

admonition, then a second admonition, and then nothing less than excommunication, in addition to a fine to be brought to church, especially in case the crime of twisting a skein with more than one thread had been committed. In short, there were the fires of Hell if a skein had been wrongly twisted.

Some attempts at striking, some pressure to improve wages, there would seem to have been every now and then; to counter which the masters encouraged the immigration of peasants who were always ready to content themselves with less, or they called in foreigners. The Germans, for example, compared with the citizens — although workmen — of one of the most stately and progressive cities of Europe, lived in rude simplicity and were content with smaller remuneration.

Naturally, wages increased after the Plague of 1348, which some people say killed off a half of the population while others put the number of deaths at three-fifths. Labour was very scarce, as the greater number of deaths was among the poor people: the others, those with well filled purses, were able to make their escape in time, in some case leaving their sick behind them; for which reason one Florentine, in the tales of Sacchetti, left all his substance to the flies as being the only living creatures that did not abandon him. And also on this occasion outsiders were called in not only because there was real need of extra hands but also to keep down the demands of the surviving workers.

The management of the Guild prohibited payment in kind, but the frequency with which they prohibited it shows that obedience was not easily obtained. They tried to influence prices, but the problem was not solved. And these workmen with miserable wages had only charity on which to rely to relieve their poverty and nothing for their old age. Their life was in the straits of their fate; the upper

classes considered them scum and the knowledge humiliated them. Their very rancour kept them morally down and hate brutalised them. Unbridled in the tumult of the Ciompis it was seen that they were only capable of cruel violence and pernicious idiocy, of shouting « Live! » and « Die! », often unreasoningly, and of being duped and betrayed by the cynicism of the demagogues.

Transport of Wool in the Argentine



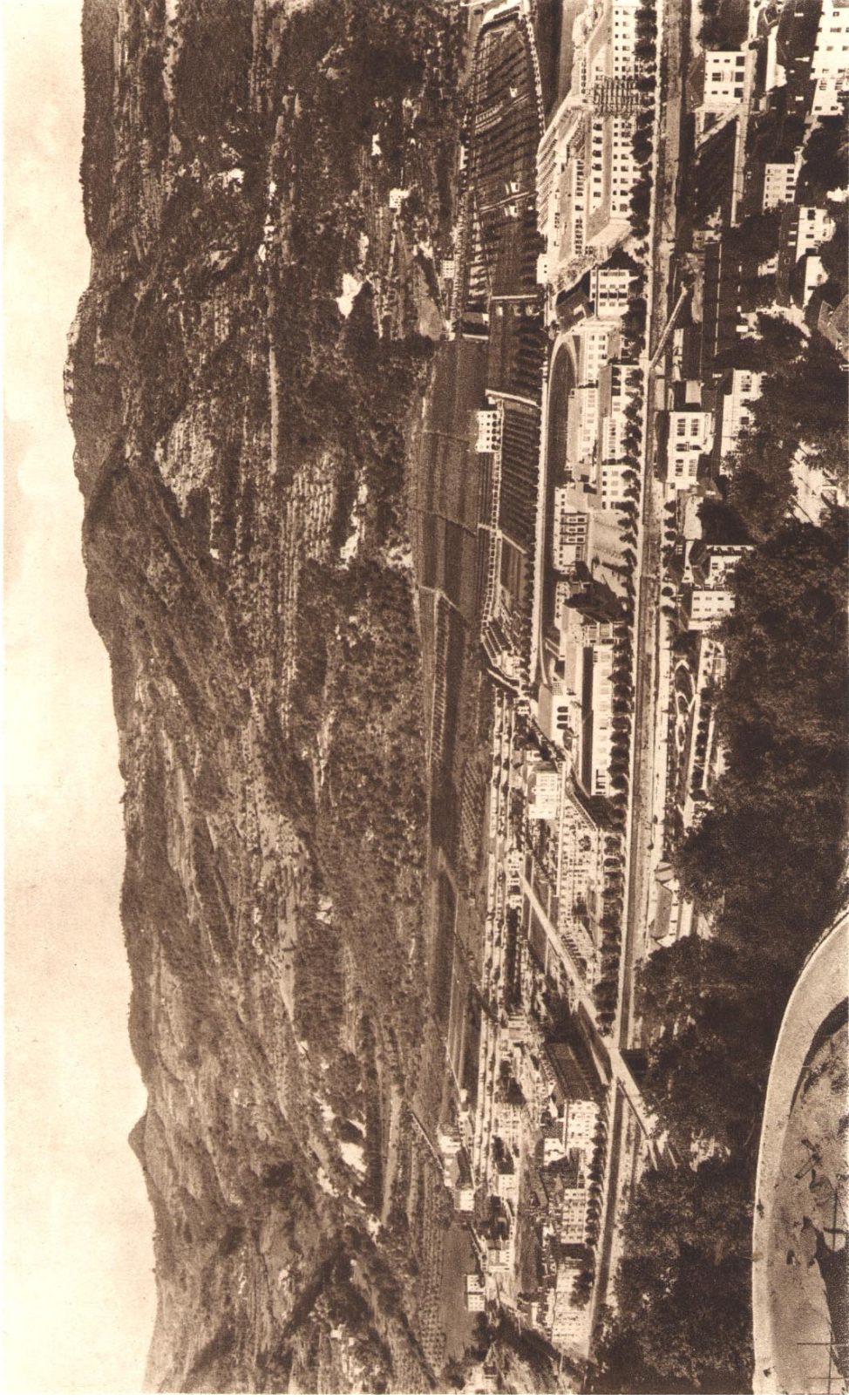


LET us now drop the curtain on this gloomy and painful aspect of the grand century, like in a spectacle of fantastic changes, and raise it on a scene of six hundred years later.

The new scene is Valdagno, near the vast buildings in which thousands of workmen work along with their foremen and managers, helping to re-establish the fame of the Italian woollean industry. But we have already visited these gigantic buildings. We started out from them to take a walk in history. Here in front of us lies what was lacking to complete the honour of the old Guild — the Social Welfare City of the workers, the living testimony of the dignity to which labour has risen, the circle that has been closed, from the co-operation of the rank and file in the fortunes of the industry to the co-operation of the industry in the civil life of the rank and file.

The living circle is soldered in the breadth of an horizon.

The natural setting of the place has co-operated in the idea of collecting in a form of harmonious evidence all the institutions dedicated to improving the life of the worker outside the factory — the river with its bridges, the brown slope of the hill which serves as a background to this singular City, the layout of the valley, the circumscribed space which is gradually being filled without crowding: a scene full of air and colour, a living creature whose birth and growth were directed by a spirit at once old and new, Christian and social and who is now controlled by the logic of large developments.



