

## THE HUMANITARIAN ASSOCIATION IN ITALY

By promoting original institutions "La Società Umanitaria" exerted remarkable influence for social advancement in Italy and abroad.

It was established in 1893 in Milan to bring aid to the poor and destitute labourers, who were "the forgotten citizens" of the time. It wanted to uplift them to feel and share in the dignity of man. It did not offer charity, but created conditions which made it possible for labourers in all branches of work to elevate themselves by their own endeavour.

It sought support for them, found them work, established gratuitous evening professional schools with the most modern technical laboratories. Gradually the schools were multiplied to include general knowledge, art applied to industry, political economy, labour exchange information, etc. It created the "theatre of the people" to which the most famous actors of the time gave their enthusiastic collaboration; it built blocks of workmen's houses to relieve the labourers from the miserable conditions and promiscuity of the slums.

By their own efforts, spending their evenings and their spare hours in study and work under the guidance of experts, the working people were able to elevate themselves and in their new dignity they began to strive and work for the professional, intellectual and moral elevation of the whole working class.

These first examples of institutions which the "Umanitaria" gradually spread all over Italy—and abroad to protect emigrants - served as an inspiration for new legislation, so that now they have become commonplace.

When in 1907 Dr. Maria Montessori began her social campaign for those other forgotten citizens, the children, those labourers who by their work did not produce mere objects but Man, she found ready understanding in the "Umanitaria".

In one of the block of houses the society had built for the residence of labourers, the second "Casa dei Bambini" was specially built in 1908. To direct it Dr. Montessori sent Anna Maccheroni, one of her most capable assistants. Around it the first Montessori courses were given. To provide the educational apparatus the "Umanitaria" afforded another activity to its working people: the manufacture of Montessori material.

A well documented history of the "Umanitaria", published to celebrate the 70th anniversary of its foundation, illustrates also the relation and the collaboration between the society and Dr. Montessori.

"Nationalized" by the Fascist Government, the activities of the "Umanitaria" and of its leaders were stifled. The allied bombings destroyed all its buildings during the war, leaving nothing but blackened rubble. The "Umanitaria" seemed well and truly dead, but some of its leaders had survived, their faith intact, their enthusiasm redoubled.

Under the inspired leadership of its new President, Mr. Riccardo Bauer, a vibrating personality, indefatigable worker and fount of enthusiasm and inspiration, the "Umanitaria" came to life again. New modern buildings have risen, new professional schools with modern equipments and methods have been established. One by one, in spite of great scarcity of means, the "Umanitaria's" institutions are coming to life with increased vigour and efficiency.

During a recent visit of Mario M. Montessori, the Director General of A. M. I. to the "Umanitaria" and to Mr. Bauer, tentative plans were made for the resurgence of Montessori activities also: to give back to the working people what came from their children and conquered the world.

Montessori education was not meant only for rich children. It sprang from the children of the poorest of the poor and rightfully it should be their heritage.

M. M. M.

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## THE „DOT-GAME”

As there seems to be some confusion about the use of the "dot-game", Mr. Mario M. Montessori has contributed the following.

### Material:

Squared paper to be used free or to be inserted into a frame of ground glass, or a slate with the same divisions as the squared paper. The squared paper is divided - from left to right - into six compartments. Each compartment, except the one on the extreme right, is subdivided from top to bottom into four parts. Of these the second from the top is divided into horizontal rows of ten squares each. On the top divisions of the compartment (beginning from the 2nd to the right and proceeding towards the left), written in symbolic colour: the numbers 1, 10, 100, etc. respectively.

A black pencil. A coloured pencil.

### First presentation and exercise

Write on the right hand side compartment with black pencil the numbers to be added, disposing them under the other as in ordinary addition. Make the sum large, taking many numbers, some of them into the thousands. Mark with black pencil dots as many squares as there are units in each digit that forms the number, taking into consideration the place-value of each digit and marking the squares in the corresponding compartment. Example: if the first number is 2345, one puts horizontally in the first row 5 dots in the unit column, 4 in the ten column, 3 in the hundred and 2 in the thousand column. If the