

WAYS OF DEALING WITH PERSONAL AND PUBLIC HYGIENE IN CRAIOVA, IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

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Abstract: In Craiova, at the beginning of the second half of the 19th century the rivers which carried the toxic wastes of the local industry across the town, the swamp created at the edge of the city by the local Craiovița Pond or the summer's dusty streets had the effect of keeping the mortality at higher rates. Every year, an important percent of the city's population died of tuberculosis, cholera, gastroenteritis, angina or venereal diseases. Since the local sanitary system was unable to solve this problem, an important role was given to the education system, which acted constantly on two significant directions: offering a healthy and hygienic environment in which the pupils could learn and teaching the same pupils – the citizens to come – the virtues of personal hygiene.

Keywords: hygiene, sanitary system, education system, diseases, pupils.

Personal and public hygiene acted as important elements of modern civilization. Subsequently, in the second half of the 19th century, when Romania had already decided to step on the path of modernization by replacing the old structures, specific to the oriental civilization, with new ones, borrowed from the more advanced western society, the issue of public health was placed on the main agenda of the local and central leaders. The second largest city in Wallachia (in the middle of the 19th century, when the city had almost 25,000 inhabitants) and, afterwards, the fifth in Romania (at the end of the same century, now with a population of 45,000 inhabitants), Craiova was, of course, no exception¹.

From the point of view of public sanitation, in 1859, when Moldavia and Wallachia united to form Romania, Craiova, the old capital of the historic region of Oltenia, was far from the standards in use in the countries from Western Europe. One of the main problems was the poor quality of the air breathed by the locals –

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¹ Titu Georgescu, Constantin Bărbăcioru, Florea Firan, *Istoria Craiovei*, Craiova, Scrisul Românesc Publishing, 1977, pp. 62-66; Mircea Pospai, *Memoria Băniei*, Bucharest, Sport-Turism Publishing, 1982, p. 107; Ion Bulei, *Românii în secolele XIX-XX. Europeanizarea*, Bucharest, Litera International Publishing, 2011, p. 101.

an unfortunate consequence of the presence, at the very border of the city and within the city itself, of several marshy areas. The small rivers that crossed the locality, infested with garbage thrown by the inhabitants and with residues from the local industry, contributed, also, to increasing of the pollution.

Forty years later, at the end of the 19th century, the problem was far from being resolved. Dr. E. Antonini, the city's authority in charge with public hygiene, included in his annual report on public sanitation for the year 1894² a desolating description of the city, which brought to the public attention the peril created by the local authorities' reluctance when dealing with eliminating the city's numerous pest holes. One of the examples offered by the author was the case of the valley beginning from the Rahova Street, an area so filthy, that a traveler would hesitate to visit it even in daylight, afraid not to "break his legs or his neck":

"The inhabitants of this part of the city, formed mainly by Gipsies, throw away all their domestic garbage; the meteoric waters, which drain furiously on the hills, have dug quite a river bed, of irregular shape, with the result that even on the driest days of summer, one can find here many muddy places, where the animals bathe and the air is filled with pestilential and fetid emanations, which are carried to the whole city by the wind"³.

The same situation could be found on the north-east part of the city, where there lied an "enormous quantity of organic mud" which, in autumn, when the weather is wet, produced a massive fermentation which altered the quality of the air or in the south part, where the pond from the Bibescu Park held the responsibility for the emanation of a massive volume of effluvia.

On the east of the city one could find the Tanner's River, formed by the waters from the Oota and Chiriac fountains, which crossed the city for more than a kilometer and was considered "one of the most terrible pest holes". The explanation was that this river, although it had been recently channeled by the orders of the local authorities, collected all the organic matters resulted from the tanning of the leather, which fermented in the heat of the summer, poisoning the atmosphere. On the western part of the city lied the vast Craiovița marsh, responsible, in Dr. Antonini's opinion, *for the killing of one fifth of the city's population, every year*.

Another important factor which contributed to the poor personal hygiene of the locals was, surprisingly – if we take into consideration the fact that Craiova is situated in an area blessed with many natural springs – the permanent lack of

² E. Antonini, *Raport general asupra serviciului hygienei publice a oraşului Craiova pe anul 1894*, Craiova, 1895, pp. 4-6.

