

THE WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT

Socialism, Internationalism, Votes for All.

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INCIDENTS OF PRISON LIFE

Prison life is not all gloom. It has its gleams of sunshine, rare, but always treasured in the memory. These gleams of sunshine come differently to each prisoner, according to temperament. Thus, there were two prisoners near me who used to relieve the monotony of their existence by writing sonnets with their needles on scraps of paper and exchanged them with each other for mutual criticism. Another prisoner was in the habit of writing letters on his slate to all kinds of persons, and many a time he broke the Defence of the Realm Act writing open letters to the political darlings of the multitude. I myself have received letters from comrades in prison which I was never able to answer because of the lack of postal facilities. In various ways the discipline was outwitted to carry messages from one prisoner to another. Political news travelled like wildfire, and the methods of communication were as ingenious as they were varied. As some of them may still be in use it will be advisable not to detail them here. On one occasion I had the pleasure of reading a copy of the "Daily Telegraph" containing full accounts of the attitude of Labour towards the proposed Stockholm Conference, and I was able to summarise the contents and by various devices passed on the information to others who were interested. Once also I was the fortunate finder of a "C.O.s Hansard" full of news of importance to us in prison.

These two literary finds would have got me into trouble if they had been discovered by the officials, but fortunately they were kept secret among the prisoners. The news thus obtained made me a person much sought after at exercise by Socialists thirsting for political knowledge. At that time all the prisoners thought we were on the eve of Peace, and the excitement, though subdued, was intense. Every new arrival was eagerly questioned thus: "Any news of Peace?" but, alas! their hopeful forecasts have not yet been realised. The news of Mr. Henderson's resignation from the Cabinet was learned generally the day after it occurred, and the interest it aroused was soon lost in the greater excitement caused by a rumour that Russia and Germany had made a separate Peace. Another time it was learned that Lloyd George had declared in favour of Peace by Negotiation, and that a conference of the warring nations was to be held in Paris to adjust terms!

Reading is the principal relaxation in prison, and for the first month is confined to the most human of all books—the Bible. I got through the Bible twice from cover to cover, and contrived to read several distinctive parts several times. After the first month we were allowed three books a fortnight; after the second month five. I was very lucky in the books that came my way. Among them were all the plays of

Shakespeare in one volume; Emerson's Essays; Plutarch's Lives; Don Quixote; Wordsworth's Poems; Bagshot's Literary Studies; novels by Lytton, Blackmore, Dickens, Scott; the letters of Earl Lytton; and a sixpenny dictionary. The latter was great fun, and in parts was more entertaining than Don Quixote, which deserves to be the most humorous book ever written. These books were mostly new to me, and thanks to them I enjoyed a literary education in prison which a busy life had always denied me before. Dickens was dismal prison reading, and I could not stand him for long. Emerson was a great consolation and Plutarch was an inspiration. Reading Plutarch's "Lives" in prison was to live in the times of the great Greeks and Romans, and I trod the streets of Athens and Rome with the best of them. Socialists will find much of interest in Plutarch, including accounts of the first strike and the first guilds known in history. Also in the life of Cato the Younger they will find an example of civic courage and devotion unknown in this commercial age. Cato the Younger should be the patron saint of all rebels.

There were no mice in prison to make friends with, but I was fortunate to get on terms of intimacy with a few sparrows who came to see me morning and night, and incidentally to eat the crumbs of bread I saved for them. These sparrows came as regularly as the morning, and were led by a chubby little rascal whom I named "The Socialist" because when the crumbs were put out on the window spar he was the first to arrive; and always he chirped on his mates to come and share the grub. He and another sparrow often came into the cell and eat their crumbs on the top of the corner cupboard; the others were content to admire me from the window spar, but sometimes, just to show they were not afraid, they would fly in at one open pane of the window and out by another. I learned from an official that the sparrows always lived well at the prison until this year, when, owing to the reductions in rations, they have had a precarious existence because of the scarcity of crumbs. Consequently, prison sparrows, like conscientious objectors, have been suffering a reduced dietary.

