

“HOTEL” MANAGED BY CHILDREN
“Herald” Reporter Visits Penstone

Imagine, if you can, a hotel managed entirely by children who learn English when they are not scrubbing floors, and you have some idea how the Basque refugee children are spending the quietest time of their young lives at Penstone House.

Refugees from a war-stricken country, they occupy their time working very hard trying to forget some of the horrors that many men have never had the misfortune to experience.

Their day starts at 7.30 in the morning and they are all in bed by 8.30 at night.

They scrub floors and launder their own clothes, and then have time to learn our language and play with toys given them by sympathisers.

WEEKLY CINEMA TREAT

This week a “Herald” reporter was shown over the house by Mr F Omegna, the Warden, whose charming manner has delighted every visitor.

Actually there are 36 girls and three boys at Penstone. There is one qualified teacher, Señorita Velasco, and three assistants – all young women who have come from Spain with the children.

Mrs Tuchmann, a German woman, teaches the children English and needlework and supervises their gymnastics and games. Miss Moore, who is well-known to Lancing for her work in the League of Nations, comes in regularly to give English lessons. Daily walks are included in the time-table, and every Saturday morning the children are entertained to a cinema.

GARDENERS, TOO

Some are learning typewriting, while every child has a special plot of garden to cultivate and keep tidy. Just now they are hoping that the onion and lettuce seeds they have planted will bear fruit.

It costs nearly £24 a week to run Penstone House and every penny is raised by charity.

Mr Omegna himself was born in Barcelona. Although still very young, he can speak seven languages fluently – Spanish, French, Italian, English, Catalan, Arabic and Hebrew. He can also converse in Portuguese to a certain extent. For many years he has been a plant fumigation expert for an American firm in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Irak and Iran.

This week, incidentally, his wife, who was also born in Barcelona, where they were married, accompanied some children back to Spain. This was the first time that she has been able to return to her native country since she came to Lancing in August.

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