

The Municipal Kindergarten "Sandleiten", Vienna.

If you wish to see Vienna's most beautiful garden, you must go to the hilly districts on the outskirts of the city, near the Vienna Forest. You must take the tram to Sandleiten, the terminus of line J2. You will be close to the border between Ottakring and Dornbach. In front of you lies an entirely new part of the city, where not so long ago there was a desolate stretch of sand, waste land, from which "Sandleiten" derives its name. A huge and wonderful block of buildings has grown up here, and in the midst of garden court-yards and ideal dwellings, the garden you want to visit shows itself in all its splendour.

The street leading to it is called "Rosenackerstrasse". — To judge by the name, you might suppose you are going to see a field of roses, but it is not showy flowers that await you, but buds — human buds only in the garden of life. A few more steps and you arrive at the entrance of the finest Kindergarten of the City of Vienna.

It is the one hundredth in the splendid series of these model institutions (at present the Municipality owns 111 Kindergartens). Its Architect, Erich Leischner, went about his work with special care and enjoyed producing a work of highest architectural standard and hygienic value. It is a work of unique perfection (see plan and photo 1).

At the entrance you are welcomed by the words of Prof. Dr. Julius Tandler, the Chief of the Social Welfare Dept. of the Municipality of Vienna, the famous Anatomist who has not only won praise and everlasting merit by instituting these Kindergartens, but who has for the whole of public welfare in Vienna made his name imperishable. His fundamental ideas in public welfare work were the pioneers to show the way for many modern European states. It is due to Prof. Dr. Tandler's activity that Vienna has become the Mecca for the student of public welfare work.

"Give to the Child Beauty and Joy"

"Childhood Impressions live for ever".

This is his greeting. And beauty and joy really await the visitor on the other side of the glass doors which divide the out-

side world and this happy island the Municipality of Vienna has given to its children. Grown-up persons may accompany the little ones only as far as these frontiers — the glass doors. Those who are privileged to pass through the glass doors have to put on overshoes that stand in readiness. These and other precautions have helped to keep an absolutely satisfactory standard of health within the Kindergarten.

All visitors to the Kindergarten (and many come from all over the world) are shown the entire house. The Kindergarten is under the supervision of the Directress who is assisted by 10 qualified Kindergarten teachers, 3 attendants, and 1 caretaker. There is accommodation for 210 children, for day only.

The pedagogical methods adopted are a combination of Montessori and Froebel principles. The best was taken from both, thus giving a happy blending of the two educational theories.

The building is open from 7 in the morning until 6 p. m. Qualifications necessary for admittance are in the first place:

1. That both parents are away at work all day.
2. Bad housing conditions.
3. Bad social conditions, endangering the physical and mental development of the child.

Should vacancies occur, it is possible to take in children to whom the aforesaid conditions do not apply, but for whom a communal education (for psychological reasons) seems necessary, i.e. only children.

The children needing care are sent to the Kindergartens through District Child Welfare Centres, the necessary connection between Kindergarten and Child Welfare Centre being made by the Public Welfare Worker (Health Visitor of the Municipality), who also visits the children's homes. The Superintendent of the Kindergarten, however, reserves the right to fill vacancies.

The Kindergarten is run on a co-educational basis. Irrespective of age, children are placed together in so-called family groups. This is the most modern way of Kindergarten education and stands in contradistinction to the formerly practised ranging of the children to age, once considered the promoting factor.

The reception of the child at the Kindergarten takes place in the presence of the parents or their representatives, it being necessary to obtain a clear and all round picture of the child's state of health as well as its mental capacities. Children are admitted from 3 to 6 years of age. The fees are very low — 50 groschen per week without meals and 3 schillings 88 groschen a week including meals (breakfast, dinner, and tea). One may best judge the present economic crisis when one realizes that only 16% of the parents are in a position to pay the full fee, while 24% pay half or one quarter of the contribution and 60% are entirely freed from obligation to pay, the Municipality covering the loss.

Once the child has gained admittance, a ray of sunshine enters

its life. In the morning it takes leave of its parents or whoever accompanies it to the glass door, and first of all enters the Hall of the house, which resembles a large picture book. The well known academic painter Prof. Arthur Brusenbauch, put his entire art to the service of the children. The frescoes on the walls, pillars and ceilings represent happy events of child life at all seasons of the year. Flower pictures, too, make the scene gay and welcome the children in, life and joy is everywhere (see photo 2).