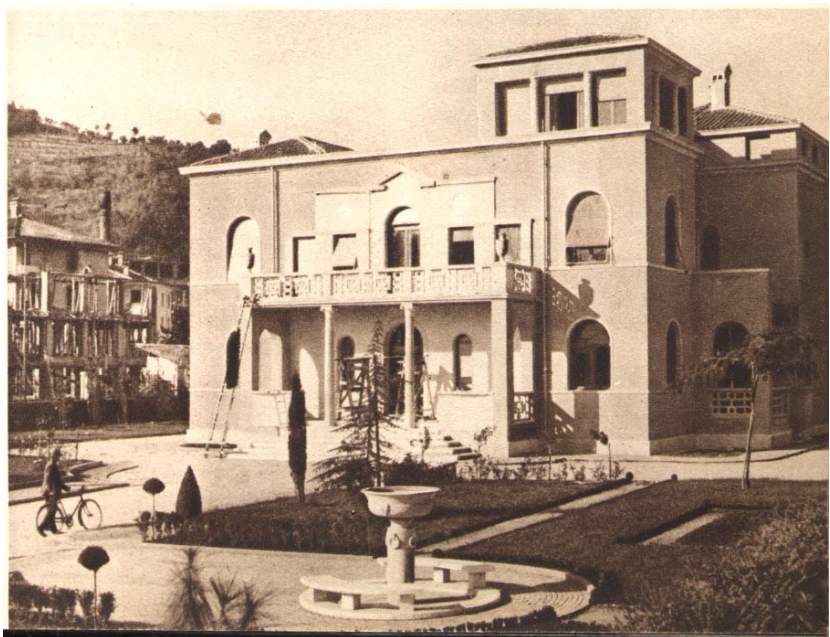
PANORAMIC VIEW OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE CITY

What modern industrialism, under the urge of times, has done in favour of the worker, either spontaneously or through legal compulsion, is known to all: modernization of unhealthy buildings, improvement in working conditions, first aid in case of accident; then help in cases of sickness and contribution to the old age fund. Even before a provident legislation took charge of the fate of the workman and his family there had been friendly societies, infant schools had been founded and hospitals maintained. All this progress of ideas and measures could be traced in Valdagno and elsewhere during the course of the last century.

Valdagno, as the centre of one of the Venetian « vicariates », had always had a certain distinction. The houses of several well-to-do families, especially during the last century, gave a tone to the place, counterbalancing the humble dwellings of the common people. Gradually, as the woollen industry of Valdagno centred in Marzotto and Marzotto grew and extended to a point of becoming the major, and it might be said, the only centre of life, it gave the town its present characteristic aspect and dominated it. The first chimney, erected on the main building fifty years ago, was like a flagstaff from which could be flown the admiral's flag.

Along the right bank of the Agno arose the houses of the owners and those of senior employees in the form of villas, each with its garden; and the number went on increasing to include, finally, the residence of the general manager, conspicuous in the calm elegance of a sober twentieth century style and commanding a wide view from the foot of a woody hill. In this side

Manager's Villa





Manager's Villa

of the town is thus reflected the potent vitality of the industry encamped at its northern extremity. And it was there that the first social welfare undertakings were centred for a time.

But the idea that was to give to Valdarno a character probably unique in Italy, was that of founding a City on the left bank of the river, not as a mere urban extension but as a special crea-

tion, the offspring of fecund labour and of a radical interpretation of social welfare. The new town is already adult and seems to have the clear smiling face of youth.

A beginning was made with the more urgent constructions — healthy and comfortable houses for workmen in a quarter which bore Margherita as its name. In the meantime, however, with the rise of the new regime and new creative and inspiring forces, there matured the vision of an organic development, a kind of constructional polyptych in which would be expressed the new destiny of the life of the worker in infancy, adolescence, youth, maturity, old age. The neat buildings with the gay lines are there to indicate the various stages, and the groups that animate them are at once the

Fountain in the Garden of a Manager's Villa



real and symbolic masses of this living polyptych.

Looked at from the old town, the new City appears in its entirety in the shallow background allowed by the narrowness of the valley and in its considerable lateral extension. In one part the lines are already fixed; and it is this

part that reflects, moreover, the character and vigour of the undertaking. In other parts stakes and scaffolding indicate sturdy continuity. The voices of the masons high up, the knocking, the creaking of the pulleys, the whole movement give to the scene a characteristic vivacity and gaiety. Nothing better than a house in course of erection, what with bricks and mortar, gestures and voices, expresses the bold conquest of life and joyful faith in the future.



Manager's Villa

To the north, from the first quarter of workmen's houses to the more recent apartment houses, with basement shops, for clerks and workers of the main factories, some eighty small villas for workmen and routine clerks are being erected. The population of the establishment has increased enormously and although many of the workmen live in small cottages to which they are attached because of the surrounding patch of land or live in neighbouring villages (at certain hours of the day bicycles swarm along the valley roads leaving or seeking the giant beehive) others have need of a better house.



Littorio Bridge -
*Shops under the
Arcades*

To say they have need is not correct, however. Man easily adapts himself and a thousand-year-old habit induces him, if he belongs to the lower social classes, to adapt himself badly as well. The new City has declared war on this habit; by offering the possibility of something better it stimulates the need thereof. One time the demagogue preached to his simple listeners the curse of their fate as beings excluded from the Garden of Eden and doomed to the wilderness of misery; and between one sermon and another they crowded together in small and unhealthy dwellings and drank the better part of their wages at the public house to keep up the elation produced by the orator's bombast. Today, without sermons and leaving the Garden of Eden in the Bible and the wilderness in demagogic rhetoric, foundations are excavated, walls erected, small houses built affording accommodation to two small families or one large



Quarter of Small
Villas for Work-
men

family, with bath, garden, heating, with all the hygienic fittings the use of which is the right — tomorrow it might be said the duty — of both rich and poor alike. The rents are even less than those of workers' dwellings in the big cities and, what matters the most, are suited to the purse of the tenants.

In order to determine this need for a dwelling which would not only be healthier but also more decent, the Social City of Valdarno has for many years experimented with some big apartment houses

