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## Box 09, Folder 46 - "Some Remarks on an Essay by Sister Elaina Cathersal FCSP" (E.M.S.)

Edwin Mortimer Standing

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*this work*  
I found ~~it~~ rather difficult to judge as a whole, as its quality varied in different sections.

I) Relative to the Questionnaire

- a) This seemed to me to beg the whole question to begin with. -- this question -- Was the class run by Sister Elaina a typical Montessori class itself.

It seemed rather remarkable that, in all that she wrote, there is nothing to indicate that she was making, or had made interesting observations on individual children, working with the Montessori materials. --

No indication that the children under her charge had become more stable personalities as the months went by.

One got the impression that the children were being looked upon as mere numbers in the discussion. The individual child as a person - with individual characteristics - did not seem to exist.

Perhaps ~~that~~ *anything different* would be expecting too much in view of the scope of the essay.

Re. that Ellensberg set-up, run by Dr Naumann and Mrs Bobbie Parsons → I have had something to do with it. And my opinion is that they started giving courses on Montessori long before they had had enough experience with it; and the whole thing was rather superficial. I spent a couple of hours in Mrs Parsons class which was very small - less than twelve - and certainly not a typical Montessori class, though it had had a promising start.

Nor have I much faith in the St Nicholas Correspondence Course (and am surprised that Mrs Ashton used it) The idea of a Montessori Training by post seems to me almost a contradiction in terms: for I can't see how any true enthusiasm can be passed on that way.

It is different, I imagine, for those who actually take a six months Course AT St Nicholas in London - but Bobbie Parsons only went to the college in London for two weeks (And then started giving lectures and courses)

But I really would not like to pronounce too definitely on this matter, until I had seen the papers corrected by that Mrs Bubbe of Oxford (see p. 3 half way down) or until I had seen the handbook which Sister Elaina had made under their instruction.

The Pertinency of the Montessori Method

*conclusion* It struck me that the whole questionnaire and the conclusion derived from it was on too small a scale to be of any real value. The statements given on page 14 would have had more cogent support if Sister E. had given examples taken from the children in her own class.

Similarly the question whether the Montessori Principles were - and are - applicable to American children could have found an affirmative reply in her own class. (Otherwise the

whole questionnaire - as suggested above - would have no raison d'être )

She makes no mention of the discussion upon this point in one of Montessori's own books where she describes the disorder in an American Montessori Class ( this was forty years ago ) . It was really only an initial disorder, but it disappeared as the children - one by one - became disciplined from within .

The same remarks were said at the beginning in most countries . "The Montessori method is all right for Italians and Spanish but not for Teutonic races etc etc". But time has proved that it is based on something so universal in child psychology that it "fits" children of all nationalities and colours and creeds.

I found the PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD in schools of the Providence Community the most interesting part of the paper

But I found that there seemed to be an unnecessary division between the horizontal and vertical implementation . One does not have to choose between them ( Like the question "Have you left off beating your grandmother?" - answer me "Yes" or "No" )

The obvious thing would be to begin at the bottom - with the youngest children - the pre-school and first grade and then carry on the same principles on the later grades - as far as they are applicable to Juniors .

practical

For Montessori's ideas of secondary education are as different from those of the small bambini as the psychology of one age differs from that of the other .

Perhaps it would be an unfair thing to say that one feels rather that Sister Elaine's interest in the subject is not a natural and spontaneous one but that from the very beginning she has had her eyes on ~~the~~ completing the ninety-hour 3- credit course". For this she cannot be criticised for that is the system .

E. M. Standing