THE rearing of children—whether in the sense of training or in the sense of free unfoldment—is still causing much dispute. The tendency of the times is to produce uniform and average types. Spontaneity and originality are considered out of date and useless. In fact, the less creative man is, the better his chances in every vocation of life.

The division of labor has never before reached such height, nor has man ever before been so much degraded to a mere machine. The spirit of an Emerson or a Goethe is rare indeed, and impractical for our daily life. The most lamentable quality of modern man is his great capacity for adjustment. His activities are mechanical; his work, instead of liberating him, is riveting his chains still deeper into his flesh. The iron necessity of eking out a living imposes such occupations which are remunerative, though in no way related to his nature or inclinations. The question is not as to what could give the greatest satisfaction or joy; rather is it what gain, what material results can accrue therefrom.

The same spirit actuates the ideals of our times in the rearing and educating of the child. Most parents see in the school, the college and university the medium of profitable positions. They
look upon education as a good investment, eagerly awaiting the time when they and their children will reap the dividends.

The idea that the rearing of the child—whether boy or girl—implies a consideration of the individual tendencies, has vanished from the horizon of parents and educators of to-day. No wonder they fail to grasp the importance of free unfoldment and growth. *

An attempt to give the child an opportunity for unhampered development is being made in France by Sebastian Faure. The latter became widely known during the high tide of the Dreyfuss campaign. Together with Emile Zola, Anatole France, and Octave Mirbeau, Sebastian Faure fought the corrupt nationalistic and militaristic cliques which were endeavoring to use the Dreyfuss affair to further their own reactionary aims, mindful of Dr. Johnson’s remark, that patriotism is the resource of knaves.

Faure is considered the most formidable foe of the reactionists, because of his remarkable oratorical ability. But Faure’s particular forte is his opposition to religion and churchism, with which, as an ex-priest, he is thoroughly familiar. Faure might be compared to Robert Ingersoll, except that the ideas of the former are much broader and higher. He did not stop at free thought; but, as Anarchist and educator he is equally uncompromising in his opposition to economic and social iniquities. Faure is a practical idealist—one that applies his theories of a happier future to the immediate regeneration of society. *

“La Ruche” is an hour’s journey from Paris; it is situated on the outskirts of a village named Rambouillet, a former stronghold of French nobility and now owned by the government, serving as a summer resort of the President.

Two years ago comrade Faure bought the land on which he has built his “Beehive.” In that comparatively short time he succeeded to transform the former wild, uncultivated country into still due on “La Ruche.” That done, the venture will become self-supporting, enabling Faure to enlarge his family.

Our visit to “La Ruche” was most interesting and instructive, and we regretted that time did not permit us to prolong our visit.

We were driven to the station by the friend who had met us on our arrival. She proved to be not only a kind and lovable person, but also a highly intelligent woman with great independence of character. Being too early for our train, we were asked to have a drive through the famous Rambouillet woods, passing the palace where the French President, M. Fallieres, was spending the summer.

How forcibly the place contrasted with “La Ruche”! The latter, an attempt at a new life, new human beings, new habits. Rambouillet, representing the decayed pillars of old and tottering institutions. What a contrast!

Sebastian Faure calls his attempt a work of “education and solidarity.” May it prosper and serve as a noble example for others to follow. In a world of sham, hypocrisy and misery, is there any grander work than the rearing of new men and women?
I asked comrade Faure what the relations of the children were among themselves and how they treated each other.

Faure replied: “It is surprising how frank, kind and affectionate the children are to each other. The harmony between themselves and the adults at ‘La Ruche’ is highly encouraging. We should feel at fault were the children to fear or honor us merely because we are their elders. We leave nothing undone to gain their confidence and love; that accomplished, understanding will replace duty; confidence, fear; and affection, sternness.

“No one has yet fully realized the wealth of sympathy, kindness and generosity hidden in the soul of the child. The effort of every true educator should be to unlock that treasure—to stimulate the child’s impulses and call forth the best and noblest tendencies. What greater reward can there be for one whose life-work is to watch over the growth of the human plant, than to see its nature unfold its petals and to observe it develop into a true individuality. My comrades at ‘The Beehive’ look for no grander reward, and it is due to them and their efforts, even more than my own, that our human garden promises to bear beautiful fruit.”