Dining Room in a
Workman's Dwell-
ing furnished by
the Management

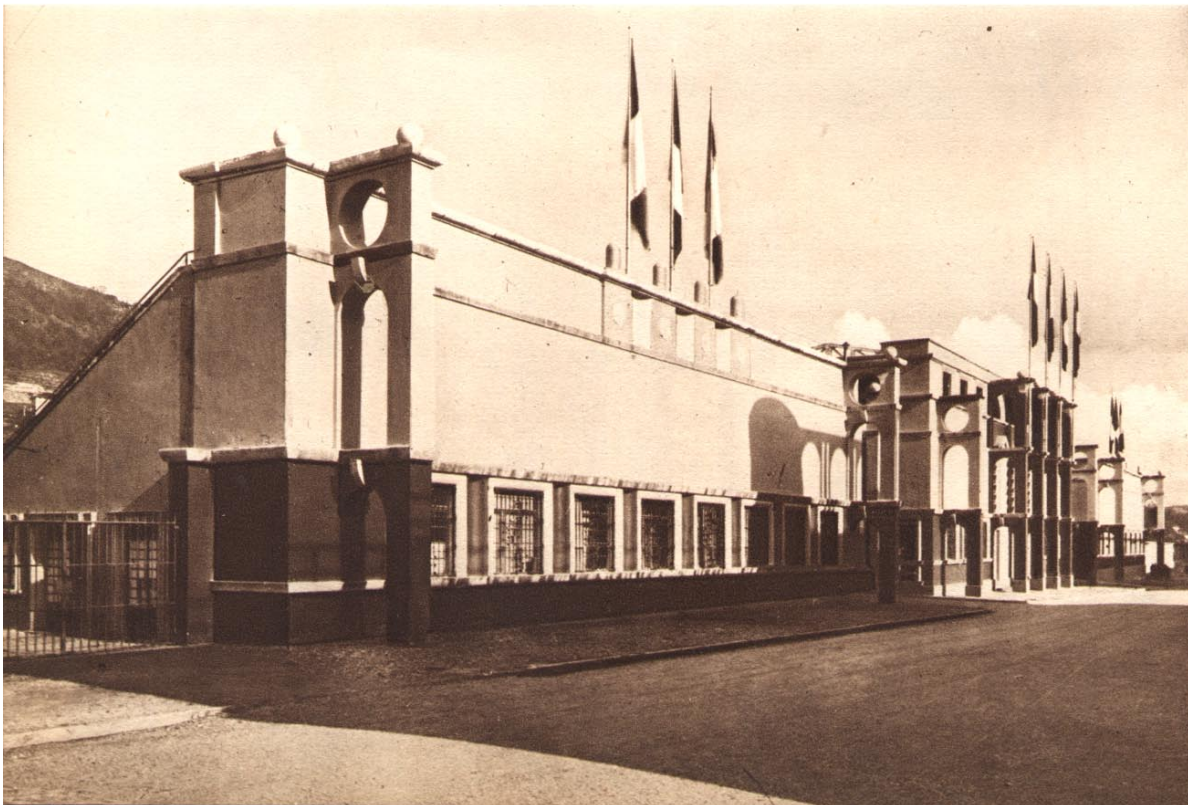




The Centre of the
Welfare City

in which the apartments were actually furnished with furniture to be paid for in easy payments, so that the occupants could enjoy domestic life free from the ugliness of objects in daily use that drives away the wish for and even the sense of cleanliness. A nice house commands respect, conduces the housekeeper to care for it and gets itself loved. One stays willingly in a house with a sympathetic and comfortable look about it; one receives friends there rather than meet them in the street or at the public house. It becomes something in

The Outside of the
Sports Field





Sports Field: The
Stands

which one takes a healthy pride. Neat and graceful things impress their virtues on the people they assiduously surround.

Small houses for married couples. Much is done in Italy and Germany to induce young men to marry, to offer an easier solution of this by no means light financial problem. Small sums are offered to them. A snug little home would be a much better thing to offer them. There is probably no greater attraction for a woman, during the period when her will is more imperious than that of her fiancé,

Maternity Hospi-
tal and Kinder-
garten





Maternity

than to see ready for occupation the small kingdom over which she will be queen, a queen who will love to keep the floors polished, the walls clean, the furniture in order and the nest pleasant for the son who will arrive. Therefore, on with the building of homes for married couples! A new life, a new house; new times, new material habits out of which must also be developed new spiritual habits, a new

The «Drop of Milk»



feeling, calmer, more reasonable and more dignified, of one's place in the social scale.

The Social City has a centre which, as we said, is its own face with the expression of its character: public utility buildings located in a square that has one side open toward the road along the river bank, and at the other end the entrance to the stadium, a simple façade gay with colour, to which the flagstaff, with the flags flying on days when sports are held, add vivacity.

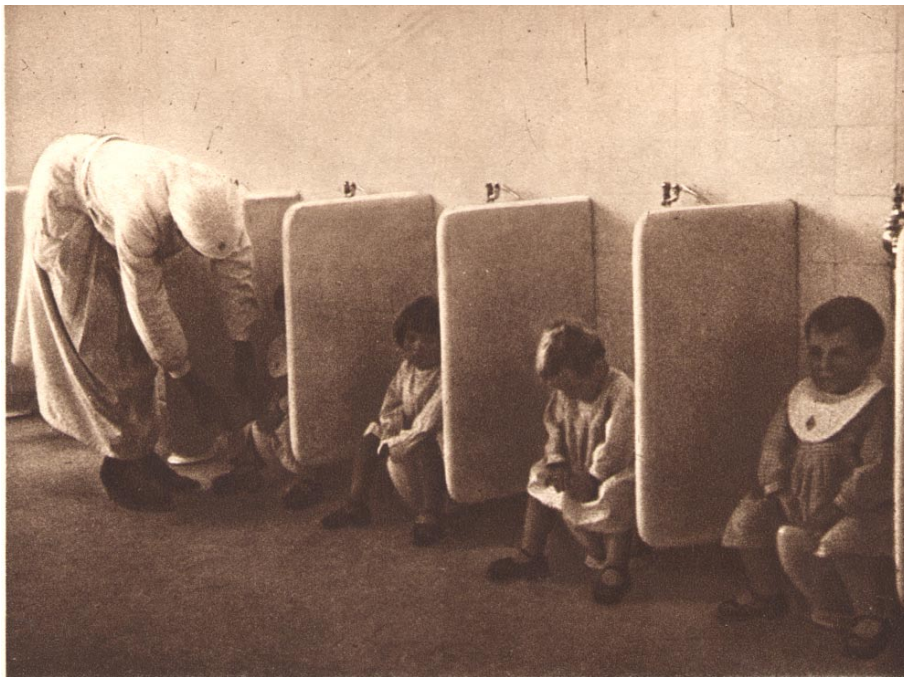
To the right is the Maternity Hospital with the Nest and the Kindergarten, to the left the House of the Balilla (one of the juvenile formations in the fascist organization) and the premises of the « Dopolavoro » (literally « After-work » — workers' recreational movement). Here are grouped together in buildings characterized by a logical and pleasing architecture that delight first the eye and then the mind, the institutions which are gradually giving another tone



The Nest: Baths

to the life of the worker, another grade in society, from birth to old age.

In the upper part of the building to the right, which is all windows, are the rooms for the women in child-birth grouped round a gynaecological room. The dazzling whiteness enhanced by the light enlivens the atmosphere and the files of beds where here and there a mother slightly pallid from the confinement clasps the new-born creature to her breast, and a sister occasionally passes with a light tread. The young mother seems to breathe the comfort of all that cleanliness and order. The occasional cry that rends the air is an infantile cry that makes maternal solicitude smile and tenderness bend over like a closing of wings. This feeling of the necessity for perfectly hygienic conditions and rapid and expert attendance ready to overcome all difficulties is a victory of hygiene over tradition. The first to come to the maternity hospital were the more intelligent wives or the wives of the more intelligent husbands; the others followed seeing the care with which the new-born children were treated, how





The Nest: Mess Room

the early suckling was regulated and the effects checked from time to time, how, in short, everything proceeded with quiet safety, among all desirable conveniences and without that confusion, that mixture of haste and negligence which disturbs the domestic tempo in the houses of women lately delivered. And they understood and began to be convinced.

As has been said, the new means for improving the conditions of the worker must stimulate the need thereof on more than one occasion and reveal it to the ignorant. The public is a child in need of discipline; and among the various forms of this necessary discipline is the habit of hygienic living, the awakening of a consciousness of the increasingly important part played by science in the defence and physical improvement of life. The best possible safeguards have to surround the mothers' confinement in this House, and the tender creature just arrived must be protected from the first insidious ills. Light, sun, cleanliness, the rules of scientific experience: the mothers observe and learn, returning later to their homes

with an education; and family life reaps the advantage. This advantage is one of the results — perhaps not the least — of institutions established and directed on a large scale.