Then, on goes the child to the Cloakroom in the broad, light corridor that divides each of the two storeys into two parts — the one to the South with all its sunlight-flooded rooms, each with a large terrace, and the other to the North, comprising the most complete and modernly equipped tea kitchen, toilet rooms and resting rooms for the Staff, etc. (see photo 3).

In the Cloakroom (4 groups in every storey for just as many groups of children) the hooks and lockers are neatly rowed side by side for the children's clothes and shoes, each having a special place. Cleanliness is the password here. Together with the street shoes and clothes, dust and germs are kept away. The children soon learn to dress and undress by themselves in happy company. In the long run, the children are better cared for at home if mother knows that her child's clothes and shoes have to be changed at the Kindergarten.

"Where is my dress?" "Where are my shoes?" — no child asks these questions, because there are mysterious signs (a rabbit, a bird, a flower, etc.) on hooks, shoe-bags, and all accessories. Each child has its own picture sign. The one has a rabbit on its blue rompers and its blue slippers that it must wear in the Kindergarten, and all the utensils and things it uses in the Kindergarten have this sign. This is easy to remember. But why does the child get blue shoes and rompers, and not red or green ones as the children of other groups? We shall see that presently. First comes washing and teeth-cleaning; The child enters the toilet-room (see photo 4).

Much fun goes on here, at the fitted basins with hot and cold water, and it certainly is a great pleasure for these children to be allowed to dry themselves in their own specially marked towels, which, in the case of the example mentioned above, will have the picture-sign of the rabbit on it as well. Pretty glasses and tooth brushes on wall shelves stand ready to be used in the teaching of teeth cleaning and gurgling. Then comes a visit to the wonderfully clean W.C. and now nothing prevents the children from entering the day nursery. There are four day rooms on each storey. It is not difficult to guess which one a child belongs to: — a blue gentian flower is painted on the dazzlingly white door; the rompers and slippers of our child are blue, — this is the room it belongs to. In the room over there, on the door of which a red poppy is painted, are children with red rompers and red slippers.

The door is opened and glorious sunshine floods the room; its

walls are gentian blue. The adjoining room with the sign of the poppy is all in red. In truth, these are ideal modern nurseries of highest perfection. We see tiny white chairs and tables of enamelled wood, dainty and shining: in fact all the furniture is like that. In one corner stands a real and perfect doll's house which the children can enter by means of a door, and look out of its windows. Inside there are dolls, furniture and prams, cooking stoves, and other kitchen utensils — what perfect bliss for the children (see photo 5)!

Over there is a chest with many little drawers, again provided with the picture signs. The children find their own immediately. Each drawer contains the treasures of the little ones: — plasticine, crayons, material for weaving, drawing books, scissors, a lot of precious material necessary for the working of a real and proper Kindergarten.

Now, the children have time till 8.50 a.m. to sweep, clean and dust the doll's house, to change the tiny bed linen, dress the dolls, or, which is particularly interesting — there is "Hans" the canary to be fed and the jolly gold fish to give fresh water and food to.

When this preliminary, necessary work is over, gymnastics begin. In twos, the children enter the large hall that can be made larger or smaller by means of sliding walls. Here, too, a real flood of sunlight enters through the large windows. Out in the garden we catch the glimpse of a statue of children making music, a wonderful work of plastic art. Its creator is the well known sculptor Wilhelm Frass (see photo 6).

Soon the gay crowd of tinies are doing their morning drill. The easy fitting rompers do not hinder their movements. The institution sees to the washing of the clothes used there so that they are always spotlessly clean. They clothe them sufficiently in these centrally heated and well aired rooms. The children learn to refuse all unnecessary, too warm underclothing that anxious mothers like to make them put on.

The morning exercises follow the rules of modern gymnastics for small children. They comprise marching exercises as well as training the different groups of muscles. Also rythmical exercises are practised to develope the sense of time and hearing, together with movement exercises. Small blond or brown heads nod earnestly to beat time to a song or a piano piece played to them by the teacher. They clap their hands, march or hop in changing step and, with astonishing speed, have learnt to keep time.

A charming children's orchestra proves the strong feeling for rythm possessed by them and it is delightful to watch and hear them giving a concert on their tiny instruments, directed, of course, by an able conductor (see photo 8).

