

A SCHOOL WITHOUT DESKS, OR CLASSES, OR RECITATIONS

And the Pupils May Talk All They Please, Move Around As They Choose, and Go Home When They Wish--It's a Great Success Too, and Has Aroused Interest All Over the World.



Playing Number Games.



Learning to Read and Write.

In a big sunny room whose windows look down over trees and meadows to the Hudson as it flows through Tarrytown, twelve little boys and girls are going to school--to the strangest school that ever healthy little boys and girls attended in America.

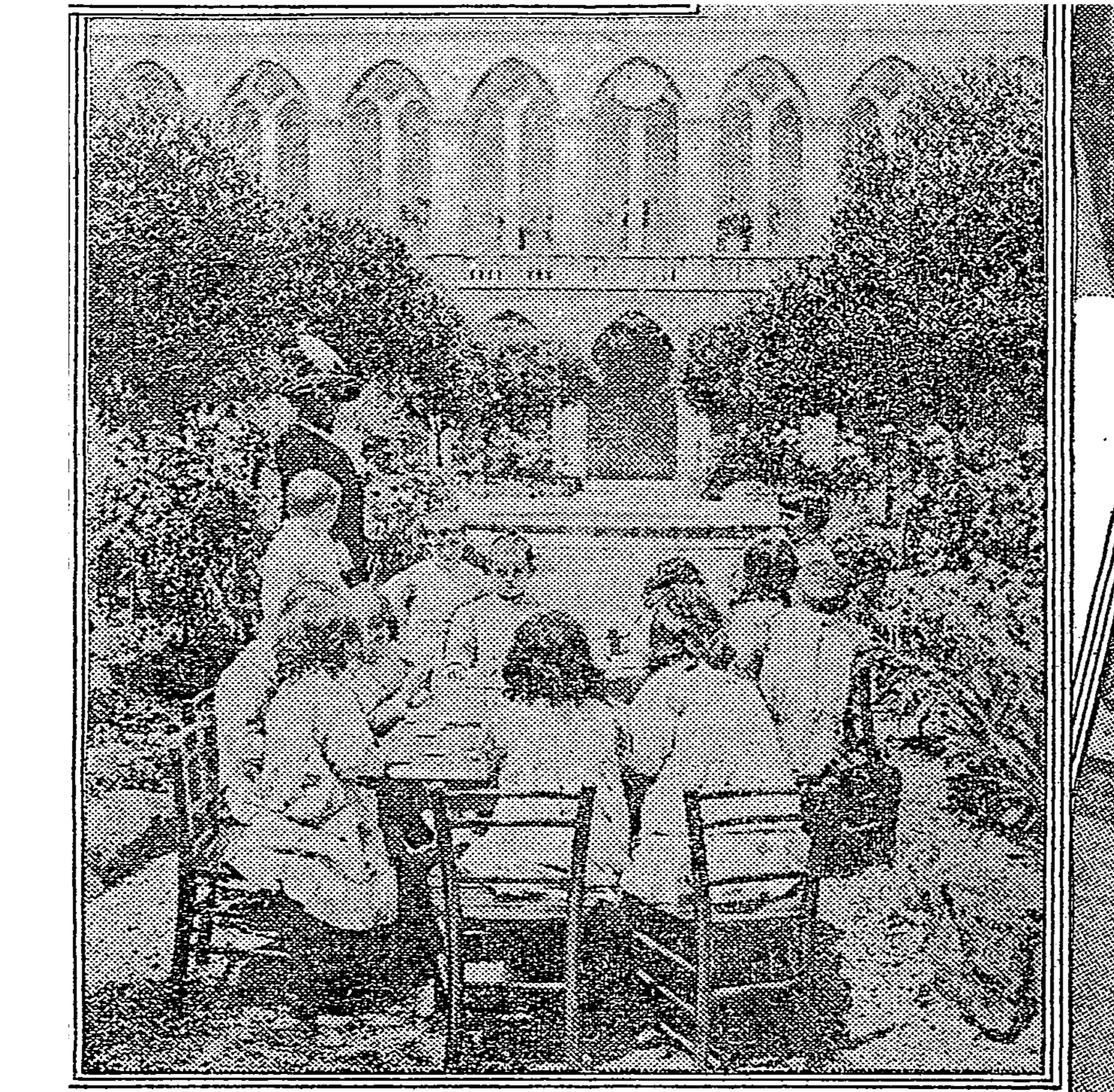
All the old bug-bears of schooltime have been banished from the classroom here. The children don't have to raise two fingers and ask permission if they want to talk to each other in this school; so long as they don't disturb some one else, they talk all they want to. They don't have to sit still through "periods" of study or recitation or even play; they move about all they wish, if they avoid getting in any one else's way.