³ The original text in old Romanian language: "*Locuitorii acestei părţi a oraşului, mai toţi Țigani, asverle toate murdăriile menagiurilor lor; apele meteorice, cari se scurg cu furie după dealuri, au săpat o adevărată albie foarte neregulată, așa încât chiar în zilele cele mai secetoase ale verii, se găesc aci o mulțime de mocirle, în cari se scaldă animalele, aerul e plin de emanațiuni pestilențiale și fetide și vânturile, în trecerea lor pe aici, le ia și le răspândește în tot orașul*".

water, which became chronic towards the end of the century. In fact, the problem was not only the incapacity of the town's 119 public fountains and many other private ones (according to a statistics from 1882) to ensure the city's entire need for water but also the fact that the water coming from these fountains was, in most cases, unsuitable for drinking and, in general, for domestic usage. At the end of the century, one could still see people with water carts, who sold water to the individuals⁴. This particular obstacle was partially surpassed in the first decade of the 20th century, during N. P. Romanescu's mandate as a mayor, when a system which brought fresh water in the city from the spring of Gioroc, situated at 40 kilometers from Craiova was constructed⁵.

The city's streets had also a devastating effect on people's health, only few of them – mainly the ones in the center of the town – being modernized with cubic stone. The paved streets had a concave form, allowing the water to drain through the gutter formed in the middle of the road. After 1876, the convex form, with gutters by the curb of the sidewalk, was adopted. The rest of the streets were constructed simply by leveling up the ground and occasionally (and only for some of the streets) strewing some gravel. The result was that there were long periods (most of spring and autumn and a little part of winter) when these streets were filled with "stinky mud" which, in the summer time, transformed in a vast quantity of dust. In order to protect from lung diseases or other infectious maladies, which flourish in such environment, one should have "the lungs of a stentor and the constitution of a giant"⁶.

Due to these inhospitable conditions for proper human health, death remained a familiar presence. Moreover, death exceeded occasionally its customary boundaries and tilted the balance in its favor, leaving behind figures and statistics which remind rather of Medieval Ages than of the end of the Modern Era. For example, in the last decade of the 19th century, for five different years, the number of deaths was bigger than the number of births. A few years later, in 1903, the percentage of deaths, by different age categories, looked like this: a) 21% for children under 1 year; b) 21,3% for children aged 1 to 10; c) 20,2% for people aged 10 to 40; d) 18% for people aged 40 to 60 and e) 19% for people over 60 years old⁷. The most frequent diseases of that time were tuberculosis⁸, cholera (which

⁴ Luchian Deaconu, Otilia Gherghe, *Craiova 1859-1877. De la Alexandru Ioan Cuza la Carol I*, Craiova, Sitech Publishing, 2000, pp. 119-121; E. Antonini, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

⁵ Luchian Deaconu, *Craiova, 1898-1916. Saltul la urbanismul modern. Nicolae P. Romanescu*, Craiova, Sitech Publishing, 2001, pp. 138-145.

⁶ N. Gh. Dinculescu, *Craiova acum 50 de ani*, Craiova, Ramuri Publishing, 1934, pp. 6-10; E. Antonini, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-9.

⁷ Luchian Deaconu, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

⁸ Tuberculosis, "the most critical medical and social problem in present day" (in 1926), was the cause of death for more than 5.000 inhabitants of Craiova in the first quarter of the 20th century (approximately 200 death each year) – Dr. Ch. Laugier, *Igiena Craiovei: evoluția tuberculozei*, Craiova, Scrisul Românesc Publishing, 1926, p. 8.

was the cause of death for 372 locals in 1873 and 516 in the following year), gastroenteritis, scarlet fever, angina and venereal diseases (especially syphilis).