The mother, in the meantime, has returned to the mill to work and ordinarily would have to leave the baby at home entrusted to the care of persons who are too old and whose weakness is dangerous or to able-bodied persons who have other work to do. It thus happens that babies a few days or a few months old are neglected, dropped into the cradle to sleep or to yell, and attended to every now and then with inadequate means. Here, instead, assiduous vigilance is the rule. The mothers arrive at the time fixed, suckle their fresh and clean babies, and entrust them again with all confidence to the attendants. Here there is no reluctance; the women are convinced. They enter smiling and leave with their minds at rest. And at the end of the day's work they return home with their babies in their arms, regarding them tenderly as though they were flowers — flowers smelling of milk and clean linen.

After having been weaned, the child has still need of constant vigilance. It is still a small creature at once poor and rich — rich in all the possibilities of a life which has to expand, climb, fight and win; poor because of the weakness of its tender members and the lack of freedom of movement. The neglect of parents absorbed in other occupations and that type of fatalism which places its trust in Providence merely to evade obligations, are the chief causes of not a few infantile diseases and defects that leave their mark for a long time, sometimes for life, on the bodies of ill-cared-for children. In the Nest the care of them is continuous. Hygienic treatment protects the tender organism, while recreation delights the mind that is just opening out. The children live in company under supervision which very often is a caressing co-operation in the first pleasures of life.



KINDERCARTEN - CLASS-ROOM



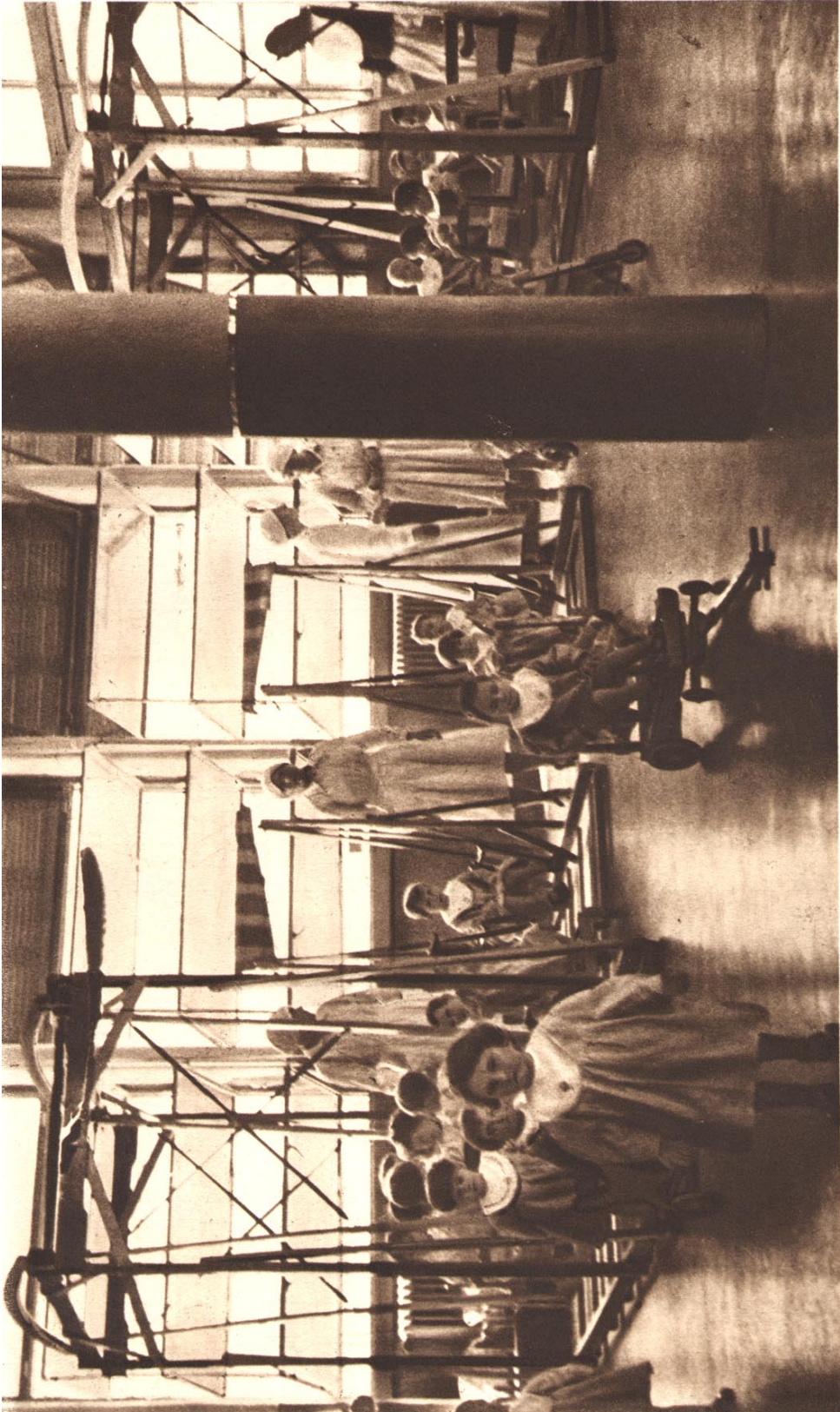
KINDERGARTEN - ASSEMBLY-ROOM



Kindergarten -
Playground with
Children

They play and strive hard with their first experiments of scrutinising and constructive action. The mothers who see them in the airy rooms with their first toys, almost invariably peaceful because they are satisfied and well kept physically, appreciate the benefit and work with a quiet mind. When they take them home they feel it incumbent upon them to continue the beneficial treatment the children have received during the day; and the home is all the better for it.

Thus in that joyous human nursery-garden thrive the shoots of a new generation. The kindergarten cares for the young ones for whom the hour to receive the rudiments of education has sounded. The class-rooms, neat and light, have walls frescoed with motifs dear to the imagination and to infantile curiosity. Here, along the shores of a glacial sea, grave and comic penguins clothed with black feathers over a white down move about clumsily in their dream of distant places. Over there fish with pleasing contours swim in transparent water on which glides a boat with white sails. Elsewhere, in icy retreats, lumber bears and Eskimos; on the sands of a desert sprinkled



KINDERGARTEN - GAMES ROOM



KINDERGARTEN - ROOM OF THE GO-CARTS

with slender palms savages gesticulate in bellicose attitudes, while camels, zebras, and giraffes with their interminable necks, look on calmly. Other walls present either a circus with prevalently comic motifs and tricks and majestic elephants or a paradise of toys representing the more popular characters in fables and tales. Each room thus has its own fantastic life, which breaks the monotony of small desks lined up with their seats of shining metal. The teacher has only to prolong and multiply the fascination of that life with her words.

She is really the gardener whose art of imparting the first ideas of knowledge to these simple intent minds resembles the art of lightly turning over the earth of well-kept flower-beds and of helping the delicate plants in flower to take a bit of sky and yield a little perfume. The marvellous aptitude of the child to live the things seen and heard is like a miracle of spring vegetation. Gone are the

Kindergarten -
Games Room



old infant schools with clumsy discipline which guarded the children in a prison of monotony, and in their place is the continuous game of curiosity and novelty, with the world presented as a fable which has one day to be learnt in its essence of pain, anxiety, fatigue and consoling illusions, but which for the present is an iridescent freshness of facts with the likeness of toys.