There are no benches or desks in the big schoolroom, but, instead, little armchairs that the children may drag about to any part of the room where they wish, at any time, to sit. And if some little boy prefers--as some little boy always does--to sit on the floor, he plumps himself down without the need of even a glance in the teacher's direction to see if he may. He may even lie flat on his stomach and no one cares.

The children all know that if they get tired of the "lesson" of the moment they may turn to something else; that if they get tired of staying in one place they may move; that if they get tired of sitting still they may run around. The children come to school at 9 o'clock, but nobody scolds them, and there are no bad marks if they are late. The sessions last until 3 in the afternoon, but if any child gets tired and wants to go home he may go.

From the moment that they enter the classroom until school is dismissed in the afternoon no little boy or girl is required to do one thing that he or she doesn't really want of a free will to do. This is a school where liberty is a rule in itself. There are no "recitations" in this school; there are no "periods," there are no "classes." Instead of tiresome tasks there are delightful fanciful games. Here is a revolution in school management, indeed.

Yet this is by no means a school for defective children or tubercular children or children who are anaemic. The little pupils in the big sunny classroom at Tarrytown are normal, happy, healthy American children, little sons and daughters of well-to-do suburban residents.



Miss Anne E. George and Some of Her Montessori Pupils.

Nor is this a school where discipline is set at naught, and "a good time" made the important feature of the day. On the contrary, the moral development of the child stands even higher than his mental education among the aims of the school.

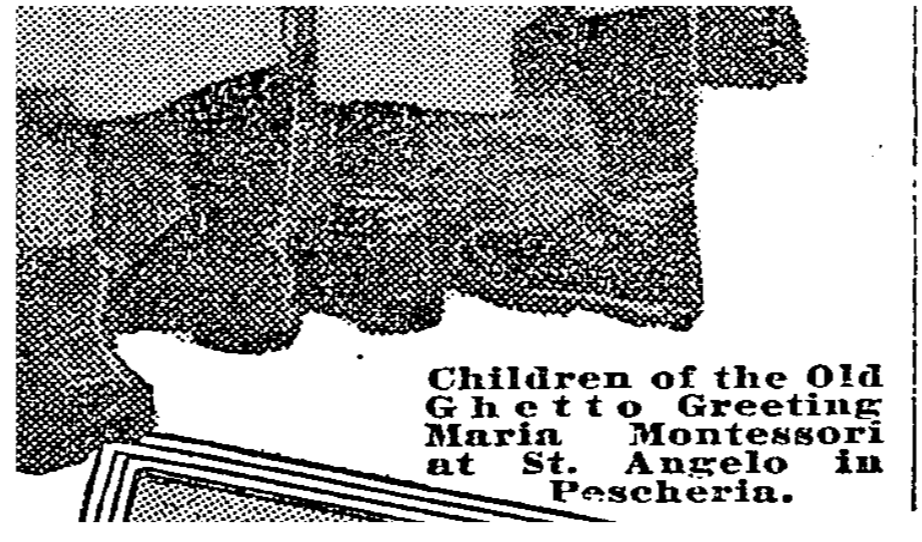
Moreover, this is not a kindergarten. In spite of the fact that the oldest child is but 9 years of age, the youngest only 3, the pupils who at 8 or 9 years have finished the course will be ready for admission to the fifth grade of the ordinary public school.

The strange school at Tarrytown-on-the-Hudson is Miss Anne E. George's House of Childhood--the only Montessori school in America.