The fight against the illness and diseases was carried on particularly by a meager network of hospitals, composed by the city's official hospital, "Filantropia", founded in 1856, with a capacity of only one hundred beds, the "Preda" Hospital, founded in 1868 at the initiative of a local rich merchant, Teodor Preda, whose entire fortune was donated with the explicit purpose of establishing and maintaining a hospital for the locals, and a military hospital ("Spitalul ostășesc"). Beside those mentioned above, there also functioned a psychiatric hospital ("Spitalul de smintiți"), which was a part of the "Madona Dudu" Establishment – one of the most important social assistance institutions from the country, which financially supported the activity of two schools for girls, two hospitals, a choir and many social assistance activities. There also functioned a small network of private doctors (only three officially registered in 1867), a relatively equal number of chemists (most of them, if not all, Jews, in contrast with the situation of the doctors, which were predominantly Romanian) and another category, formed by unqualified practitioners, barbers and "witches", who operated at the edge of the law and at constant war with the official doctors and with the city's authorities⁹. By the middle of the 1920's, this situation was significantly changed (for the better, of course), as the inhabitants' health was constantly supervised by a group of three officials (a general inspector, a first doctor of the County and a first doctor of the city) who had to control the activity of 44 physicians, 22 accocheuses, 11 dentists, 15 chemists and 2 druggists¹⁰.

Another important factor which acted in the direction of improving the health conditions of the city's inhabitants was the school system, which had the advantage of operating simultaneously on two different zones: teaching the pupils – the citizens to come – the basics of personal hygiene and, at the same time, offering them a clean and salubrious environment to study in during the classes. To make sure that the latter conditions were respected, The Ministry of Education, the local Mayoralty and the city's Hygiene Council intervened constantly, imposing diverse measures regarding the pupils' mandatory vaccination, the measures to be taken in case of the outbreak of different contagious diseases or the compulsory sanitation of the school buildings during the holidays¹¹.

⁹ Iosif Ciobanu, Gheorghe Enache, *Asistența medicală în municipiul Craiova – Realizări și perspective*, in "Craiova, trecut, prezent și viitor", Craiova, Scrisul Românesc Publishing, 1979, pp. 198-199; Marius Dobrin, *În căutarea memoriei*, Craiova, Aius Publishing, 2003, pp. 26-32; Luchian Deaconu, Otilia Gherghe, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-104.

¹⁰ P. I. Comăneanu, *Călăuza orașului Craiova*, Craiova, Institutul de Arte Grafice "Ramuri", 1925, pp. 29-32.

¹¹ Dolj County Service of the National Archives (it will be further quoted SJAN Dolj), fund Școala Generală "Obedeanu", file 11/1867, f. 8; file 17/1870, f. 6; file 18/1871, f. 6; file 19/1872, f. 12; file 25/1876, f. 33, 33vs; file 31/1886, f. 16; fund Școala primară de fete Nr. 1 "Regina Elisabeta", file 27/1877, f. 24; file 28/1888, f. 19.

The issuing, in 1893, of *The regulations for the construction of urban and rural elementary schools*, which stated all important requirements regarding the health of the children, can be considered, from this point of view, a significant step forward. The regulations book brought in modern ideas about how the school buildings should have been built, stating that the buildings had to be constructed on dry land, far from stagnant waters, cemeteries, slaughter houses, deposits and noisy shops or workshops. The classrooms had to be high (4-5 meters), with large windows displayed only on the East, South-East or South-West side. The size of each classroom was calculated to shelter up to 80 first year pupils and 70 pupils from superior years (the criterion used was that for each pupil was allocated 1-1.25 square meters surface and a volume of air of 4.50-5 cubic meters). The pupils' desks had to be arranged in such a manner that the light coming from the windows should always fall on their right. The water for the pupils had to be analyzed by the city's sanitation service and the latrines, provided with septic tanks, had to be placed in a different building, situated at least 15 meters away from the school building¹².

Unfortunately, the lack of money and/or of political willingness meant – as the Minister of Education admitted in a memorandum emitted in 1898 – that the requirements provided by the Ministry were often ignored by the local authorities, with the direct result that at the end of the 19th century many schools in Craiova still had small, dark and poorly ventilated classrooms and were placed closely one to another, in the center of the town, forcing the children from the outskirts of the city to travel a long distance to get to school¹³.

In fact, taking into account the realities of the second half of the 19th century, one is inclined to admit that improving this situation was an immense task, and the local authorities did the best they could, given the circumstances. The 1864 Education Law had introduced the generous and modern principles of compulsoriness and gratuitousness of the elementary schooling or the equal admittance to the education system of both boys and girls¹⁴, but the process of turning the ideas into reality was extremely difficult, partly because the pecuniary obligations regarding the maintenance of the schools or even the payment of the monthly wages fell mostly within the competence of the local authorities, which, in most cases, lacked the financial capacity implied by this project. Nevertheless, it's fair to say that big cities like Craiova had an obvious advantage over the poor villages from the rural area¹⁵.

