5) + (3 \times 5) + (3 \times 5) + 5^2 \\
 &= 49 + 21 + 21 + 9 + 35 + 35 \\
 &\quad + 15 + 15 + 25 \\
 &= 225
 \end{aligned}$$

No fuss; no racking his brains to remember the formula; ^{he just wrote the numbers quickly down taking it all} he just simply took it in his stride. "It seems to you rather

wonderful" said the Directress smiling, "but really it is quite

simple. You see we never begin with ~~just~~ abstract numbers on paper - but always with ^a concrete material. ^{Such sums are} in this case with the peg-board and these different colored pegs. ^{Some of them are units}

worked out first with the

some tens, some thousands. ^{like they have worked a great many such} Working ~~sums many times with concrete~~ material the children come to ^{understand} see the thing so clearly that the

Sums with the concrete

abstract idea - the algebraical formula ^{comes by itself, at a} certain moment ^{they simply "see" it} with the intellect. ^{at a} The next morning when I visited the school I said to Signorina Paulini, the Directress " I hear that some of your children

Paulini, the Directress " I hear that some of your children

(over page)

with the intellect - the mind's eye - and no longer just with the senses

know how to find the square root of a number, is it true?

She smiled and went and wrote on a black board $\sqrt{729} =$ }

Then she ^{approached} ~~went over to~~ two boys (ages about 8 ^{and} to 9½ years) who were doing a map together and said, "Would you like to show this gentlemen how to do that sum" They consented readily; put their maps aside, and began bustling about making preparations. One ^{boy} went and fetched a longer table, the other a big square board pitted with holes. Then, while ^{he} ~~one~~ went off and fetched three boxes with wooden pegs in them, (such as you would use in that game Peggoty) the other returned with three saucers, ^{which he} ~~and~~ placed ~~them~~ in a row along the end of the table. Then they got pencils and paper and ^{settled} ~~sat~~ down to work. It was going to be quite a formidable

business, apparently, this quest of the square root, and they were leaving nothing to chance. I could not help thinking that ^{judging by} ~~it~~ looked much more as if they were preparing for some scientific experiment than a sum in Arithmetic. ^{and indeed,} ~~Indeed~~ in a way, I was right.

For the whole point about all this paraphernalia was that they now ^{set to work} ~~were~~ to find out the answer "experimentally", by means of ~~real~~ ^{manipulation of} tangible ~~operations with~~ visible objects. The whole process was fascinating to watch; and ^{to a casual observer} ~~looked~~ like a curious mixture of ^{the games} ~~a game~~ of Halma, ^{and} Peggoty, ^{and the making of} ~~making~~ pretty patterns ⁱⁿ ~~of~~ geometric forms with the little coloured pegs. And it was certainly a fascinating operation ^{too} for the two young fellows involved. They soon forgot all about me and the ^{circumstances} ~~fact~~ that it was being done for my benefit, ^{so much so} ~~and~~ when I got a step ladder and put it in front of them, and mounted

^{over} ~~it with a view to taking a snap shot of this mysterious process~~ they did not give me more than a couple of glances, to return at

So much so that, when I went away
for a few moments and returned with a step
ladder which I placed down in front of them
and ~~begun~~ ^{tried} to mount it with the view of
taking a photo they did not give me more
than a couple of glances, ~~to return~~ ^{and} ~~at once~~
immediately to the

~~to the~~ absorbed ^{has} ~~recess~~ discussion that
accompanied ^{has} ~~their~~ quest for the missing root.

once to their absorbed and eager discussions on the succession
of problems that ¹⁻²⁴ accompany the hunt for this missing root.
After about fifteen minutes and ^{more} a deal of discussion a conclusion
was come to and committed to paper. $\sqrt{729} = 27$. Then they asked
the Teacher to give them more numbers to find the square root of -
and "harder ones, please," - ~~and with something over~~, which she did -
half a dozen more - and they worked them all out, correctly, in the
same manner, ^{just the same sort of case} and with ~~the same~~ zest as the little ones had looked
in the garden for the leaves. (over page) →

The afternoon of that same day I saw one of the children,
not yet eight ^{yo base} working out ^{the following sum} this ~~sum~~ - he was finding the interest on
a capital sum of 4300 guilders invested at 4% for two years.

Here again ^{the work} ~~it~~ was not done in the abstract, but by means of a
visible concrete material, ^{(The Golden Decimal System beads) which helped} which assists the juvenile mind to "see"
the quantities involved in the concrete as well as the abstract.