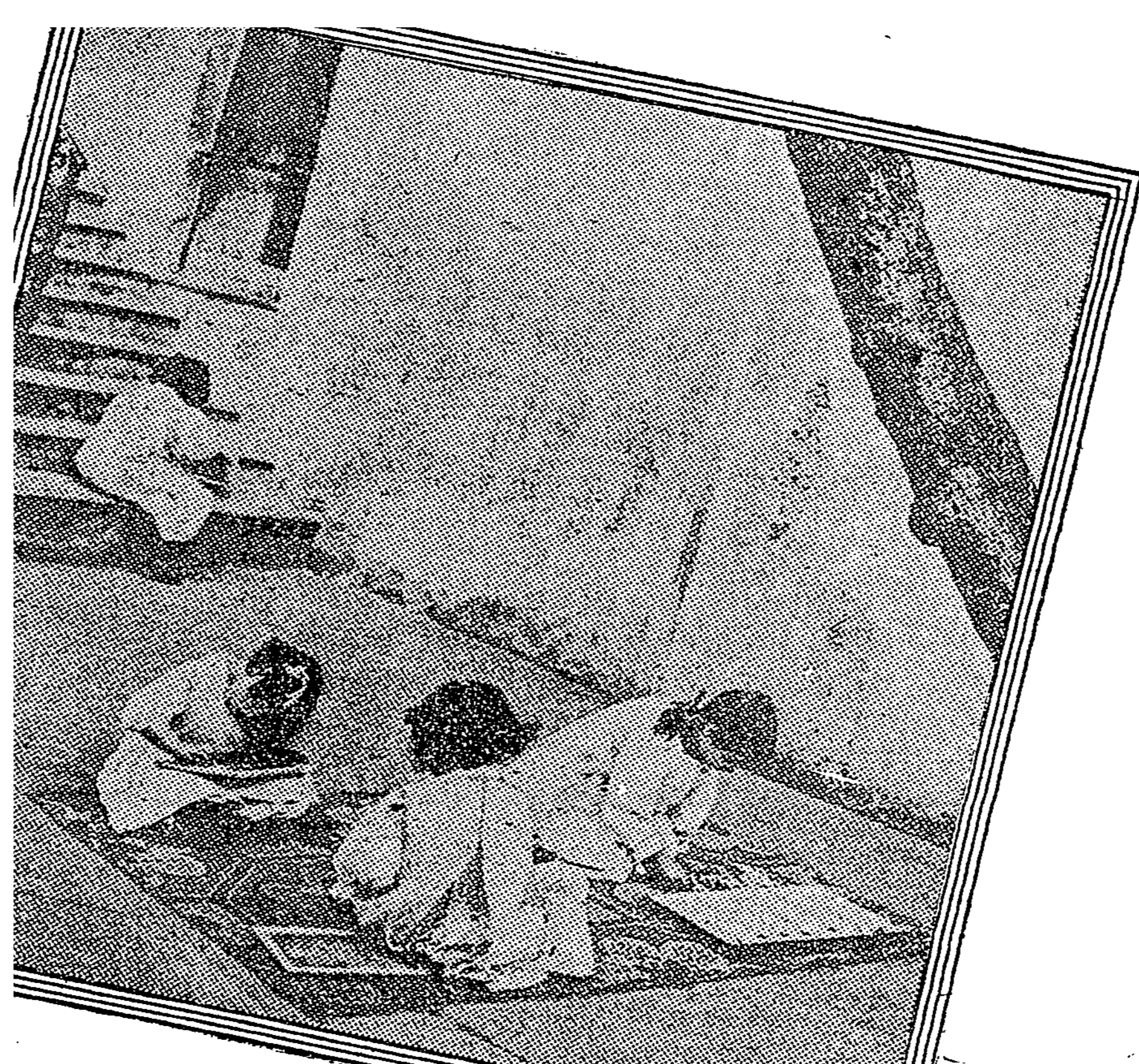
The object is not only to allow children

to play, but to teach them to read and write and master elementary arithmetic solely through their play instinct not only to allow them liberty, but to discipline and develop them through liberty, activity, and the training of their power of choice.

It turns our old ideas in the education of normal children upside down--even to the detail of teaching writing before reading. And its founders claim that it crystallizes for the first time into practical form the desire of educators to utilize--in the mastery of reading and



Children of the Old Ghetto Greeting Maria Montessori at St. Angelo in Pescheria.



A Group of Children in the Courtyard of St. Angelo in Pescheria, So Concentrated in Their Attention on Their Work, That They Do Not Notice the Photographer. A Remarkable Thing for Italian Children.

writing and arithmetic--a child's love of play. Miss George was a teacher in the Chi-

cago Latin School two years ago when friends from Italy asked her if she knew anything about Maria Montessori. She didn't. But when something of Mme. Montessori's educational methods were explained to her she determined to know more.

