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## Editorial.

### PLAY CENTRES.

It seems as if the present century is one which will, to some extent, wipe out the wrongs done to children in those that have gone before. First came the Children Act which gives them legal protection, and legal redress from unnecessary sufferings and hardships, laying the foundations of saner, happier, brighter lives.

Then the theology of the day is emerging into fuller light, and is characterised more largely by that charity, without which the rest of the cardinal virtues profit nothing. John Calvin and his austere teachings no longer make the night a terror to impressionable children, who are "fed with food more convenient" for them, and lastly, grown up people are increasingly realising that love and kindness, air and space, are the environment in which children develop as flowers in the sunshine, and that even those who live in the slums of our over-built cities have the right to space in which to exercise their restless limbs, and gardens and play centres are being provided for them.

We recently referred briefly to the charming lecture given at a meeting convened by the Public Health Sectional Committee of the National Union of Women Workers, by Miss Parsons of New York on the School Children's Gardens started in one of the worst neighbourhoods of that city, some nine years ago, by her mother who knew that children do not want to look at flower beds which they may not touch, but to cultivate them for themselves. In these gardens they learn of the mysteries of nature, and the brotherhood of man. In the South white children do little manual labour, but in their own gardens they work quite as hard as the coloured ones.

In London a similar scheme has recently been inaugurated, and there are also nearly 200 play centres. Recently, Lord Iveagh who has always been sympathetic with the work done in London, organised a play centre in Dublin, near St. Patrick's Cathedral, and placed it in charge of a Superintendent who had already done successful work in the East End of London.

The Centre opened with thirty children, and after the lapse of only eighteen months, when the King and Queen visited it during their recent visit to Dublin, 520 children went through a programme of songs and games with so much spirit and success that their Majesties warmly declared it had given them very real pleasure, and as many more regular attendants had to be excluded for want of room.

Lord Iveagh is so well satisfied with his initial venture that he intends to erect a fine building as a permanent play centre in Dublin, which will afford opportunities of healthy and wholesome enjoyment to 1,000 children at a time—or to 2,000 weekly if the "thrice a week system" is adopted.

It really seems as if grown up people were at last beginning to realise that they once were young themselves. The repression of children by adults in the past makes one inclined to wonder if some of the latter were "born grown up," they seemed to have had so little understanding of childish needs. But there is a good time coming for the bairns. There is greater understanding amongst the adults, and the mischief of children is not always attributed to naughtiness, but is regarded rather as indicating the pent up vital forces which need an outlet, and which should be developed, and diverted into suitable channels. If rightly directed it should rather be regarded as evidence of valuable energy.

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