By introducing this principle of seeing and doing into the
Teaching of Arithmetic, it is surprising what very small children
can understand. ^(see photo) I saw a small girl - she could not have been
more than five, - taking out little slips of paper and putting them
out carefully on metal circles which had been cut into segments.
^{She was beginning the} She ~~was~~ studying fractions, ^{of} and each slip had $\frac{1}{2}$, or $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{5}$ up to
tenths written on it; and the exercise consisted in putting each
slip, as you found it, ^{in one of the divided circles.} on the corresponding fraction of a circle.
Here again action accompanies learning; and it is this activity
which rivets the attention, ^{the} of the child and sustains ~~its~~ interest.
How different from the old system where all the poor mites had to
sit ^{immobility} ~~squashed~~ together, like herrings, on a bench - doing nothing -
with their hands -

✓

the juvenile intelligence to see & comprehend

picture

✓

The last number given them
was Their work with the symbols
was based on the formula $(a+b)^2 =$
 $a^2 + 2ab + b^2$; or rather a special case
of this $(t+u)^2 = t^2 + 2tu + u^2$, t standing
for the tens in the forthcoming answer
 $+ u$ for ~~the~~^{the} unit figure.

and listening to the interminable droning of the Teacher, ~~who inter~~
~~all their movements.~~ ^{young children} For the ~~child~~ there is no true development
 Intellectual as well as physical, ^T without movement.

^{Another} ~~One~~ thing that struck me very forcibly, and very pleasantly,
^{During my visit} was the curious love of the beautiful. Art and mathematics seemed
 together quite naturally in their little souls. One child for instance
 (about four years) who had just finished a page of very simple sums-
 such as $9 + 1 = 10$ - was busily making a decorated border round the
^{pages} ~~with~~ a little girl ^{I noticed that one} in a higher class, ~~I noticed, had made~~
^{little girl (about 8) had made} floral pattern round the edge of a large sheet of paper on which she
^{previously} had recorded the ^{factors} ~~fractions~~ of all the numbers from 1 - 100.

I was fortunate in being there on ~~one of the days when~~ ^{a day when}
^{is to direct} Dr. Montessori herself was present at the school. ^{Her main commision with the school} ~~For she directs~~
^{have been} the Directresses, rather than teaches herself. ~~In fact~~ ^{more than this on account of her} it would not
 be possible for her to do this ^{more than} ~~as she has so many engagements elsewhere.~~

^{over page} On ~~this~~ particular morning she was due to lecture in London the same
 evening at 6.p.m; and though it was 11 a.m. before she left Laren for
 Amsterdam she kept her London appointment - by air. Pretty good
 going for a lady of nearly 70 years of age! It was delightful to
 see how all the children crowded round her eager to show her what they
 had been doing.

Dr. Montessori is to be congratulated in having as her chief
 assistant so brilliant a Directress as Signorina Paulini, who has worked
 with her already in Italy and Spain. This indefatigable lady not
 only looks after the school when Dr. Montessori is away, but also helps
 to train students teachers, for Dr. Montessori has also started a
 Teachers Training Centre at Laren in conjunction with her School.

On the evening of that particular morning
she was due to lecture to the students of her
International Training Course in London at
6 p.m. It was 11 a.m. before she left
Laren by car for Amsterdam where she
took lunch + went on by air to keep
her London appointment. Not bad going

for a lady of 70 years

There ~~are~~ ^{were} many more things I would like to ^{have} described — how the children sang in four languages (Dutch, French, Italian and English) ; the breathless excitement of a small boy who came bursting in with the news that a water-lily had opened in the pond; the follow-my-leader-game, on bicycles, in the garden during playtime, (everyone in Holland from the Queen-mother downwards has a bicycle or a scooter); the commotion when it was found that a salamander in the vivarium had caught a worm; the wonderful model of a river system, with five or six tributaries, that really worked — but space forbids.

~~The Mystery of Silence -~~

I cannot, however, resist a few words in conclusion about the "Silence Game" - surely one of Dr. Montessori's most original ^{masterpieces.} inventions

It happened this way. I was sitting quietly in a corner of the ^{one of} room, jotting down a few notes, when I became aware that something ^{unusual} was happening; ^{quite man over} though precisely what I could not imagine. One by one

^{nearly} all the children had stopped working, and were sitting quite still, as though they had been petrified. ^{turned into stone} But to judge by the expression on ^{it was not fear which had petrified them, for their faces} their faces ~~not by fear - rather it would seem by anticipation.~~ ^{shone with eager anticipation and farous anticipation.}

Then the Directress went softly, on tip-toe, to the windows and ^{gently drew} ~~drew~~ ^(over pass)

^(over pass) the curtains. This done, still on tip-toe, she glided silently as a shadow out of the room into the hall - leaving us ~~(The children and myself)~~ motionless in the hushed twilight.

For a few moments nothing happened. We waited but no one moved. ^(over) The silence deepened - ~~it seemed as if were to be made audible~~ by little tiny noises, like a bird cheeping, the clock ticking. An impressive silence full of expectation, as though something

leaving the room & its tiny occupants
(and myself!)
in a hushed & mysterious twilight.

The silence deepened; and as it did so
all sorts of little tiny noises came out "like
mice" — a clock ticking; a bird twittering,
a distant water-horn. It seemed almost
as though these little noise accentuated

the silence: it was "silence ~~and~~ ~~sound~~
sound."