When we were on association labour it was sometimes possible to steal a chat with a comrade, and in this way I have known discussions to take place on varied subjects ranging from the "advantages of a separate Peace for Russia" to "the universalism of Emerson." The overseer in our association shed was popularly regarded as a rotter and repressed sternly all attempts at familiarity, but his sternness only prompted the prisoners to employ extraordinary skill in outwitting him. He was apparently the youngest of all the warders and the worst. It required

great effort to maintain one's conscientious objection to the use of force when dealing with him. He was about the most obnoxious person I have met in my time. The other warders with whom I came in contact were in the main decent fellows who carried out their duties with the minimum of harshness. Two or three warders were actually kind in their attitude towards us, and made it obvious where their sympathies lay. It was almost nice to be a prisoner under their control. The superior officials were strict, but civil, and at all times were open to hear complaints or give information re routine or privileges. The chaplain was a Government Christian who carried out his duties as if Christ had been a prison commissioner. As I preferred to study the scenery of the clouds rather than attend

Of Special Interest This Week

Mistaken Ideals.

The Montessori Method

By Muriel Matters.

chapel I was spared the doubtful privilege of hearing his sermons, which I have been informed were as dull as a prison wall.

Most prisoners in their cells amused themselves at night by humming tunes, but there was one brave lad who defied the rule against singing daily. This boy sang several Scottish songs nightly, and usually concluded his concert with "England, Arise" or "The Red Flag." On one occasion he caused great fun by chanting "God Save the King," and that, no doubt, was as grave an offence as singing the hymns of rebellion. I never got to know the singer, but I learned that, though his vocal efforts kept him continually in "punishment," it did not still his song. He was a boy who would have sung a hymn of defiance on the scaffold a minute prior to his execution. His spirit could not be shut up within prison walls. There was another prisoner who whistled despite the rule against warbling, and I think his violation of prison etiquette was never proved against him. On Saturday evenings a choir came and cheered us up with their spirited renderings of Socialist songs, and on one occasion they sang in a storm of rain and wind as blithely as if they had been choristers revelling in the sunshine of a June morning. On behalf of many grateful prisoners I tender thanks to that choir, and trust their song will never grow hoarse. They indeed brought a lump of sunshine to the prison, and their singing made us feel we had friends in the world across the wall.

WHY I CANNOT BE A C.O.

By J. E. FRANCIS.

I have argued with more than one C.O. and Pacifist who commands my respect for his ideals and his conduct in other matters, hoping thereby either to become a C.O. myself—a rôle I should like to have the conviction necessary to fill properly—or that, having altered the opinion of someone (whom, differing from, I was still proud to call my friend) I might feel greater confidence in my present attitude. I have gained neither satisfaction.

I am, however, a conscientious objector—and and hope every day to become a more strenuous one—to actions which make strife inevitable.

I visualise the position of the world before the War as a big dining-hall. High tables in different parts of the room are overloaded with luxuries. The people at these tables had eaten to repletion; but, except for a few exceptions, were guarding like snarling dogs what they could not consume. I do not suggest that the measure of disgusting greediness was equal in all cases, but there was no high table that could be regarded with other than dislike by anyone believing in Christian economy.

Below these high tables were ranged other tables at which were seated those who had sufficient, but the majority of whom were greedily watching for an opportunity of pushing their way to the higher table. The floor round the tables

was covered by a mass of humanity, most of whom were either struggling for sufficient sustenance or to get a place at a table.

At certain times the consuming people had to desist in order to look to the replenishment of their stocks of food, but the amount of time given to this last was in inverse ratio to the amount on the table, and all, except those at the heads of the high tables, had to contribute the greater part of what they obtained to those whose position was better than their own.

Suddenly one of those seated at one of the high tables (who but a minute previously had been "taking wine" with those at other high tables) rose, and, commanding those about him to follow, made a grab at what was on some of the other tables.

Immediately the heads of other tables called on those about them to withstand the onslaught and retaliate by a counter-invasion. I was seated at one of the lower tables—one not immediately menaced. What was I to do? I was convinced that the instigators of the raid would not stop if they were successful in overcoming those they first attacked, and I felt it my duty to offer to help drive the raiders away from the first table attacked because it was numerically the weakest.

A C.O. will probably object that I have not faced the argument of the sacredness of human

life. I would suggest that for one body maimed or killed in war, dozens of souls are destroyed in what we call the days of peace. Until we stop this last violence, we cannot properly get forward with more important matters. The C.O. will say, "You become a devil yourself in order to cast out another devil." I admit the extreme danger; I do not admit that it is yet a fact.