Miss George herself had been trying for years to find a theory of education that built in practicable fashion upon a child's liberty and a child's love of play. She had had ideas of her own about education that should be active instead of passive, positive instead of negative, that should foster in a child not obedience and quiescence, but interest and choice. She was soon convinced that Mme. Montessori's original method of education was what she herself had been looking for. So she went to Italy, enrolled as a teacher-pupil in the Montessori schools at Rome, and studied under Mme. Montessori for a year. This Fall she opened, in the residence of Edward W. Harden in Tarrytown, America's first Montessori school.

Since Miss George went to Italy to study

quiring as to the practicability of introducing the new system in public and private schools and settlements in this country.

A school in Boston, under the management of Mrs. Copley Green, is to be opened during the Winter, and plans have been formulated for the establishment of a Montessori class for the children of the social colony at Newport. At the Roger Ascham School at Hartsdale the Principal, Mrs. Joseph Allen, has introduced it in the primary classes. Educators at Harvard have shown particular interest in the method. And to meet the popular demand for information about this strange new system of child training, Miss George herself is translating Mme. Montessori's own explanation of her theories and their working out into English, and the book, "The Method of Scientific Teaching," is to be published by the Frederick Stokes Company. The publication is under the auspices of the "division of education" at Harvard, and Prof. Henry W. Holmes will write the introduction to the book.

Miss George's little pupils, in the first place, do nothing all day long but play games. They do not know that the pieces of sandpaper and cardboard with which they amuse themselves for half-hours at a time are letters that teach them how to read and spell and write. They do not know that the fascinating "step game" that they find such good fun is really an unforgettable lesson in elementary arithmetic. They do not even know that when they play at arranging their dress, when a part of the game is to replace in their boxes the toys with which they have been amusing themselves, they are learning to keep things in order and to use their little hands in the quickest and deftest way.

The youngest little tots in Miss George's school begin play with pieces of cardboard, satin, and sandpaper, with which the object of the game is to distinguish between rough and smooth. The teacher tells the child which is which, showing him how to pass his fingers over the latter. And then she asks the youngster which is smooth and which is rough. It is not a hard game to play, and the answer is usually right. But it is not Miss George does not correct her little pupil. She leaves him alone to think it out by himself and goes to some one else with another "game" to play.

After they have mastered the differences between rough and smooth the children have color games to play with, little puzzles in the tying of knots and



A Game at Writing.

this new method of education, the Montessori system of child training has been officially adopted by the Boards of Education of Italy and of Switzerland, two model schools have been established in Paris, preparations have been made to introduce the method into England, and the demand from English and American teachers for instruction from Mme. Montessori has been so great that the Italian "dotteressa" has announced the opening, during the present Winter, of a training class in Rome for English-speaking educators, to study under her personal guidance the system that she has originated. Miss George is at present the only teacher in America who has studied under Mme. Montessori, and her school at Tarrytown is the first experiment in using the Italian system here. She has in her school, however, as assistants both to help her and to learn the Montessori method, two other teachers, Miss Friend of Milwaukee and Miss Waring of New York. The Boards of Education of Des Moines, Iowa, and Omaha, Neb., are considering the definite adoption of the Montessori method in their schools. More than 400 City and County Superintendents of Public Education in various parts of the country have requested complete information as to the Montessori methods. J. Stanley Hall of Clark University, Ella Flag Young, Superintendent of the public schools of Chicago, and Jane Addams have written in the past few weeks in-

the making of pretty bows. Then come jolly games with blocks and geometric designs. After a while there are sandpaper letters pasted on blocks, with which the children "play games," which they copy and put together in various ways, until, before they know it, they have learned to write. At this time they are taking up the "step game," that makes them masters of the decimal system, and the various counting entertainments that give them their first knowledge of arithmetic. And it is not until after they have really learned to write and have received many lessons in careful articulation that they are given "games" that teach them how to read.