If one presents oneself to that nestful, he also becomes an unusual fact to be gazed at with wide-open eyes, a toy for the moment, the shade of a cloud between a sunbeam and fantasy. But if he is able to watch unobserved, before him will be unfolded the first contacts of man with reality — man who begins to touch the real through roseate veils, a reality which is light and caressing so as not to bear upon those wings of butterflies that have settled on ideas of things like on fragrant calyxes. This also is a sort of hygiene, which aims at the spirit as the other aims at the body, which watches over the movements of the mind as the other does over those of the body, cleansing and keeping all impurities at a distance. Here begins the harmony of the sound mind in a sound body. The initial knowledge enters along with the air



The Tour of the
Elementary
School

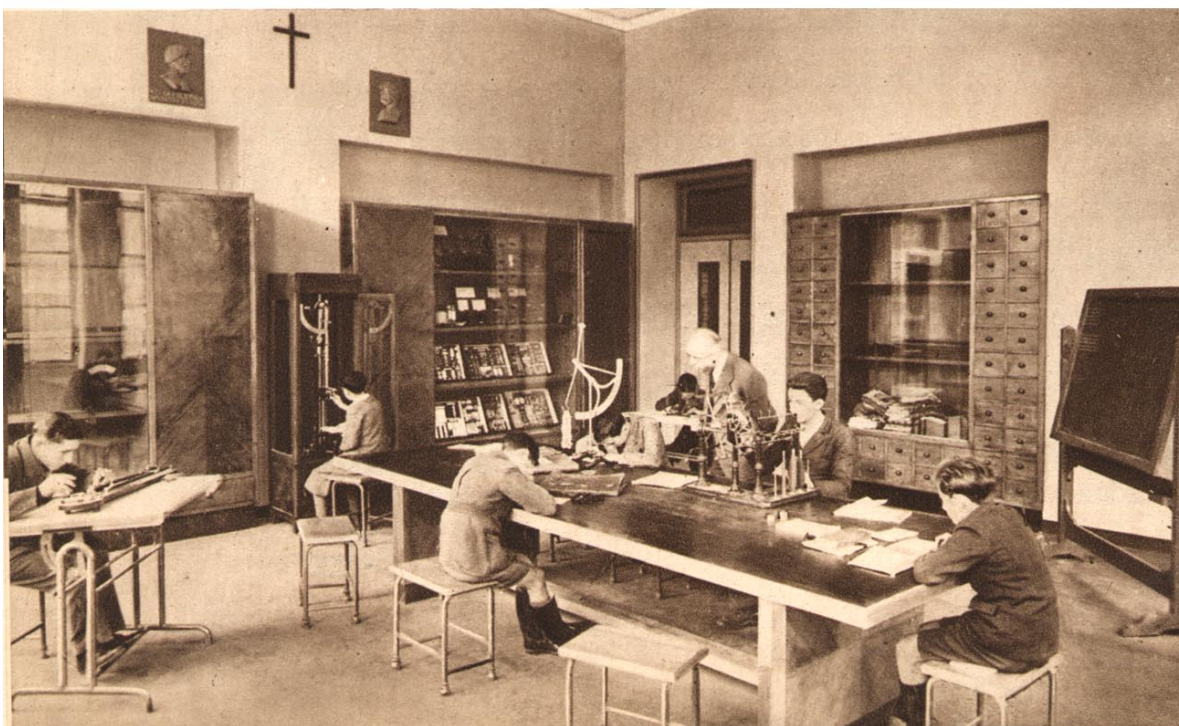


Technical School

and the sun and possesses their power, which little by little strengthens.

But the life of the child is in play, which for him does not constitute recreation or rest, but a real and natural occupation. We use the word « play » with the concept of adults whereas in reality it is work which pleases more because it is done with greater freedom; it is a form of instruction that attracts the child more than any other form because the teaching does not come from without but from his

