- Free Kind artens of Honolulu -

BY CHURCHILL HARVEY-ELDER.

If one would see the workings of real charity, charity of the kind that looks not for reward, he could do no better than make a round of the free kindergartens of Honolulu. Quietly, unostentatiously, the devoted women who are given up their lives to making the lot of unfortunate children brighter, are going about their work. The outsider knows nothing of their trials, and their reward is the realization that they are accomplishing good in the world. The financial remuneration which they receive amounts to practically nothing.

To the child born and reared among happy, healthful surroundings, it matters little whether there be kindergartens or not. With a thoughtful mama or a skilled nurse to see that little hands are occupied and that little bodies are well cared for and nourished, the child is not so much need for anything more than what the home has to offer. But with the child of the lower districts the case is different.

The teasing little youngsters which are [illegible] in the Kakaako kindergarten, in the Palama kindergarten and in the Kaulu[illegible] kindergarten, in fewer cases come from the streets, where they are [illegible] acquainted with the deadly knowledge of life. Were it not for the [illegible] authorized women of the [illegible] these little ones would be [illegible] and [illegible] where their baby hands and [illegible] minds are trained to the right [illegible].

All Classes Represented.

All of the proper classes are represented in the free kindergartens. There are the children of the poor whose parents use every endeavor to make the one or two miserable rooms in which they are forced to live look something like a real home; there are the children of the industrious working people who try to carry out during the hours the children are under their care the teachings of the kindergartners; but there are also the offspring of the lazy, the depraved and the dissolute. It is among the latter that the most praiseworthy work is being done.

Among the children in the Kakaako kindergarten is the little Kerr child whose unnatural father fed her on cheap wine until her baby eyes closed in a drunken stupor. There are other children brought up under fully as unpromising surroundings, children whose mothers are too ignorant too look after the physical and mental welfare of their offspring, children of lazy, unnatural mothers, babies whose little bodies show the marks of blows, of ill nourishment and of pitiful neglect.

It is among these children that the kindergartens do their most meritorious work. Trained nurses see that cuts and bruises are so dressed that infection will not cause dangerous complications to set in, who see that the diseases to which children raised in the slums are liable do not make savage inroads upon the frail constitutions.

Parents Also Helped.

And it is not only the children that profit. Many a sick mother has been brought to the kindergarten by a baby child, and there, at the hands of the sweetfaced nurse, received relief. The kindergarten director of the neighborhood is more often than not the general friend and confidant of children, fathers and mothers.

In many cases the kindergartens have had to work against apparently hopeless odds. In those districts settled largely by Roman Catholics the teachers have had to overcome religious prejudice. There has been a feeling that efforts might be made to proselyte children away from their faith.

But right in the heart of a Portuguese Roman Catholic colony is one of the most flourishing of all the kindergartens. A Roman Catholic director was placed in charge of this little school when it was founded, and she quickly won the confidence of the mothers of her charges to be. She made them realize that the children might be entrusted to the care of the kindergarten with perfect safety and though since then the original teacher has retired, and has been succeeded by a Protestant, the kindergarten is now on a firm footing, and nearly every one of the children comes from Roman Catholic family.

No Discrimination.

Another obstacle which the kindergartens have had to face is the uncharitable feeling which is exhibited by many people toward the children of orientals. "We will help the kindergartens if you will exclude the Chinese and Japanese," is too often the reply which those in charge of the work receive to their requests for assistance. Help proffered under such conditions is respectfully declined; to the charitable women in charge of the kindergarten movement, and to the directors and assistants doing the teaching work, a child is a child, irrespective of the complexion or religion of its parents.

Just to prove the lie of the child has yet to be born, the aim of the kindergartens is that child the offspring of Christian or infidel parents, of white black or yellow, the little one is received with absolutely impartial welcome. The child who needs the kindergarten is the child whom the kindergarten wants.

Crowded Schools.

[illegible] the present time the free kindergartens have had a serious problem to contend with in the fact that the public schools are so crowded to overflowing that many children of school age. There are [illegible] the kindergartens many children who should be in the primary [illegible] for them and [illegible] them in the kindergartens as they [illegible] to be [illegible] with the schools.

[illegible] the kindergartens [illegible] in fact. Among the children in the kindergartens [illegible] is perhaps Chinese. The little [illegible] are dressed in [illegible] and warm [illegible] Hawaiian [illegible] And this is done by making play out of the daily ablutions.

The Laundry.

Not only do the little tots, three and four years of age, learn to wash their faces and hands before coming to school, but at the kindergarten they are taught to wash their clothes. Just as the happy child of the well-to-do home delights to play keeping house, so the little one of the tenement takes joy in that sort of thing, when once his or her mind is directed in the right channel.

Among the articles of equipment of the various kindergartens are little washtubs and washboards. These the baby tots are taught to use, and on each day some one class retires to the laundry and there washes handkerchiefs or other pieces of wearing apparel. A teacher is always in charge of the work and the necessity for having the laundry clean and white is impressed upon their little charges.