¹² *Regulament pentru construcția localelor de școli primare urbane și rurale* (1893), in C. Lascăr, I. Bibiri, *Colecțiunea legilor, regulamentelor, programelor și diferitelor decisiuni și dispozițiuni generale ale acestui departament de la 1864-1901*, Bucharest, Imprimeria Statului, 1901, pp. 506-510.

¹³ *Circulara No. 50.183, adresată primarilor din comunele urbane, relativă la clădirile de localuri de școală* (1898), in Lascăr, I. Bibiri, *op. cit.*, pp. 1400-1403.

¹⁴ N. Adăniloae, *Istoria învățământului primar (1859-1918)*, Bucharest, Cris Book Universal Publishing, 1998, pp. 51-52.

¹⁵ Nicolae Andrei, Gh. Pârnuță, *Istoria învățământului din Oltenia*, vol. II, Craiova, Scrisul Românesc Publishing, 1981, pp. 179-199.

In this context, it's not a surprise that the second half of the 19th century was largely a period characterized by the local schools' permanent struggle to assure the minimum material conditions required for an education institution to function in proper conditions. This reality becomes a more obvious one if we analyze the situation of the city's oldest school, The "Obedeanu" Elementary School for Boys – founded in 1774-1775, by the ruler of Wallachya, Alexandru Ipsilanti, and initially dedicated to the education of the local nobility's children¹⁶ – whose institutional history in these decades includes a large number of complaints sent to various superior authorities, which were a reflection of an endless series of material problems.

The most frequent problems – which affected or could affect the pupils' health – the school encountered during this time were the insufficient stock of firewood (problem which repeated almost every winter¹⁷), which condemned the children to an inhospitable, disease-friendly environment and the physical damage suffered by the school building, like the recurrent deterioration of the roof (which permitted the rain water to infiltrate through the ceiling and pour into the classrooms and, at the same time, to weaken its strength, generating a permanent threat of a sudden collapse of the ceiling during the classes¹⁸). Other problems dealt with the large number of children in one classroom¹⁹, which were sometimes so crowded that affected the quality of the air breathed by both the teacher and the pupils, the wrong positioning of one of the classrooms, which was placed right over the basement and became impossible to heat up whenever the weather was very cold, in spite of the fire burning "all day and all night", the presence of some "horrible" pits, made by the inhabitants and placed close to the school's gate, where the school's pupils made the habit of playing, thus risking their life, the construction of some ditches to drain the rainwater which were so large and deep that prevented both the teachers and the pupils from entering the school or the lack of a proper latrine, which forced the pupils to "defecate in the fields surrounding the school, infecting the air and poisoning the health" of the children, during the hot days²⁰.

The problems encountered by the "Obedeanu" School were, in fact, the problems encountered by many other state schools from Craiova in the same

¹⁶ Marin Popa Nemoiu, *Memoriu asupra situației istorice și juridice a Bisericii Obedeanu*, Craiova, Tipografia Sf. Mitropolii a Olteniei, 1941, pp. 51-52.

¹⁷ SJAN Dolj, fund Școala Generală "Obedeanu", file 15/1869, f. 1, 5; file 17/1870, f. 2, 2vs; file 23/1874, f. 6; file 25/1876, f. 156.

¹⁸ Idem, file 17/1870, f. 20; file 19/1872, f. 21, 21vs, 25; file 25/1876, f. 83, 85.

¹⁹ For example, one of the mandatory medical inspections made periodically in "Obedeanu" Elementary School revealed that the number of the pupils who attended the first two classes was two times bigger than the capacity of the classroom permitted; Idem, file 25/1876, f. 33, 33vs.