Technical School -
Classroom of Textile
Technology

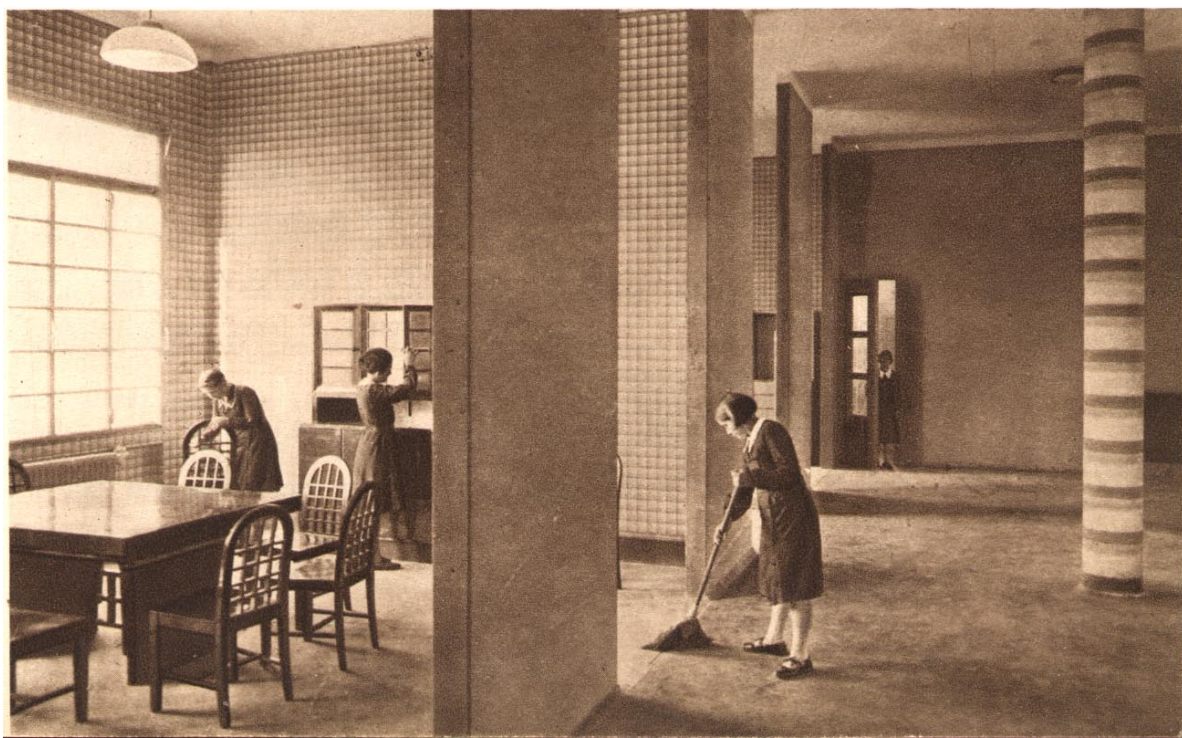


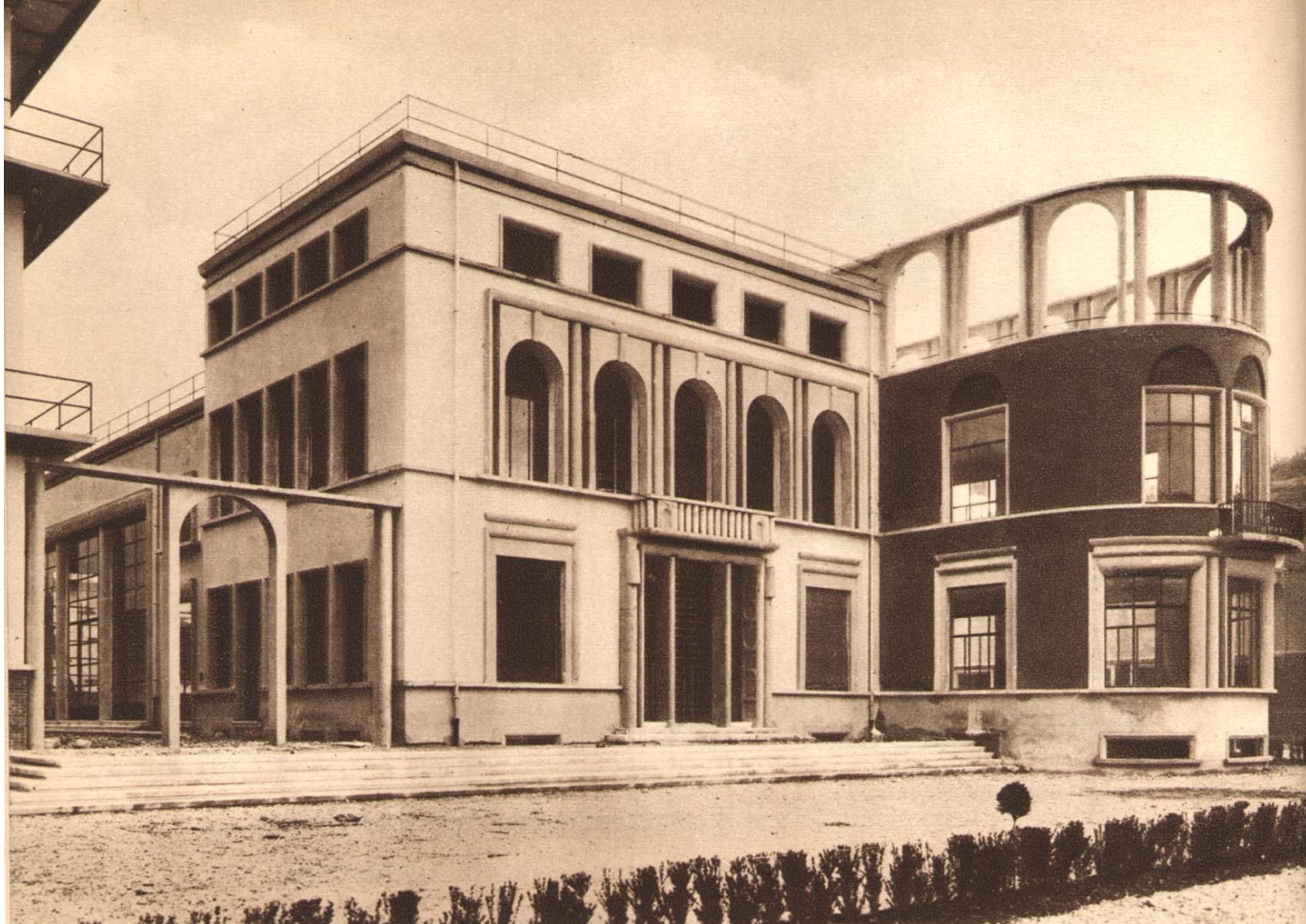


Technical School
· Domestic Eco-
nomy

own twilight experience. The objects placed at his disposal are virgin land of which he makes use with a certain feeling of independence, exploring it. Play is free gymnastics for his mind after the compulsory gymnastics. Aptitudes begin to become marked, traits to be delineated and bents to be revealed, which it will be advisable to restrain, guide or encourage as the case may be. It is here that the direct and many-sided human material of society begins to receive light. Play is the pure nakedness of the infant mind exposed to the

Technical School
· Domestic Eco-
nomy



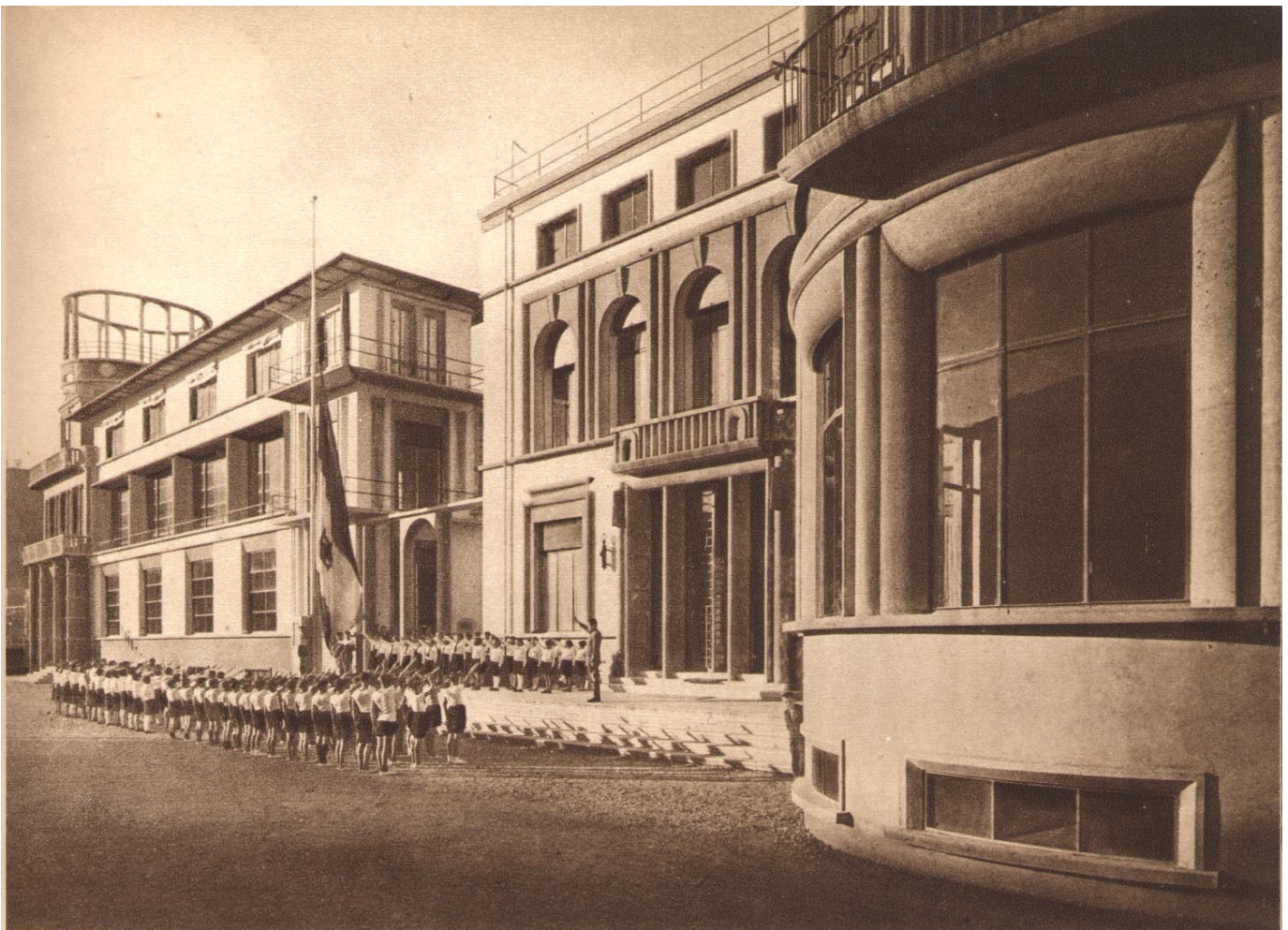


House of the «Ballilla»

eyes of the educators. Thus the son of the worker no longer grows up like a small ignorant beast exposed like a sod of earth to the wind that carries seeds of weeds as well as seeds of flowers. He does not live obtusely or enter upon school life like an inert thing into which it will be necessary once more to breathe a soul, so to speak.