And the weekly washday is looked upon as the happiest sort of a lark. Last Monday, when an Advertiser reporter visited Kaulu[illegible] kindergarten, he found a class of babies leaning over the washboards and washing their handkerchiefs. Shrieks of mirth came from the baby lips, and as each finished washing her handkerchief she wrung it out carefully and spread it out to dry. Then with a regretful look at the little tub and washboard she turned her eyes toward the schoolroom to give another child a chance to get into the laundry. Washday is looked forward to by the children with the greatest expectation.

Mechanics.

In the Kaulu[illegible] kindergarten, the reporter found one class of little tots busy with hammer and nails building playhouses out of pieces of shingle which had already been shaped for the purpose. The four sides of the house were each separate shingles and the roof was made up of two pieces. Each child was given the pieces needed to make one complete house, a hammer, and a handful of nails. Some of the toy houses turned out by the youngsters showed excellent workmanship.

In many of the kindergartens it is necessary to feed the children before anything can be done toward building up their constitutions. Little tots with pinched faces and parched lips, showing all too plainly the lack of nourishment, are brought to the kindergarten. In some families the mothers do not care enough about their children to [illegible] proper food for them, or others [illegible] the children get the best share [illegible] enough to keep them in healthy trim.

[illegible] regular distribution of food at the kindergartens, though [illegible] are [illegible] among the [illegible] Where [illegible] the Kalihi kindergarten [illegible] Hawaii [illegible] the [illegible] of rice. Illiterate eating they find [illegible] quietly at the tables with the jewels of rice before them. [illegible] served the portions, and the little ones fell to with gusto.

And the table manners of these little youngsters were a revelation. Many a child raised under the strict guidance of a fond mama might well take some lessons in table deportment from the little ones of the kindergartens.

Though the kindergartens can not do all that they would like to they are far better off as regards funds than are the institutions in most places. The people of Honolulu have been generous in their donations and the rooms used for the classes are well fitted for the uses to which they are put.

Alice Cooke Kindergarten.

The show schoolhouse is that of the Kaulu[illegible] kindergarten, built by Miss Alice Cooke. Miss Cooke taught as a volunteer assistant in this kindergarten for some time, and when she became convinced of the necessity for a new building, she erected a model schoolhouse at her own expense and [illegible] it to the association rent free.

The Alice Cooke kindergarten is beautifully located on a fine lot and is surrounded by palms and plants. The building is a most artistic bungalow and is surrounded by broad lanais. The rooms are bright and cheery and the floors are smooth and shiny. Nearly all of the class work is done out on the lanais, of which there are ample to care for all of the children. Having this beautiful building there in charge of the kindergartens are enabled to offer to the poor children of the neighborhood, during part of the day at least, the comforts which fall to the lot of more fortunate little ones.

The Kakaako kindergarten, though not as happily situated as the one just mentioned, is well off as regards location. For some time this school was located in the basement of the Kawaiahao church, and was known as the Kawaiahao kindergarten. The quarters were too dark, however, and were too far away from the heart of the Kakaako district, so when the present quarters became available they were quickly snapped up.

Private Capital.

The free kindergartens are maintained by the Free Kindergarten and Children's Aid Association, a corporation supported entirely by private subscription. The Territory makes absolutely no provision for kindergarten work, so the carrying on of this very important branch of educational work devolves upon private parties.

The funds needed to keep up the kindergartens are largely furnished by private subscription. This money does not meet all expenses, however, so an entertainment is held every year to make up the deficit.

There are six free kindergartens maintained by the association. These are the Palama kindergarten, the Kaulu[illegible] kindergarten, the Fort street kindergarten, the Miller street kindergarten, the Kakaako kindergarten, and the Kalihi kindergarten. In addition to these the Castle Home in Manoa Valley is also maintained.

Affiliated with the association, but wholly independent as regards administration and support, are the Henry and Dorothy Castle kindergarten and the kindergartens on the other islands. The Castle kindergarten is maintained entirely by the Castle Estate.

Organization.

The kindergartens of the association are under the immediate control of Miss Frances Lawrence, the supervisor. Miss Lawrence is an experienced educator and an authority on kindergarten work, and under her direction the various kindergartens have been developed along the most satisfactory lines.

The morning hours Miss Lawrence devotes entirely to visiting the different kindergartens. It is impossible to visit all on any one morning, but the director makes it a point to see each school every day or two.

During the afternoons Miss Lawrence conducts normal classes for those who are preparing themselves to become kindergarten directors.

Each of the kindergartens is under the charge of a director, while for every fifteen children there is an assistant. The directors are all experienced kindergartners while the assistants are either those who are preparing to become directors or who are giving their time for pure love of the work. The salaries paid to the assistants amount to practically nothing.

An effort is now being made to train all kindergarten directors here. There are among the assistants many who are well fitted for the work, and experience has shown that those who have lived here for years, and are conversant with local conditions and problems, do far more satisfactory work, as a general thing, than those brought from the mainland.