From the Gymnasium the children are again taken to the toilet room to wash and cool their little hands and faces made hot by the effort to drill. The smell of cocoa pervades the house: —

breakfast is ready. Soon the children are seated at the tables in their nursery. They serve each other in turns. The china cups are placed on the tables and the bread is distributed. The teacher fills the pots with cocoa and gives them to the children "on duty". It is interesting to see how skilfully the children, boys and girls, fill the cups without spilling one drop. Soon they learn to serve properly and noiselessly, to eat nicely, to take care of the pretty china service that is at their disposal, and to see to the clearing away and tidying up of the room after meals, all by themselves (see photo 9).

Play begins now. "What shall we play today?" This is an important question. Without noticing it, the little ones are guided into the most glorious games by the teacher. Songs are sung, stories are told, or an adventure is related. They work with crayons, plasticine, scissors, etc. There are also little sculptors who reproduce what they have just heard. Many wonderful things are created in these happy work hours, and they are as gay and bright as life in this house itself.

A child may also quite independently satisfy its own desire in play or work. It may choose its favourite game. Soon groups centre round the doll's house, and some round other things there, and all get satisfaction. They draw, cut out, model, weave or learn to lace, button and tie according to the Montessori system, by means of buttons and loops on stuff-covered frames. This proves very instructive for dressing and undressing independently. This is how it goes on till dinner time. Meals are supplied by the "WÖK" (Vienna Public Kitchen Service). In the large, scrupulously clean and airy kitchen of the Kindergarten the food is set ready in dishes for the various groups (see photos 10 and 11).

Before dinner, the children again visit the toilet room to wash. They also have to use their own combs which are in little picture sign bags. The little heads have become untidy at play, but soon they are in order again.

Tables are now covered with white cloths, plates, spoons and forks, and bibs (each with the child's picture sign) are distributed. Boys and girls then sit hopefully and joyfully down at tables (see photo 12).

After a merry chorus has been said, and "Mahlzeit" — good appetite — is wished, the meal begins. It is not only excellent but also prepared strictly according to the famous "NEM" system of Professor Klemens Pirquet, that allows, by special calculation, all the calories, units of nourishment and vitamins necessary to the child's body.

The last plate empty, plates are cleared away, table cloths and bibs folded and put away in their respective places.

Now comes something especially nice. In the "Comfy Corner" that consists of real armchairs, you see six candles burning in wee, gay, wooden candlesticks. A child in the group has a birthday, and as is customary in this house, celebrates it with lighted candles

(their number being according to the child's years) and a plate of sweets. In this way it learns to celebrate a feast and experiences the joy of giving and taking.

When the birthday celebration is over, the room is made tidy, the chairs are placed to the tables, and the glasses and plates washed up in a real sink basin. This affords the tinies special fun (see photos 13a and 13b).

Work finished, now to rest. Soon the children are lying on special resting mats that have in the meantime been put ready in the large hall. There are no pillows or covers, as they are unnecessary in these well ventilated and well heated rooms, and apart from that, they are considered dust and germ carriers. In a short time all is quiet, all sleep well after play and work, especially in summer when the little woven straw mats are placed on the terrace where sunlight and wind play around the little sleepers (see photo 14).

The siesta is followed by a wash, a brush up and games in the nursery or work in the children's own workshop. The nursery has something especially pleasant about it. Its bright joyfulness is perhaps enhanced by the gay and jolly life-sized frescoes that were painted by girls of 11—14 years of age, pupils of a class for youthful art at the Vienna Municipal Institute of Pedagogics. With these gay and colourful pictures these bigger children have opened a source of joy and happiness for the little ones (see photos 15 and 16a).

"Joy and beauty to the child" was the motto of these little artists.

The parents of the children at the Kindergarten form a so called Parents' Association for the purpose of supporting the educational work done in every possible way. Also here, at Sand-leiten, the most beautiful feasts are prepared, organised and celebrated in cooperation with the Parents' Association. At Christmas, each room has its own Christmas tree. In the large hall, however, a communal Christmas feast takes place under the largest and finest fir-tree. On that occasion, each child gets some toy and sweets.

There is also a working-community in which parents make cheap and useful toys before Christmas under the instruction of the Kindergarten-teachers.

A merry children's ball with a carnival procession is organised in the Carnival season; at Easter time, the Easter bunny hides gay-coloured Easter eggs in the large hall and, finally, a festive meeting is held annually at the close of every period, children who have reached their sixth year of age receiving a nice present on final leave (see photo 16b).

Besides merry feasts, however, real and serious work is being done at the Kindergarten. In the children's workshop, which, by the way, is a delightful thing to see for every pedagogue as well as for the outsider and mere visitor, the children have ample chance to satisfy their desire for work to the utmost extent.