The hushed air seemed vibrant
with expectation as though something important
(page 16)

important was about to happen. And then something did happen,
I don't think you would have guessed what,
but you would never guess what!

I became aware of a slight movement at the ^{far} end of the room.

A child had risen to its feet very carefully, and very quietly,

and was making his way on tip-toe ^{towards} ~~to~~ the door. Then another

child, and then another. At first I wondered why just these

children went ^{and not the others; but soon} and then I became aware, a mysterious voice ^{emanating} ~~sounding~~
^{from} in the next room. ^{It was hard as mine like} ~~Not a voice~~ but the shadow of a voice, the very ^{emanating}

ghost of a whisper. ^{It was so soft that} It did not break the silence, rather it seem-

-ed to insinuate its long drawn accents through the silence -

silently almost as a wisp of smoke - It seemed almost like the

voice of a spirit calling from another world - and it called each

child in turn by name. ~~X~~ One by one as they heard this mysterious

summons they rose and glided silently out of the room into the hall.

At last I was left all alone in that empty silence. I felt awe-fully

alone ~~abandoned, left out.~~ It was as if all the others had been

called ^{partake in some} to some inner shrine, to ~~a~~ great initiation, and I had been left

as ^{one} unworthy in the 'outer court'. (No wonder Dr. Montessori insists

that when they play this game they must call all the little ones, -

^{not one must be left out} leaving none behind) I could not suppress ^a the wish that I too had

been called. And then - oh joy! - with a thrill that ^{I am less} quite surprised

myself ^{come} I heard my name ⁱⁿ floating in a long-drawn whisper (and very

foreign accents!) through the empty room "M-----ee-----s---t---er

Sss-----t---a-----nd---eeing! ^{carefully on the floor} Silently, I arose from my seat, and ^{careless}

made my way amongst the tiny tables and chairs into the hall. And

there, all round the wall - like a row of flowers - stood the children

silently waiting. They did not seem to think it the least odd that

*Over
the
hall*

(partake)

*this game is played
the dress must be caught to
that when they play this game they must call all the little ones,
leaving none behind*

(vowels) I placed my chair in its place

A child had risen to its feet very quietly
& then very carefully & without a sound placed
his ^{his} ~~entire~~ ^{entire} ~~chair~~ ^{chair} against his table & began making
^{his way / in an out amongst the other tables}
towards the door. Then another child arose &
did the same thing; then another, ^{from here}

at first ~~on the~~
~~on to lined paper MS~~

at first I noticed only just
these children had risen & not the
others; but gradually I became
aware that a mysterious voice
was calling from somewhere
through the silence. Indeed it
was hardly a voice, more like
the shadow of a voice, the ghost
of a whisper. Its accents were so
soft - ~~so long drawn out~~ - that
it did not break the silence.
Rather ~~it seemed~~ almost as if it
was to my expression of the
silence. It came in syllables
so ~~long drawn out~~ ^{long drawn out} that they
~~long drawn out~~ flooded
through the silence almost as
silently as a long rush of
smoke. After a few moments I
realized it was coming from
the hall. It seemed like the
voice of a spirit calling from
another world; and it

*Take notice
it is its own reward*

I should have been summoned too.

And then, you might ask, what happened next? Nothing! that was all, it was over. And, rightly understood ^{if was} quite enough too. For ~~silence~~ ^{although} itself is a wonderful thing - ~~though~~ ⁱⁿ these ^{restless} hectic and noisy times we do not realize it - nor even give ourselves the chance to do so. But ~~the Silence game is~~ to these small children ^{the silence game is a unique} ~~and~~ ^{indeed it} wonderful experience ~~and~~ often brings to their sensitive souls, presentiments of still higher and deeper mysteries to come. ^{of "thoughts beyond the reaches of their souls" (Hawke)}

At a sign from the Directress the spell was broken, and we all went ^{quietly} back into the schoolroom, each to get on with his business. ^{in accordance with the} ~~for as Hamlet says "Each man has business or desire after his sort"~~ ^{of his heart,}

~~And so has each child; and~~ ^{each} very pretty it was to see these little ones ^{he or she} going back to the work ~~they~~ ^{each} had chosen - some to make plasticene mountains in the Dutch East Indies Colonies; some to their Singulars and Plurals (Grammar); some to the Multiplication Tables; some to make coloured patterns; some to make music with the bells ^{all to something useful + interesting.} etc.

It reminded me for all the world of that passage in Midsummer Nights Dream, where ^{Titania describes} the fairies disperse - some to do this and some to do that; except that in this case these little fairies were real.

L' Envai

It was hard to tear myself away from this delightful Liliputian world I have done my best to describe it, but I know I have failed. For there is an intangible something about a Montessori school especially this one - which eludes description. For it is something not made up by any number of described incident or material details: it is an atmosphere - something spiritual.