Chapter 07

School Hygiene

1913

People :
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Text :

CHAPTER VII.

SCHOOL HYGIENE

In regard to hygiene we are, in Spain, dominated by the abominable ideas of the Catholic Church. Saint Aloysius and Saint Benedict J. Labré are not the only, or the most characteristic, saints in the list of the supposed citizens of the kingdom of heaven, but they are the most popular with the masters of uncleanliness. With such types of perfection, in an atmosphere of ignorance, cleverly and maliciously sustained by the clergy and the middle-class Liberals, it was to be expected that the children who would come to our school would be wanting in cleanliness; dirt is traditional in their world.

We began a discreet and systematic campaign against it, showing the children how a dirty person or object Inspires repugnance, and how cleanliness attracts esteem and sympathy; how one instinctively moves towards the cleanly person and away from the dirty and malodorous; and how we should be pleased to win the regard of those who see its and ashamed to excite their disgust.

We then explained cleanliness as an aspect of beauty, and uncleanliness as a part of ugliness; and we at length entered expressly into the province of hygiene, pointing out that dirt was a cause of disease and a constant possible source of infection and epidemic, while cleanliness was one of the chief conditions of health. We thus soon succeeded in disposing the children in favor of cleanliness, and making them understand the scientific principles of hygiene.
The influence of these lessons spread to their families, as the new demands of the children disturbed traditional habits. One child would ask urgently for its feet to be washed, another would ask to be bathed, another wanted a brush and powder for its teeth, another new clothes or boots, and so on. The poor mothers, burdened with their daily tasks, sometimes crushed by the hardness of the circumstances in which their life was passed, and probably tinder the influence of religious teaching, endeavored to stop their petitions; but in the end the new life introduced into the home by the child triumphed, a welcome presage of the regeneration which rational education will one day accomplish.

I entrusted the expounding of the principles of scholastic hygiene to competent men, and Dr. Martinez Vargas and others wrote able and detailed articles on the subject in the Bulletin. Other articles were written on the subject of games and play, on the lines of modern pædagogy.2

Footnotes

1It is especially commended in the life of Benedict J. Labré and others that they deliberately cultivated filthiness of person. --J. M.

2These articles are reproduced in the Spanish edition. As they are not from Ferrer's pen, I omit them. J. M. From: Anarchy Archives.