It is too often the case that kindergartners anxious to come here are those who are broken down in health and hope that the sunny climate of Hawaii will cure matters. As a matter of fact the climate here is enervating [illegible] than [illegible] in the most of [illegible].

Training Needed.

[illegible] training is needed before an applicant can be [illegible] a director. [illegible] Miss Lawrence [illegible] the [illegible] Miss Lawrence [illegible] normal classes. [illegible] Long [illegible] normal course.

[illegible] Much of the work of these [illegible] sity has to be done with the parents of the children, and great care must be taken not to trample on the prejudices of the people with whom the teachers come into contact. This is one of the reasons why those thoroughly conversant with the Islands are better fitted to undertake kindergarten work than are those of even great experience who come from a distance.

Association Officers.

The officers of the kindergarten association, elected at the annual meeting held on Friday morning last, are as follows: Mrs. Theodore Richards, president; Mrs. L. L. McCandless, first vice-president; Mrs. L. Tenney, second vice-president; Mrs. Charles H. Cooke, third vice-president; Mr. Frank G. Dillingham, recording secretary; Mrs. F. E. Steere, financial secretary for the kindergarten department; Mrs. F. M. Swanzy, treasurer for the kindergarten department; J. H. Walker, financial secretary for the Castle Home department; Harold Dillingham, treasurer for Castle Home department; D. [illegible] Anderson, auditor.

The two epochmarking events in the history of the kindergarten association during 1909 were the opening of the Kalihi free kindergarten and the acquiring of the new Kaulu[illegible] kindergarten, the gift of Miss Alice Cooke.

The reports read at the annual meeting show that with the close of the year 1909, 100 more children were enrolled in the free kindergartens than at the close of the preceding year.

The treasurer reported that the books had just been closed with a balance of $1000 on deposit in the savings bank to the credit of the association.

The report of Miss Frances Lawrence at the annual meeting [illegible] pointed at the obstacles which the kindergartners have to face, but also called attention to some of the many matters quite outside the scope of kindergarten work which need immediate remedy. In writing of the Kakaako kindergarten Miss Lawrence says:

Miss Lawrence's Report.

"There is no end to the possibilities for work in this neighborhood where indolence, intemperance, brutality, filth and vice brood and thrive. Who is responsible for the conditions and what is the remedy are big questions not in our province as an association but as citizens of Hawaii and friends of the children we can enter our protest and do our part in arousing the public to its responsibility for the present and for future generations.

"The trained nurse of the kindergartens is a most valued assistant to the health authorities. She does not go to talk to clear up their premises or threaten them with arrest, but she points out what should be done in the welfare of those who are forced to live in the tenement districts. The residents of the district have learned to look for her, and it is seldom that she is not received with a cordial welcome.

Significant Dates.

The following are the milestones in the history of the kindergarten association:

1892—Opening of the first free kindergarten in Honolulu by Frank Damon, in connection with the Central mission.

1893—Establishment of a Hawaiian, a Portuguese and a Japanese kindergarten by the Woman's Board of Missions of the Pacific Islands.

1894—Organization of a kindergarten department of the Woman's Board of Missions; opening of a foreign kindergarten; inauguration of the Honolulu kindergarten training school. Receipt of first memorial endowment.

1895—Incorporation of the Free Kindergarten and Children's Aid Association of the Hawaiian Islands; receipt of the Charles R. Bishop annuity; aggregate income for the year about $[illegible].

1896—Opening of a mixed kindergarten, Palama Chapel. Average income for the year about $4100.

1897—Establishment of the first plantation kindergarten at Ewa, all expenses to be borne by the Ewa Sugar Company. Gift of a new building for the Portuguese kindergarten—the first building owned by the association. Organization of the hygiene department of the association. Expenditures for the year, $6535.

1898—Opening of a mixed kindergarten on South street, in place of the foreign kindergarten at the child garden. Expenditures for the year, $[illegible].

1899—Establishment of the Castle Home for Children, the association accepting the charge under the department of children's aid. Expenditures, $6079.85.

1900—The affiliation of the Japanese kindergartens. Expenditures: Free kindergartens, $6025.50; Castle Home for Children, $3150.87.

1901—Establishment of Mary Castle day nursery. Expenditures: Free kindergartens, $6003.75; Castle Home for children, $2231.02; Mary Castle day nursery, $620.

1902—Extension of aid to the kindergarten at Kohala, Hawaii. Expenditures: Free kindergartens, $[illegible]; Castle Home for Children, $4100; Mary Castle day nursery, $573.

[illegible] The legislature passed a bill [illegible] appropriation of $[illegible] for the establishment of a kindergarten [illegible] with the new Normal school. Expenditures: Free kindergartens, $[illegible]; Castle Home, $[illegible]. The name of the Castle Home was changed to the Children's Home. Expenditures: Free kindergartens, $[illegible]; Children's Home, $[illegible].

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—Photos by C. Harvey-Elder.

KAULUWELA KINDERGARTEN.

This building was erected by Miss Alice Cooke [illegible] association free.