I totally disagree with the treatment of the C.O. A few days before Lord Hugh Cecil made the suggestion in the House of Commons, I had published an article in which it was suggested that C.O.s ought to be allowed to leave the country, though I think it would have been right to deprive them of all but the bare necessities of the journey. Where could they have gone? Well, there are still spots outside the war zone where they could have lived "by the sweat of the brow." If any C.O. suggests that that would have been an undeserved punishment, I would ask him whether he is really convinced that he or anyone had done all that was possible to prevent this War. Can any of us escape some measure of condemnation? No; all the nations and all the individuals in the nation are guilty—not equally guilty. England less than others, and perhaps mostly in the fact that her internal dissensions were Germany's temptation.

Finally, I agree that force is no argument, but if you will pamper individuals until they run amok, then the time for argument has passed until you have the offenders under some sort of control again.

Dr. Montessori and Her Educational Principles

By Muriel Matters

II.—THE PREPARATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT: THE CHILDREN'S HOUSE.

"When a method is applied to any positive science, it results in giving that science a new direction—that is to say, a new avenue of progress. And it is precisely in the course of advance along that avenue that the content of the science is formed; but if we never make the advance the science would never take its start."

Therefore, if our study be that of the child and if we are to follow the leading of other branches of science, it is evident that we must have a method peculiar to Pedagogy. We must first prepare the environment in which we shall be able to observe the object we are to study. And "if a new and scientific pedagogy is to arise from the study of the individual, such study must occupy itself with the observation of FREE children." Accordingly Montessori turned her attention to the question of a suitably prepared environment proportioned to the child's needs in every way. For only thus can the right method be established of observing "the liberty of the pupils in their spontaneous manifestation." It is clear that if there is a disproportion between the child and the contents of his environment there will follow some of the awkwardness and disorder so commonly associated with, and termed "characteristic" of, the behaviour of the young child.

In our experiment at the "Mothers' Arms," in which Miss Hildegard Gunn, and, later, Miss Pleasance Napier, assisted, we had two great initial drawbacks—lack of sufficient space and no garden. The latter is considered by Dr. Montessori as a most important part of the preparation of a children's house. She says: "In considering an ample playground, with space for a garden, as an important part of this school environment, I am not suggesting anything new. The novelty lies, perhaps, in my idea for the use of this open-air space, which is to be in direct communication with the school-room, so that the children may be free to go and come as they like, throughout the entire day."

Notwithstanding this lack, we set to work to make the best of the conditions, and we had many compensations. Foremost, we enjoyed complete liberty from interference, which some students have suffered from orthodox and rigid officials. This will be the sore trial of students who attempt to introduce the method anywhere under the old régime—for the new wine cannot be put into old bottles.

It is not the place to speak of the help of various friends and their enthusiasm, but we prepared our environment conscientiously according to our understanding of Dr. Montessori's principles. The tables and chairs were made small and light enough for the youngest children to lift easily. All knobs and latches on doors and cupboards were small enough for the little fingers to handle with facility. Pictures were hung low for their eager eyes to see, and all utensils, brooms, pans, dusters, were in miniature. The most successful of our improvisations was the long form which we commandeered from the receiving-room of the Clinic, and converted into a washing bench, on which were placed small basins and jugs, with accompanying soap dishes, tooth-brush jars and towels. We have since added to the back ledge of this invaluable article of furniture small pigeon-holes, numbered as receptacles for each child's toilet requisites.

When our labour was completed, we took from the nursery seven children of different ages, of course under five years. The subsequent studies of those and other children will, I hope, make interesting reading at some future time.

"The first step which we must take in our method is to call to the pupil. We call now to his attention, now to his interior life, now to the life he leads with others. Making a comparison, which must not be taken in a literal sense—it is necessary to proceed as in experimental psychology or anthropology when one makes an experiment—that is, after having prepared the instrument (to which in this case the environment may correspond), we prepare the subject. Considering the method as a whole, we must begin our work by preparing the child for the forms of social life, and we must attract his attention to these forms." For we have not only to educate the child in the ordinary scholastic sense, but we have to fit him to take his place in the social scheme. Now, obviously, the first help that we can give is to enable the child to be independent. This in itself is not difficult, because the life-force within the child is desirous of expression. But that such independence shall be accompanied by cleanliness, order, right behaviour towards others is a longer work—a gradual ripening and development of the inner life. The observing and directing of these tendencies manifesting in the smallest child calls