²⁰ Idem, file 11/1867, f. 4; file 15/1869, f. 1vs; file 17/1870, f. 1, file 18/1871, f. 18; file 19/1872, f. 2; file 21/1873, f. 16, 16vs, 53-55; file 23/1874, f. 30, 31; file 25/1876, f. 104, 104vs; file 27/1877, f. 68, 69; file 32/1886, f. 6, 6vs, 33, 33vs; file 45/1894, f. 15-18.

period. A thorough analysis of these conditions offers a perspective from within the system on some of the causes of the contagious diseases that occurred frequently in that period, affecting the health of the children and disturbing the proper functioning of the education process. For example, in the last decade of the 19th century, the schools from Craiova were affected successively by the outbreak of catarrhal fever (in 1890, which delayed the start of the second semester), cholera (which was the cause of two different class suspension periods in the first semester of the 1893-1894 school year), scarlet fever (confirmed at the beginning of the year 1894, when it was already under control by the authorities – which suggests that it actually started in the earlier year – and again in 1898 and 1900), measles (in the spring months of 1894) and diphtheritis (the last one was considered so dangerous that, after one case was discovered in 1895 at The Secondary Day School for Girls “Regina Elisabeta”, the classes were suspended by the order of the city’s First Doctor for ten days, to permit the complete disinfection of the classrooms; the situation repeated, with similar details, two years later, in October 1897)²¹.

The main weapons used by the local and central authorities in their permanent fight against these diseases were the periodical sanitation of the classrooms²² and the careful observance of the rules contained by the prophylactic system elaborated by the medical authorities. To ensure the fulfillment of the second requirement, the Ministry of Education and the Town Council periodically “bombarded” the schools with instructions regarding the measures to be taken in order to protect the health of the pupils and to prevent the spread of the infectious diseases. For instance, in 1877 the city’s Hygiene Council decided to forbid the pupils to participate in any burial procession²³ and later, in 1886, in the context of an outbreak of convulsive cough epidemics, the Mayoralty of Craiova informed the headmasters of the local schools about their duty to isolate the sick pupils and to prevent them from coming to school, until they were absolutely cured²⁴. In 1893, the presence of a few cholera cases in some localities of the country determined the Ministry of Education to send a circular letter to all the schools in which it restated the rules to be followed in these conditions: a better cleaning and ventilation of the classrooms, the disinfection of the school’s cesspool and latrine, prevention of the proven sick pupils (and also the filthy, yet not sick ones!) from coming to school

²¹ Idem, fund Liceul externat de fete “Regina Elisabeta” Craiova, file 1/1890, f. 1-3; file 1/1894, f. 109-110; file 1/1895, f. 112; file 2/1897, f. 189; file 1/1900, f. 95, fund Școala Generală “Obedeau”, file 43/1894, f. 10, 57, 57vs; file 45/1894, f. 13, 44bis; file 65/1898, f. 54.

²² This activity was usually performed during the summer holidays (*The St. Peter Holidays*), and consisted mainly in whitewashing the interior walls, scrubbing the floors, oiling the wood parts of the doors, windows and furniture and making all the required small repairs. Idem, fund Școala Generală “Obedeau”, file 17/1870, f. 6; file 18/1871, f. 6; file 21/1873, f. 40, 42; file 23/1874, f. 30, fund Școala Catolică “Sf. Anton” Craiova, file 44/1911-1912, f. 11.

²³ Idem, fund Școala primară de fete Nr. 1 “Regina Elisabeta”, file 27/1877, f. 24.

²⁴ Idem, fund Școala Generală “Obedeau”, file 31/1886, f. 16.

and the mandatory sterilization of the water drunk by the pupils, using diverse filters or by simply boiling and then cooling it²⁵.

For a better control of the sanitary conditions in every school, the school inspectors had the obligation to examine not only the educational parameters but also the hygienic ones. Some of the reports made by them even had predefined fields or questions to be filled in, such as “the condition of the school building”, “the condition of the school furniture”, “the degree of cleanliness”, “are the bedrooms ventilated enough?”, “is the capacity of the classrooms and bedrooms sufficient in comparison with the number of the pupils?”, “what’s the quality of the drinking water?”, “are the pupils practicing various physical and singing activities?”²⁶. Also, for similar reasons, a health record, which contained all the essential information of every pupil (weight, height, skin, hair, sight, smell and the hereditary, collateral and personal bad health antecedents) and was filled in by a doctor, was introduced. The health record had to be updated every year²⁷.

