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Box 09, Folder 40 - "A Revelation, Not a Method" (draft duplicate) (E.M.S.)

Edwin Mortimer Standing

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A REVELATION NOT A METHOD

morning

One day in the summer of 1950 I called on Dr Montessori.

She was then staying at a guest house at Iglis a village in the hills above Innsbruck . As I entered she put aside a pencil and paper with which she had been occupying herself before I came in . I begged her pardon for intruding and said I would call another time as she was occupied . "It is nothing she said - nulla - I was just trying to jot down some thoughts that had come to me , but it is no use - or words to that effect .

She had a rather sad expression on her face , and I wondered if it had anything to do with the thoughts that she had been trying to put to paper . I made another tentative suggestion that ~~she~~ I should go and leave her a peace : but she insisted on my staying .

In the course of our conversation I discovered that the thoughts that she had been brooding over had to do with the discovery and reception she had met in the world in relation to her life's work . Not for the first time she then expressed her dissatisfaction - more her sorrow - that the world had come to look upon her chiefly as the discoverer and founder of The Montessori Method of Education .

During the whole of the past decade of her life this subject seemed to be more and more on her mind . It is not my method that is important she would say : it is the children who are to be studied - .

enter into the order . When this happens it resembles a cure in which the medicine which effects it is the ordered environment ,the liberty to choose the good in it , and the path which has opened up in front of the child which leads to self -perfectionament.

COMPARED TO PURGATORY

The religious order , with the child as its centre , makes one think of a continual purification .Somebody , writing of the Montessori method compared it to a sort of Purgatory .(not in the notion of suffering but rather in that of purification . Though actually theologians tell us that the souls in purgatory are happy - just because of their progress towards perfection)I have lost the article but I know it please the Dottoressa .

It is a fact that the child acts - and acts by himself - guided of course by the knowledge of how the materials should be used. By himself he corrects his own errors - one might say that he "expiates" them repeating them over and over again . But he also repeats the exercises when he has learned how to do them properly: now he repeats them not in order to do them better , but because by repeating them he sees ~~more~~ and understands more deeply . This reminds one of an episode in the life of St Teresa of Avila .She used to meditate repeatedly on the humanity of Our Lord . When someone said to her she should meditate ~~also~~ on the Divinity of Our Lord the Saint replied "I am waiting for the time when Our Lord will Himself raise me up so that I can meditate on His Divinity . This puts me in mind of what happened in my school once . A little child called Clare was matching - pairing - the colours - two and two the same , and so on. Next to her another child was doing the gradation of colours - a more difficult task , grading eight shades of the same colour . Clare did not realise what she was doing . This went on for several days when suddenly Clare saw- her eyes were opened to what Clare had

"I 'm going to do that too "exclaimed Clare and began doing the grading of the colours . And why did she begin doing it just that dya and that moment after several days had gone by ? The impulse came from within --before she was blind now she could see .