It is true that the big, the strong, the wise, the poet do not need all this diligence and scrupulous attention during early years in order to achieve distinction. On the other hand, it is equally true that such a fecund work is not meant for geniuses but for the common run of people, and that a country is mighty and sound according as the multitude from which it draws its fundamental strength is balanced and soundly educated.

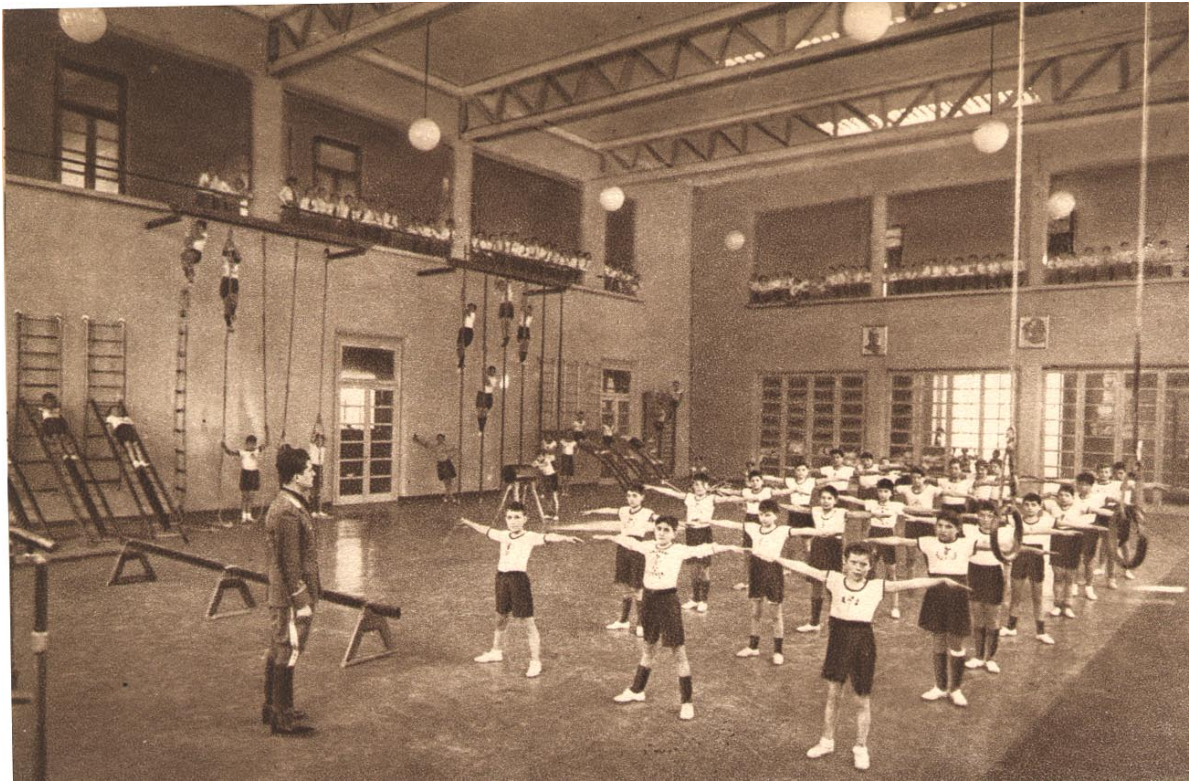
Nor must it be forgotten that the equilibrium of the common man is sustained by the dignity of his manner of living and that this



House of the «Basililla» - Hoisting the Flag

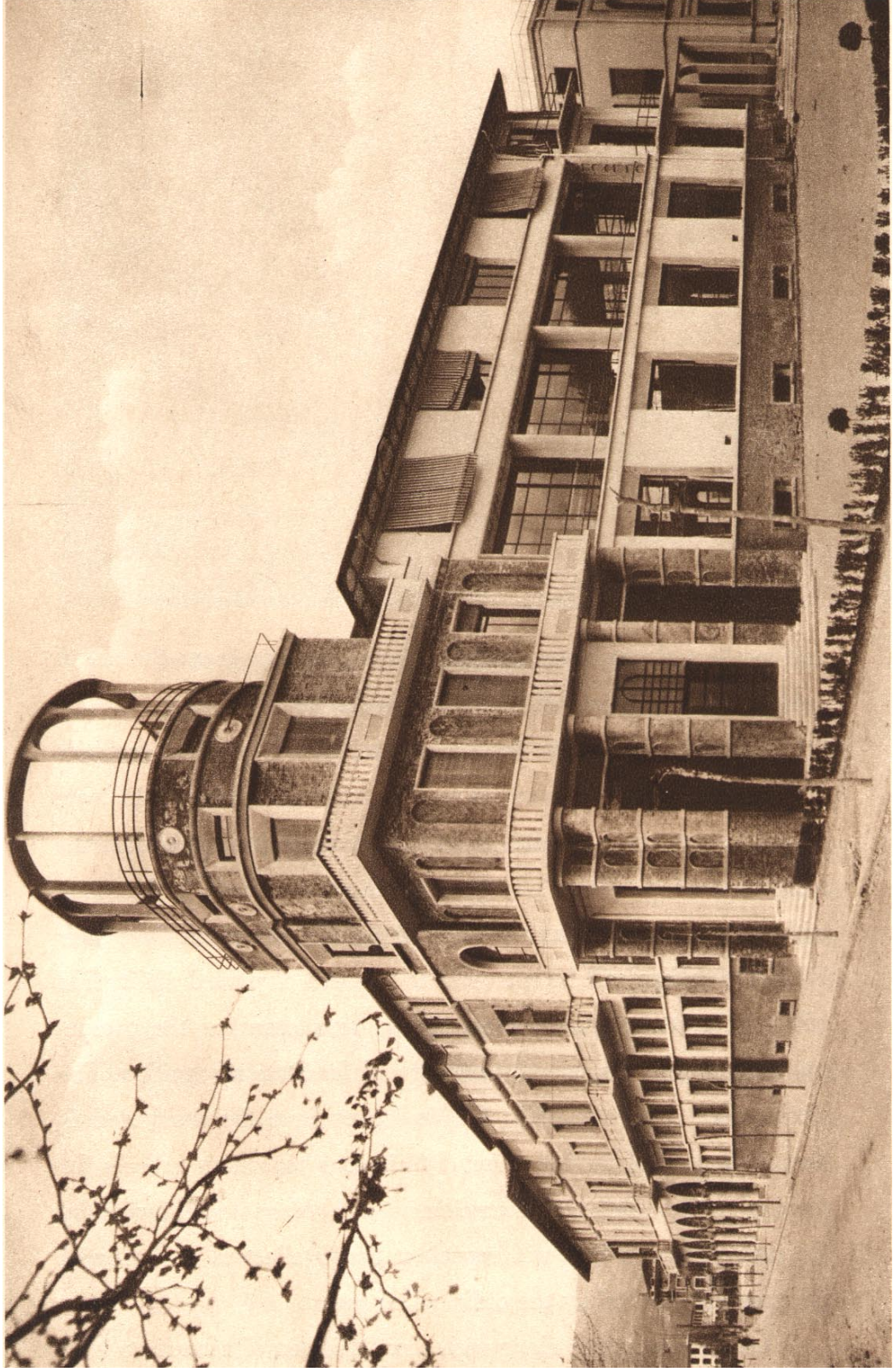
dignity is born of the consciousness of being an operating force of the nation, the importance of which is practically valued.