for love and wisdom on the part of the Directress. She must most carefully distinguish in the first acts of the little child "every manifestation having a useful scope." These are permitted and observed, and those other acts which infringe the rights of others and which cannot in any sense be called "good" must be given either a new direction, or, if harmful, eliminated. But only after some experience does one realise fully the wisdom of Dr. Montessori's statement: "We cannot know the consequences of suffocating a spontaneous action at the time when the child is just beginning to be active: perhaps we suffocate life itself. Humanity shows itself in all its intellectual splendour during this tender age as the sun shows itself at dawn and the flower in the first unfolding of its petals; and we must respect religiously, reverently, these first indications of individuality. If any educational act is to be efficacious, it will be only that which tends to help toward the complete unfolding of this life. To be thus helpful it is necessary rigorously to avoid the arrest of spontaneous movements and the imposition of arbitrary tasks. It is, of course, understood that here we do not speak of useless or dangerous acts, for these must be suppressed, destroyed."

After a short while in a Montessori class, even the smallest child will achieve a certain independence which is most moving to witness—although one knows there exists a form of adult egotism which takes the contrary view. Such egotism is heard frequently in such expressions as the following:—"I want to keep him a baby as long as I can," or "I can't bear to see them growing away from me," or "I am not anxious for her to speak plainly; I love her baby talk." These expressions will not bear a moment's clear unselfed thought. Who would deliberately frustrate growth or hinder the physical development of a child? Then why wish to hinder its mental and spiritual development? As a mother takes joy in the cutting of the baby's first tooth, we take our joy, not less, perhaps more, when our children give signs of mental and moral growth. Watch that child who a few weeks ago came to us from the nursery with all the accompanying signs of his immaturity. He couldn't handle without letting fall; he walked with difficulty up the stairs, and frequently stumbled in the musical exercises. His eyes were misty, like the eyes of a calf, with desire for objects useless to him; he had no co-ordination; the consciousness had not come through (an expression of my own, not to be confused with the clear thought and expression of the Dottressa's); he was unable to express himself, speech was late, and had not been helped. "Hunger and thirst were his emotions bare" and "squawks" conveyed his needs to us. And now, he is growing towards perfection in movement, in speech, in sentiment. He can dust various pieces of the material quite well and continuously; he is beginning to recognise form and colour; he knows the difference between sound and noise. His little hands are acquiring dexterity; he can button and unbutton his jumper, and handle things most carefully. He can ask to go to the lavatory, or to be allowed to wash his hands, to help to put the cloth or the flowers on the table, or to move the various pieces of furniture. He goes to the handkerchief bag, and takes from it one of the pieces of linen which we call handkerchiefs, and after using it he deposits it in the basket provided for that purpose. His sense of tidiness is becoming so keen that the frayed threads from the pieces of linen which sometimes attach to the bag distress him, and he picks them off and puts them in the waste basket too. He makes a good attempt at sweeping the floor; he does certain musical exercises quite well; he resents the suggestion conveyed by adult action that he is a baby to be nursed, and, struggling to free himself, takes refuge in his masculinity, exclaiming with energy: "Me, me? No, no. Rene, Rene," meaning that a tiny girl of his own age shall be subjected, instead of himself, to baby treatment. Rene straightens herself, and also rejects the invitation to be nursed. Only adult egotism could view such conquest on the part of the child with distress or regret. Speaking of the mother who serves her child instead of helping him to learn to serve himself, the Dottressa says: "She offends the fundamental human dignity of her son, she treats him as if he were a doll, when he is, instead, a man confided by nature to her care." And thus we bear ever in mind the fact that "needless help is an actual hindrance to the development of natural forces." After the child has accustomed himself to his new environment, he begins to settle down to "work" with the Montessori material. Indeed, it is "work" with this material that makes possible the development which I have recorded in the little boy's case. For has not the buttoning frame afforded the practice which has converted that hand from a clumsy,

(Continued at foot of next column.)

WHATS' ON?
W.S.F. FIXTURES

OUTDOOR

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6th.
Lewisham Market Place, 3 p.m., Mrs. Walker.
Whitmore Head, 3 p.m., Mrs. Bouvier.