Referring to the subject of history and the prevailing old methods of instruction, I asked comrade Faure how that subject is being taught at “The Hive.”

He replied, simply: “We explain to our children that true history is yet to be written—the story of those who have died unknown in the effort to aid humanity to greater achievement.”

The comrades associated with Sebastian Faure are so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the place that everything continues in the same harmonious way, though he, himself, is absent the greater part of the year on lecture tours. The latter serve the double purpose of education and raising funds for “La Ruche,” forty thousand francs having been raised during the two years of “The Hive’s” existence. Comrade Faure hopes to earn this winter a sufficient sum to liquidate the amount
The cleanliness and beauty of the "Hive" filled us with admi-
ration. Most wonderful of all, however, proved the dormitory
and lavatory of children, furnished in the plainest conceivable
manner and yet producing a remarkably bright and cheerful
effect. The latter was due to the hand-painted wall paper—a
labor of love by some of the ablest artists of France. Flowers,
plants, birds and animals were grouped in harmonious colors,
thus quickening the imagination of the children more effec-
tively than a hundred lessons.

Co-education is still forbidden by the lawmakers of France.
It is owing, however, to the great popularity of Faure that the
government does not interfere with him, who not only propa-
gates joint education, but also maintains it at "La Ruche." There
the boys and girls mingle freely together in class-room, work-
shop and gymnasium.

The schoolroom lacked the usual awe-inspiring appearance—
the children rocking in their chairs, listening to their instructor
whom they seemed to regard as one of their own number,
telling them an interesting story. Never before had I seen
such spontaneous joy as on that September afternoon, when
Sebastian Faure led us into the classroom and—with the
most serious face—introduced the "American comrades to the
comrades of 'La Ruche'," addressing each little tot as Mlle.
Janette or Monsieur Henri. No one could remain in doubt as
to the affection the children bore Faure.

Naturally, we were very anxious to hear the views of Faure
himself, as to his novel undertaking. Among other things he
said:

"I have taken twenty-four children of both sexes, mostly or-
phans or those whose parents are too poor to pay. They are
clothed, housed and educated at my expense. Till their twelfth
year they will receive a sound elementary education; between
the age of twelve and fifteen—their studies still continuing—
they are to be taught some trade, in keeping with their individ-
ual dispositions and abilities. After that they are at liberty to
leave 'La Ruche' to begin life in the outside world, with the as-
urance that they may at any time return to 'The Hive' where
they shall be received with open arms and welcomed as par-
ents do their beloved children. Then, if they wish to work at
our place, they may do so under the following conditions: One-
third of the product to cover the expenses of his or her mainte-
nance, another third to go towards the general fund set aside
for accommodating new children, and the last third to be de-
voted to the personal use of the child, as he or she may see
fit.

"The health of the children who are now in my care is per-
fected. Pure air, nutritious food, physical exercise in the open,
long walks, observation of hygienic rules, the short and inter-
esting method of instruction and, above all, our affectionate un-
derstanding and care of the children have produced admirable
physical and mental results.

"It would be unjust to claim that the children have accom-
plished wonders; yet, considering that they belong to the aver-
age, having had no previous opportunities, the results are grat-
ifying indeed. The most important thing they have acquired—a
rare trait with ordinary school children—is the love of study,
the desire to know, to be informed. They have learned a new
method of work—one that quickens the memory and stimu-
lates the imagination. We make a particular effort to awaken
the child’s interest in his surroundings, to make him realize the
importance of observation, investigation and reflection, so that
when the children reach maturity, they should not be deaf and
blind to the things about them. Our children never accept any-
thing in blind faith, without inquiry as to why and wherefore;
nor do they feel satisfied until their questions are thoroughly
answered. Thus their minds are free from doubts and fear resul-
tant from incomplete or untruthful replies; it is the latter which
warp the growth of the child and create a lack of confidence in
himself and those about him."