

originality in this connection is no more than a matter of peculiar emphasis and particular application. But even if such is granted, her contribution to educational thought and practice may still be quite real and extensive.

The principle of liberty finds its first application in the attitude of the teacher towards the child. Before she can help the child she must know what the child is in the matter of instincts, capacities, interests, and these reveal themselves only in action. So at the outset and in certain cases for days together the child must be left to *itself* to absorb the spirit of its new environment and to seize upon that aspect or activity in which it finds genuine interest and satisfaction. Another implication of the principle of liberty is that the teacher shall reduce the element of formal instruction to an absolute minimum. The typical Montessori lesson is a very simple matter indeed. The teacher, for example, places two spools of coloured silk before the child, one red, the other blue. She takes up the first and says slowly, "This is red". She takes up the other and says, "This is blue". Then putting them both down, she says to the child: "Give me the red", "Give me the blue". If the child gives the wrong colour, the teacher does not correct; she places them both aside and passes on to something else. The mistake of the child is, according to the Montessori doctrine, evidence that it is not ready for the particular bit of knowledge in question. To make a correction would be to confuse the child and hence to retard its mental growth. A day or a week later the teacher will return to the exercise, and will find that the child will make the distinction readily.

All this may seem finicky, but it at least illustrates the extreme emphasis which the doctrine places upon the importance of spontaneous development. "Hurry" is a word not found in the Montessori vocabulary. The day is long, and life, though brief in retrospect, is at least long enough in prospect for the teacher to await the psychological occasion.

But what of bad and obstreperous children? Are there none such in the Montessori schools? Since these schools are a part of earth and not of heaven, there are; but they are dealt with through isolation rather than through active coercion. The unruly child is given a table apart; he is allowed whatever he