In the Social City the development of this force is followed without any gaps in the work of assistance. Up to yesterday the workman's son, on reaching the age of six, entered one of the elementary schools of Valdagno. Today there is a new school, not far from the kindergarten, which, like this, has all the marks of comfortable and hygienic modernity. It is open to all children of Valdagno, for which reason it has been presented to the municipality. The most exacting educational progress could not wish for a better scholastic equipment than it possesses. The children continue to live in the atmosphere of the New City which has been erected for them and which they will love the better the more they feel there, from stage to stage of their lives, at their ease.



Gymnasium - «Ba-
lilla» at their E-
xercises

The elementary school does not represent, however, the only centre of instruction in the City that has arisen from industry. A technical school has been built and is now ready where workers' sons who wish to receive and eventually to put to use a good technical preparation will find not only clear and comfortable rooms for the theoretical part of the teaching, but also a workshop for the practical teaching, a miniature factory in which they may obtain familiarity with the machines. Thus the very place which for centuries gave so many lowly workmen to the woollen industry when it was carried on with old means and methods, is today able to supply the industry, now made gigantic by machines and complicated by new proceedings in continual progress, with well-trained workmen and technical assistants who have grown up alongside the coarser work of their fathers. Thought has at the same time been given to the girls leaving the elementary school, and a school of domestic economy has been prepared for them with a teaching which they will put into practice as helpers of their mothers and later as wives



THE « DOPOLAVORO »

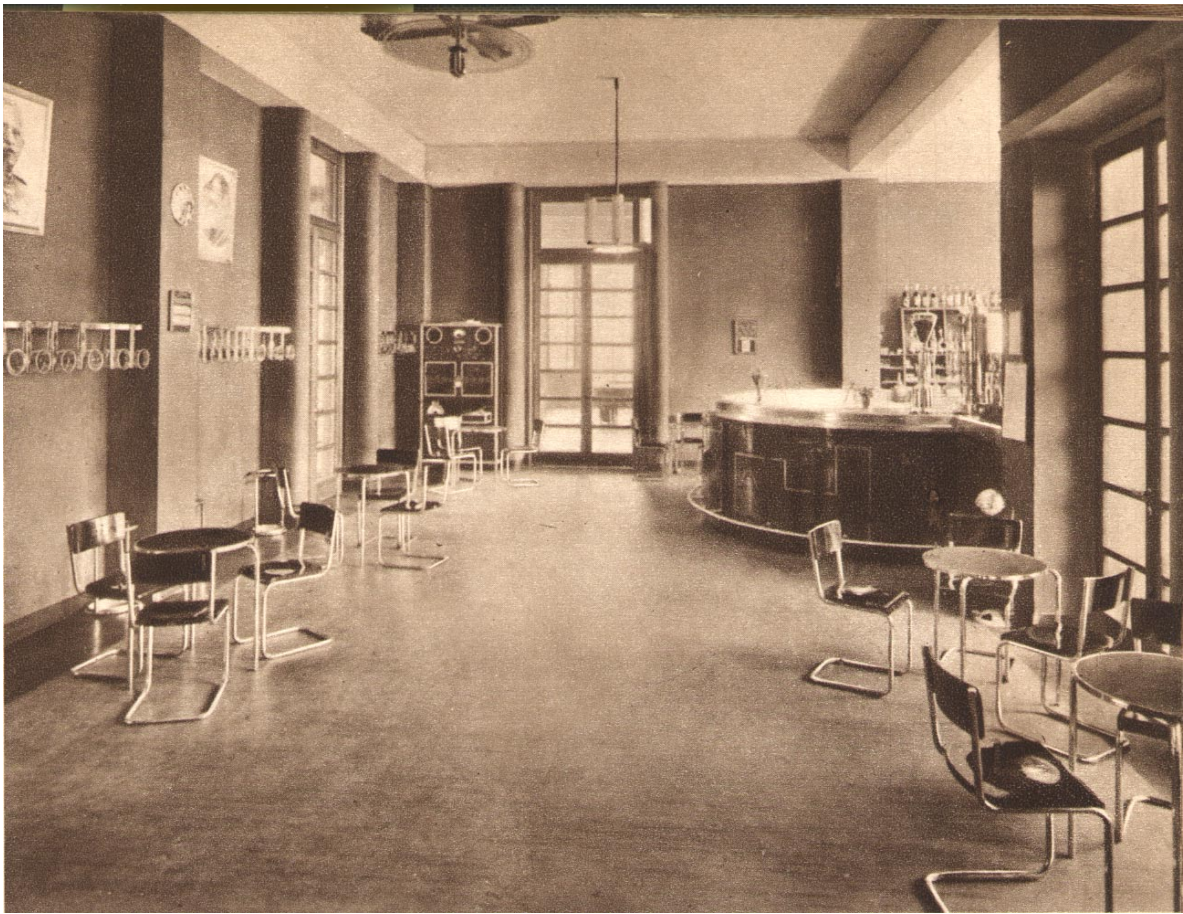


The «Dopolavoro»
- Restaurant

and mothers themselves; a school where they may learn the art of being good housewives in better houses, to be kept better.

Moreover, Valdagno has inadequate secondary school facilities and since the number of clerks is now fairly considerable and the town has a by no means negligible middle class, projects are afoot for the foundation of a college affording classical education. In harmony with the spirit that has animated all the other institutions since their birth, the college will be entrusted to teachers of proved ability and will attract students from other towns, thus ensuring the prosperity necessary for its smooth working and for State recognition. The clerks of the Marzotto mills will no longer have the worry and financial burden of having to send their sons to distant schools for their education, and the other citizens of Valdagno will benefit by the convenience, which will represent the intellectual crowning of the progress reached by the old woollen town.

Let us now return along with these children of a more enlight-



The «Dopolavoro»
- Bar

ened age to the material and ideal centre of the New City; let us return there with the companies of « balilla », who have their own attractive and spacious House in front of the maternity hospital. The children are now in the uniform they love and of which they are proud not merely because of a natural and likable vainness but also because of the first simple sentiment of patriotism symbolized by the uniform and cultivated by the discipline. They march and sing. They are conscious of belonging, with no less attachment and with more pride, to something bigger than their families and their town, to be prepared for something finer and more vital than work and the daily round. They have a feeling of an horizon much broader than that with which their valley is bounded and of catching from fantastic distances the echoes of their very songs, of their tread, measured like others, throughout the whole of their beloved Italy.

In their House they are specially attracted by the gymnasium with the most varied and ingenious gymnastic equipment, where