INDOOR

THURSDAY, JANUARY 3rd.
Co-operative Hall, King Street, Southall, 3 p.m., Miss Lynch.
Monthly Sunday indoor meetings will be held in the Bow Women's Hall after Christmas, beginning on Sunday, January 20th, 7 p.m. Full particulars later.
The weekly lectures at 22b Lincoln's Inn Fields will be resumed on Thursday, January 24th, 7.30 p.m., when Mr. A. L. Bacharach will speak on "Industrial Unionism" and Mrs. Bouvier on "The Present Outlook."
The Saturday "Great Push" Campaign will be resumed on January 12th, when Stratford will be visited.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS

KINGSLEY HALL, Bromley-by-Bow, at 8.15 p.m.
Speakers: Sunday, December 30th, Muriel Lester—"The Two Paths." Sunday, January 6th, George Lansbury—"The New Year's Message."

THE IMPRISONMENT OF MISS MARSH.

Miss Marsh, one of the Portsmouth members, has been sent to prison under D.O.R.A. The local branch of the W.S.F. is endeavouring to raise the legal costs incurred in her trial. Donations to this fund are urgently required, and should be sent to the Hon. Financial Secretary of the W.S.F., Miss Norah Smyth, 400 Old Ford Road, who will transmit them to the local branch. Our sympathies go out to Miss Marsh and the branch.

W.S.F. members will join us in sympathy with one of our earliest Poplar members, Daisy Morley, in the loss of her beloved brother, who has been killed in the War.

MISCELLANEOUS ADVERTISEMENTS

FAMILY LIMITATION DOCTRINE. Post free, 14d. —Malthusian League, Queen Anne's Chambers, Westminster.

SUFFRAGE WORKERS should spend their holidays at "Sea View," Victoria Road, Brighton. Hostess, Miss Turner.

TYPEWRITING REQUIRED at home; MSS. and Plays; Duplicating accurately done. Terms on application.—Apply Miss A. O. Beamish, 85 Hoxton Street.

TWO UNFURNISHED ROOMS TO LET in English style; rent 5s. weekly; second floor, rooms facing front; children (not more than two) not objected to; Central London.—Apply Box 400, this office.

MONDA SOCIALISMO.

Free Food, Law Love, Temple Truth, Sovran Self. Songs and Recitals by ALEXANDER HUNTER, 37 Collingwood Road, Coventry.—"Fine Voice." "Powerful Reciter."

ANTIQUES

For Genuine Old English Furniture and China MARY CASEY, 29b Lincoln's Inn Fields, W.C.2

INTERNATIONAL YOUNG AGE PENSIONS.

Dear Friends of Humanity.—Before the storm bursts let us endeavour to place the children and all those who are helpless in comparative safety by securing SEVEN SHILLINGS A WEEK each for them from the State, that we may be free to work for other reforms. At present, whilst they are exposed to cold, poverty and hunger, we can think of nothing else. 7s. a week would ENABLE FAMILIES TO MOVE AT ONCE INTO BETTER HOUSES, and to obtain better milk and food. This would stimulate local trade and reduce expenses of WORK-HOUSES, HOSPITALS, PRISONS and LUNATIC ASYLUMS, and do away with all poor rates to such an extent as to be a GREAT SAVING to the taxpayers, and would enable sensible girls to marry where they would otherwise not dare to do so, and to bring up healthy happy children to become stalwart citizens and parents in their turn, besides relieving untold pain and suffering, and being an estimable benefit to the State.

The fact of a married man becoming automatically POORER at the birth of each child constitutes a cruel wrong to all children, and until each child has 7s. a week in its own individual right, as an infant citizen, suffering, war, disease, and poverty can never be abolished. Let us all demand this from the Government now before it may be too late.

S. MACKENZIE KENNEDY.

Advert.]]

the command of his impulse. His fingers are now able to manipulate the buttons and buttonholes on the frame, and on his pinafore, too. The latter act is the application of the newly derived power. Working with the solid in sets, and by the repetition of placing the cylinders in their right apertures, he has learnt to differentiate objects according to thickness and size. In so doing, his attention has been fixed, held for a considerable time, and it is by this inner act of attention that his intelligence has developed. All the achievements which D— has accomplished within a few weeks are the result of "work" done during that time in this prepared environment. Therefore the child—the subject—has been and is being prepared, too. This calls for an analysis of the material and its purpose.

(To be continued.)

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