There are two points about these games that are not always plain to the observer, but that are among the most important features of the Montessori method. One is that every game has a definite object in education. The tying of knots in colored ribbon is not merely to keep a child's fingers busy and himself happy and well behaved. It is to train both his sense of touch--through which, in the manipulation of letters and numbers he receives his first unconscious lesson in reading and writing and arithmetic--and his sense of color. Observation is a prime factor in the Montessori system; and it is a part of the "dotteressa's" training of observation that her little pupils are taught to distinguish sixty-four color shades.

The other important point is that Miss George never corrects a child who gives the wrong answer, never shows a pupil how to begin or carry out any of the games.

Back of the training of the sense of touch and of sight, back of the programme that places writing before reciting in the list of scholastic accomplishments, back of the discipline that allows movement, conversation, and undoubted "lounging" in the schoolroom, is the firm conviction that Mme. Montessori has indicated and that Miss George is carrying out at Tarrytown that "auto-education" is the only education that is worth while.

The twelve little boys and girls at Tarrytown play their games and fulfill their unconscious tasks themselves. The teacher does not suggest "lessons" that have to be explained, in which the child has to be helped or "showed how," if he can't somehow think a thing out himself he is not yet ready to do the thing at all. The object of the Montessori system is not proficiency in some one thing, but mastery of one's own mind; not mere knowledge, but thought as well.

The children in the Tarrytown school choose themselves what they will do. The teacher makes suggestions; she never enforces commands. She answers questions, and asks them. But if a child tires of what he is doing, if his interest flags, she does not try to hold him to what has become a task; she lets him choose something else. It is her work to interest him in the games and puzzles, to direct his latent power of choice. But she never issues directions, and the child does not know that he is being "trained." Many a time during the day a little pupil tires of what he has been doing, and sits for minutes at a time absolutely idle, until, not having been inspired with any idea of employment that seemed to him altogether satisfying, he toddles over to the teacher and asks for something to do.

The Montessori theory of "auto-education" demands not only freedom of choice and independence of achievement in mind training, but liberty in behavior as well. There are no punishments in Miss George's school; there are no rewards; there are no corrections; there are no rules that demand quiet. There is, instead, a careful watch kept by the teacher on each child's individual character, his individual development. There is the one general rule that the little boys and girls shall not do anything that annoys or disturbs any one else. There is the strong influence of affection, patience, sympathy on the part of the teacher.

Mme. Montessori herself has a dread of conventional "discipline." She says that it annihilates a child's personality, his individual power for goodness and strength; she considers a room full of silent, obedient, indolently acquiescent children--children who sit up straight in chairs and ask permission to speak or move--a dreadful thing. A teacher, she points out, must first of all observe her pupils, first of all understand them. And a child that is interested is immeasurably better than a child that is simply obedient.

While Miss George has in her school only a few children, who come from careful homes, she knows that the success of "discipline through liberty" is not confined to little boys and girls who are in the first place "well bred." For she has seen Mme. Montessori work out her idea of liberty and education among the little wallofs of the Ghetto tenements in Rome.

Miss George's "lessons" are conducted with the special apparatus invented by Mme. Montessori to make education practicable through play. Although the games are played and the lessons taught with mechanical toys and blocks, bits of wood and pieces of cardboard and silk and leather cords, the children do not follow out any ideas of manual training in "making things." They do not make anything. They simply play with the apparatus the games that teach the day's lessons. But they do all the work of the room themselves, putting the blocks away, setting things to rights, and even moving the big kindergarten tables for that have been especially constructed of wood so light that almost the smallest children can move them about.

The Montessori method of education is for little children. It takes its pupils only through the fourth grade of the public school, and the average child finishes his course by the time he is 8 years old.

Mme. Montessori, who is a physician as well as an educator, began her work with defective children in what she called her "mind-straightening school" in Rome. In 1906 she was given entire charge of schools for normal children in one of Rome's tenement districts, and it was there that she began to work out her theories of normal education and founded the first "House of Childhood." But the movement has in the past few years ceased to confine itself to the children of the tenements. Private schools for the little titled boys and girls of the Roman aristocracy are conducted according to the Montessori methods and under Mme. Montessori's management, and the "dotteressa" has demonstrated the practicability of her system with children of all classes. She is now at work on an extension of her method to the education of older children.

The Italian educator has been aided in the establishment of her schools by two American women in Rome, the Baroness Franchetti and the Marchesa Ranieri di Sorello.