

THE CHILDREN'S LABORATORY,

by Mabel G. Bell.

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Thursday, July 18, saw the opening of the first children's laboratory conducted after Dr. Maria Montessori's method, in Canada.

Indeed - and more particularly Leinn Through - has thus again had the honor of seeing the first starting of new forms of human effort.

The upper floor of the old warehouse has been converted into a pleasant workshop, where little ones from three years of age upward can experiment with all sorts of things to their hearts' content, and at their own sweet will, with only such guidance from their director as is needed by beginners in all laboratories.

A large dormer window has been built along the south side of the roof of the warehouse. Through this a lot of air and sunshine enters, making fresh and bright the once dark and close garret. The walls have had a coat of whitewash and are further brightened by pictures, some of which are water color reproductions of a famous series of scenes from Norwegian fisher folk life, now in the Royal Summer Palace at Christiansia. Others are strange and brilliant reproductions of colored cloth of Egyptian figures, purchased by Dr. & Mrs. Bell at Port Said.

The old lumber littering the sides of the garret has

been removed, and low shelves piled with things for the experimental work have taken its place. There are also stands of cedar trees and vases filled with pink fox-gloves, red tiger lillies and purple fleurs-de-lys. The floor still looks rather dull in spite of the Savahoe rugs, but it is to receive a coat of light blue and green paint, which will be the finishing touch of what we think is the most attractive experimental laboratory for children yet started.

There are, around the room, low tables and chairs and a piano, and on the floor a large circle has been drawn in white chalk. Along one side are low hooks for hats and coats and wash basins at a suitable height, where little fingers can be washed clean before beginning the experimental work.

The children present at the first day were:- Gertrude, Isabel, Lillian, Alec and Eliandreline Grosvenor; Graham and Barbara Fairchild; Georgina Frost; Robert and Sadie Rose; Ruth and Marion Davidson.

They answered to their names to the Director, Miss R. Fletcher, and started work at once by walking around the circle to music, stretching their arms to ease up joints, and then sitting down and trying their voices to music. Next, business actually began. Each little experimenter carried his or her chair to a table, picked out some object which struck his fancy as worthy of investigation, and then began. Alec and Barbara and Georgie chose cylinders and studied different sizes and ^{their} relations to different sized holes. Robert and Sadie investigated the properties of various solids. Others tried experiments ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ the lower building.

They worked for different periods, and the Director knelt by each in turn, considering ^{with them} the different problems as they arose, until ~~essentially~~ she thought enough work had been ~~done~~ ^{done} for the first day. Games of 'Drop the handkerchief' and 'Going to Jerusalem' to relieve possibly tired muscles were played, and then all gathered their little chairs around the Director who told them some wonderful story that held their attention to the end.

Then came 'Good-byes' and the first day's work closed.

Today - Friday (July 19) other objects were selected for investigation. Among others, engineering feats in stair building were attempted, and relations of colors and substances were studied. A new exercise was the Silence period, when the music sank to very low notes and died away into silence, and the Director called the children in whispers and they came on tip-toe while a hush fell in the room till one little girl rubbed out the word "Silence" written on the blackboard and the music recommenced and the children trooped out to play.

Tomorrow - Saturday - the Laboratory will not be open, so Monday, July 22 will see the third session.

It should be stated that while the five Crosvener children were present on Thursday, only one - Alice - really did any experimenting, but on Friday four - Gertrude, Isabel, William and Alec - were at work, and there was another experimenter in the person of Edith Davidson, who had begged for admittance after hearing the reports of her two younger sisters.