

The Montessori "System"

Pedagogical Anthropology by Maria Montessori; Frederic Taber Cooper

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intestine? The chapter on appendicitis is necessarily long. For quiet cases the "gridiron" and the "vertical" incisions are described. The latter is recommended to be 3 in. in length with its centre over the umbilicus; this is presumably a modification of "Battle's incision" which commences an inch above the umbilicus and passes obliquely downwards for four inches internal to the semi-lunar line. In what respect is the authors' incision superior to Battle's, except possibly when the diagnosis is in doubt? It would seem that the access given to the right iliac fossa must be indifferent.

The chapter on hernia is in every way admirable and excellently illustrated. What is described as "Kocher's method of treating the sac in radical cure of inguinal hernia" is not that which Kocher has preferred since 1907. The "*Invaginationverlagerung*," described in the fifth edition of his textbook is almost always applicable and is probably better than any other method.

The volume is completed by chapters on the rectum and anus which follow recognized lines. The difficult question of rectal cancer is dealt with in a very satisfying manner which unquestionably represents the present position of this subject.

### THE MONTESSORI "SYSTEM."

MADAME MONTESSORI's name is best known in connexion with a system of teaching adapted for the development of mentally defective children. The scheme which she has brought into existence in Italy has been a notable advance on the methods previously existing there, and as such has attracted a great deal of attention amongst educationalists; further, it was averred that the same scheme with modifications presented the ideal of education for all children. The claim of the system on the notice of English educationalists has been and is still the subject of inquiry, but, so far as can be judged by the reports of those who have examined the schools in their native habitat, the methods do not present any advance on, if indeed they are so good as, existing methods for the training of defectives that have been working in this country for several years; whilst the claim that it is the foundation of a better scheme of general education for normal children appears to be quite unfounded. Montessori methods suggest improvements on Italian methods, but not on English methods. English educational methods provide a freedom for individual expression that is unknown in regular Italian methods.

The weighty volume, *Pedagogical Anthropology*,<sup>3</sup> is in a sense the basis of the author's teaching scheme. She is a disciple of Cesare Lombroso. What he claimed to have done for criminal anthropology the author seeks to do for pedagogy. She writes: "The credit rests with Italy for having rescued anthropology from a sort of Olympus, and led it by new paths to the performance of an eminent and practical service." Until these new paths were discovered "Anthropology failed to raise itself from the status of a pure and aristocratic, in other words, a superfluous science, a status that prevented it from ranking among the sciences of primary importance." Unfortunately for this claim, Lombroso's way of opening these new paths has been subject to the most destructive criticism, and the new world has been found to be a shifting morass. So recent a piece of work as that entitled, *The English Convict: a Statistical Study*, by Dr. Charles Goring (London: Wyman and Sons), proves conclusively from the life-histories of 3,000 convicts that there is no such thing as a predestined type of humanity "born to do evil," and "there is no definite line of demarcation, no absolute difference in nature, as opposed to degree, between the human beings who are, and those who are not, criminal." Taking the words of our author literally, they mean that the man in the street has had an introduction to anthropology by a sensational road which to some extent tallies with preconceived notions, or at any rate fits in with the sense of things as outlined by melodrama. We should like to hear the views of anthropologists, the "pure scientists," on the assertion that their work is "superfluous," and not "ranking as of primary importance."

The work deals with the general principle of biology,

<sup>3</sup> *Pedagogical Anthropology*. By Maria Montessori. Translated by Frederic Taber Cooper. London: William Heinemann. 1913. (Roy. 8vo, pp. 518; 163 illustrations. 14s. net.)

then proceeds to consider human morphology in detail. Stature, weight, craniology, the trunk, limbs, skin and pigmentation, and the significance of stigmata, are dealt with. Then follow the methods of anthropological investigations, and tables for the calculation of indices.

There are points of detail open to criticism; for example, it is written: "The English recommend soups made of cereals and gluten, in which it is never necessary to use soup stock, just as it is never necessary to use meat in children's diet." Apart from a general recommendation nowadays of porridge, and the pet hobbies of certain dietetic cranks, this statement is quite untrue of English practice.

Some of the author's conclusions are not untinged with her views on feminism. Dealing with stature and bodily conformation, the two types—the robust of trunk and the long of limb—are considered. The former is that of the worker type, the latter that of the aristocrat. Applying the suggestion implied by the respective utilities of these classes, the author argues that woman, being of the robust trunk type, is likely to be superior to the long-legged man! Truly each is the superior of the other for that state of life to which it has pleased God to call us! Again, in craniology there is a revival of the bigger brain criterion of the sexes, and the author quotes with the highest encomium the work of Manouvrier, who, by a strange "sexual index," proved that woman had the biggest brain mass. The method is a lively example of how figures may be made to prove anything. In this thing only the author laments the depravity of her master Lombroso, who "defended the principle of the innate inferiority of woman, and regarded her, in comparison with man, as a case of infantile arrest of development."

Some of the stigmata and the indications of character given by physical conformations are difficult of application. In the one part of the book the glory of the face as the prime index of character is dilated upon; in another the hand is cited as the one index—"we can judge from the hand whether a man is fitted for work or not." It would be a hard thing to decide the fate of a child upon his face or the shape of his hands, if even we dare venture a guess on that of a man with his more defined features. Indeed, the author suggests the problem in another part of the work: "The women of Latium, who are dark and dolichocephalic, have most beautiful faces, but their hands and feet are imperfect; the brachycephalic blondes, on the contrary, are coarse-featured, while their hands and feet are extremely beautiful." Which, then, is the indication of the finer character? The dilemma shows the uncertainty that must attend upon any such scheme of pedagogical anthropology.

Nevertheless, this is a book that every school doctor should read and study; and if he will undertake investigations of the sort indicated in this work the more or less routine work of examining school children will abound in interest. If he cannot take a tripos course in human anatomy at Cambridge he can do the next best thing—read this work, follow up the authors quoted, or, better, launch out into an investigation of his own.

It remains to be added that the translator has done his work admirably; the text reads like good, original English.

### INDIAN SOCIOLOGY.

A TRUE and detailed account of domestic life constitutes a very important contribution to the science of sociology. The family is the nucleus and type of social organizations, and the habits and usages of the home are the outcome of those instincts and motives which govern the relations of individuals to each other and the adaptations of human beings to their environment, and to their hopes and fears for the future. From this point of view Mr. DENYS BRAY'S *Life-History of a Brāhmi*<sup>4</sup> possesses great value and interest, and this has been recognized by the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, which has issued the work as a prize publication. Mr. Bray is an Indian civilian stationed at Quetta, and the material utilized in the composition of his book was obtained orally from one Mirza Sher Muhammad, himself a Brāhmi and intimately acquainted with the customs of this race of Mohammedan

<sup>4</sup> *The Life-History of a Brāhmi*. By Denys Bray, I.C.S. London: Royal Asiatic Society. 1913. (Med. 8vo, pp. 182. 5s.)