There they sit, the little ones, with green workman's aprons on, round the low, tin-covered tables. They are hammering, sawing, building, modelling, painting for all they are worth. The boldest models of aeroplanes, ships and edifices are created here. On small frames the children weave brightly-coloured woollen things, such as doll's carpets, belts and bags, etc. Others again are busily cutting and pasting away. The Kindergarten is by no means short of painters. Their colourful works decorate the walls of this workshop as well as the exhibition glass-cases of the house, and are appreciated and admired accordingly (see photo 17).

For the tiniest who are not yet able to handle tools, there is a large sandbox for building and playing in one of the corners.

After leaving the workshop, the children are taken to the toilet room again for a wash, in order to be nice and clean for tea. Afterwards, they change their dress in the cloakrooms, for the day in the Kindergarten is nearing its end. The little ones eagerly endeavour to change skilfully and quickly. They help one another and practise their sense of order at the same time. The slippers are put into little white bags, the rompers are hung on their proper pegs, where they are kept ready for the next day, looking just like gay-coloured wings of butterflies.

When the children have left the Kindergarten, the whole house, with all its day-rooms, offices and by-rooms (of which there is a stately number) is thoroughly cleaned. Besides kitchens and other domestic offices, the house also holds a comfortable and bright-looking recreation-room for the teachers, where they may retire during the resting-intervals. Finally, there is also a most modernly equipped doctor's room which deserves special notice.

Here the doctor examines the children once a week, thus constantly watching their state of health. The little ones are no strangers to her, as it was she who examined them at the time of their admittance to the Kindergarten. A health record is kept of each child and the result of each medical examination noted by the doctor.

In summer the children are mostly in the garden which rises in terraces and seems to be crowned by the building. Each group has its own play-ground and its own sand-box. The small green garden-tables carry large gaily-coloured sun-shades to protect the children from the hot sunshine during meals (see photo 18). Fine games in the sand and on the lawn unite the merry group in this garden. The finest and merriest of all, however, is no doubt the wading-pool with a sloping depth from four to twenty-eight inches. The water in it is as clear as crystal and is changed every day (see photo 19). Only those children who have had a thorough wash are allowed in under one of the showers in the little garden houses. The latter also contain lavatories, so that the children are not forced to run to and from the Kindergarten building (see photos 18 and 19).

During the warm season, the children have their meals on the terrace and play and bathe in the garden. They may stay in the open air even when it is raining, as there are covered terraces facing the garden. A breeze of fresh and pure air comes from the Vienna Forest and the sun casts its bright beams on this shining house, the windows and verandahs of which are decorated with flowers and blossoming creepers. In the large garden, however, children, little buds of humanity, are growing and prospering. In time these human flowers will unfold their strength and beauty, to the pride and joy of their native city, Vienna, which can be seen spread out in all its splendour from the roof-terrace of the building.

This Kindergarten has the very making to promote the natural development of the little ones. It is here that they are made healthy and resistant to life's little ills. For "there is a sane mind in a healthy body". — After the time of careless happiness here in the Kindergarten, school, with new and greater claims and strains, awaits the children. But they will not have to take this new step unprepared.

It is due to the crisis of our time that, in many cases, education at home cannot be what it ought to be, and much of what is absolutely necessary for the child, must be left out. Here again, the Kindergarten fills the gap. It gives to the children what they have to go without at home: — Sense of order and community-spirit, independence, pleasure in play and work, and, most important of all, cleanliness and culture. With gay hearts the little ones return home — often enough to a dark and dreary home —, communicative of what they have received, and transmitting to others what has grown into a natural habit with themselves.

Thus the blessing of this most beautiful of gardens is radiant even in poor and scanty homes where joy is unknown. To know our growing youth safe in a place of joy and love like this — at a sad time like ours —, must fill all our hearts with hope and satisfaction. All the greater, therefore, is the merit of the Municipality of Vienna, to have found the courage, the will, and the means, in spite of all difficulties, to create possibilities for the protection of our youth from all the threatening dangers of a large city.

The Vienna Municipal Kindergartens.

The Vienna Municipal Kindergartens (Infant Schools) form part of the welfare activity of the City. They are for children before school age, from three to six years of age. Children of two years of age are only admitted in extremely necessary cases.

The Municipal Youth Welfare Department has been entrusted with the management of the Vienna Kindergartens by the Town Council. It