

GREAT INTEREST IN MONTESSORI METHOD

**Mrs. Margulies, Who Has Been
in Rome Studying It, Tells of
Inquiries from All Over World.**

ITS WONDERFUL RESULTS

**They Show That with the Child
Self-Discipline Is Real Discipline
and Superior to Forced Submission.**

Mrs. A. Reno Margulies, principal of the Reno Margulies School for the Deaf, has recently returned to New York after a four months' stay in Rome, where she investigated and studied the Montessori method of teaching children.

Mrs. Margulies is full of enthusiasm over what she has seen and feels confident that after the method has had a fair trial in America—that is, under trained teachers—it will not only modify the present methods of elementary instruction but will to a certain extent revolutionize them.

"Although I had as a foundation my experience with deaf and defective children," says Mrs. Margulies, "much of which is on the line of Dr. Montessori's work, and had also made a thorough study of the book, 'The Montessori Method,' in both English and Italian, I decided that the only way to judge this method was to leave all preconceived ideas on the threshold of the Convent of the Franciscan Sisters, where a Case dei Bambini, under Dr. Montessori's direction, was conducted.

"Any one who has approached Dr. Montessori's ideas in the spirit necessary to understand them must have been impressed with the results obtained in her schools.

"Well-poised, well-developed, happy little beings, from three to six years of age, work in an atmosphere of freedom, without restraint; respectful of the rights of others. Perfect harmony exists; difficulties are conquered without asking or desiring aid, and joy and triumph shine on the little faces as they call the attention of the directress (teacher) to their self-set tasks.

"I have seen the children under most trying circumstances control themselves without suggestion from the directress, proving beyond a doubt that self-discipline is real discipline and what we have hitherto called by that name has been forced submission, ready at any moment to turn into anarchy.

"Much has been written and said about the control exhibited by the children in carrying heavy chinaware while setting their little tables. I spent from two to three hours daily at the Case dei Bambini for several months and in that time it did not happen more than two or three times that anything was dropped or spilt. This, marvelous to the general visitor, was not new to me, as I have had little ones of five, with imperfect muscular control, teach themselves in three weeks to use the didactic material I have given them—use knives, forks and spoons, and laugh with joy at this wonderful new accomplishment.

"The question has been asked as to the adaptability of the Montessori method to the American child. I have not found any fundamental differences between the Italian child and the American child—just as general human nature differs but little, no matter what the nationality. I cannot, within the limits of an interview, go into the merits of the question which was asked in Rome over and over again. 'Can Montessori's system of teaching reading and writing be applied to the English language, which is not phonetic, like the Italian?' Perhaps my statement that for years our deaf children have been taught by a phonetic method, and far surpass normal children in their ability to read and write difficult words and sentences, will indicate my answer. As an experiment, I used this phonetic method with some hearing boys (normal children) who were not promoted in the public schools on account of their inability to read and write properly. In six months they were able to rank with boys of their own age.

"I believe no one who has not been in Rome can form an idea of the world interest that has been aroused in the Montessori method. There is scarcely a country on the face of the globe that has not sent its emissary to visit Dr. Montessori and her schools. I wonder how many know that she has devoted a large part of each day in receiving those who have professed interest in her work. A great many of these visitors have been Americans, most of whom could speak neither Italian nor French. With unbounded patience Mme. Montessori has answered question after question through the medium of an interpreter.

"I hear that a statement has been made that a syndicate had been formed to 'canvas funds' here and in England for an institute in Rome. I feel that, in justice to Dr. Montessori, as well as the English Montessori Society, I, who know the facts, should make them public. A Montessori society was formed in England in March, 1912, the prime movers being the well-known educators, Edwin Holmes and Bertram Hawker. The object of the society is to devote itself to the propagation of the principle at the heart of the Montessori system."

"The society has not waited until the plans for the founding of an institute in Rome have crystallized, but has generously tendered Dr. Montessori a pecuniary endowment for the furtherance and development of her work.

"That an institute in Rome is contemplated is true. Enthusiasts over the work in the Case dei Bambini have urged Dr. Montessori to interest herself in the idea of an international institute in Rome, where teachers can be trained and the plans for elementary and advanced classes can be worked out."

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