A special attention was paid to the boarding schools, which functioned on the principle that the pupils should reside in school during the school days. In the second half of the 19th century in Craiova there only were several state schools which had a boarding school: “Carol I” High School, The Normal School for Boys, “D. A. Sturdza” Military High School and “Elena Cuza” Boarding School for Girls. Because the 1864 Education Law was not very comprehensive about the rules to be followed when dealing with boarders’ hygiene²⁸, later, in 1877, the Ministry of Education issued a special *Regulations for the hygiene of the boarding schools and boarders of both sexes*²⁹ which contained all the rules and details regarding the organization and functioning of a boarding school.

For instance, the building of the boarding school had to have at least the following rooms: several study rooms, a dormitory, an infirmary, a washing room, a bath room, latrines, an eating hall and a gymnastics room to be used during the winter period. The infirmary, which contained at least one bed for every 20 pupils, could be placed only in the most salubrious room of the building, as far as possible from the dormitories. The bath room had to contain at least two transportable vats and the washing room had to be provided with a washing system which consisted in several big troughs placed along the walls, used for draining the water, above which small tin vessels with a tap were placed. There had to be at least one tap for

²⁵ Idem, fund Liceul externat de fete “Regina Elisabeta” Craiova, file 1/1893, f. 105, 105vs.

²⁶ Idem, fund Școala Catolică “Sf. Anton” Craiova, file 31/1905-1948, f. 22, 23, 24.

²⁷ Idem, file 44/1911-1912, f. 41.

²⁸ The law stated only that any boarding school had to have a consulting room and be visited by a doctor at least three times a week – *Legea instrucțiunii din 1864*, in C. Lascăr, I. Bibiri, *Colecțiunea legilor, regulamentelor, programelor și diferitelor decisiuni și dispozițiuni generale ale acestui departament de la 1864-1901*, Bucharest, Imprimeria Statului, 1901, p. 18.

²⁹ *Regulament pentru igiena internatelor și internilor de ambe-sexe* in C. Lascăr, I. Bibiri, *Colecțiunea legilor, regulamentelor, programelor și diferitelor decisiuni și dispozițiuni generale ale acestui departament de la 1864-1901*, Bucharest, Imprimeria Statului, 1901, pp. 317-319.

every three pupils. The dormitory and the study rooms, which were lightened up by oil lamps and heated by stoves made from bricks, had to be aerated at least two times a day. The beds (one for each pupil), placed side by side at a distance of at least one meter from another, had an iron framework and a straw mattress, covered with a wool mattress, a bed sheet, a wool or straw pillow and a blanket or a counterpane.

Personal hygiene included also activities like the weekly cold bath (in the summer) and monthly hot bath (in the winter time), the regular change of the underwear (twice a week), sheets (once a month) and the straws from the mattresses and the pillows (twice a year), daily gymnastics exercises and a good, eight hour night sleep (from 9 p.m. to 5 a. m. in summer and 6 a. m. in winter!). Also, on every weekend the pupils went out, for a walk, accompanied by at least one of their teachers.

In charge with the boarding school's hygiene was an officially appointed doctor, who had the obligation to visit the school at least once a week and had under his control not only the health of the pupils but also the hygiene in the classrooms and bedrooms, the quality of the food or the cleanliness of the vessels used in the kitchen. The school's doctor was also the authority who examined the children who wanted to become boarders and decided the measures to be taken in case of the outbreak of an epidemic. If a pupil, already accepted as a boarder, was proven by the doctor to be suffering from urinary incontinence or nervous, contagious, incurable and chronic maladies, he would be excluded from the school by the order of the Minister of Education.

The importance of school hygiene grew over time in such a manner that in 1903 a member of the prestigious Romanian Academy chose it as a subject for his presentation. His work used the context of a brief history of school hygiene to emphasize and analyze the issues raised by such an important component of the modern school organization process. In his opinion, which came as a summary of the entire theme, the questions which had to be taken into consideration when dealing with school hygiene were numerous and involved all the possible problems that could affect the physical, intellectual and moral condition of the pupils: the improper building of the school, the inadequate sanitary installations, badly constructed and arranged furniture, the agglomeration of the pupils in small chambers, the poisoned air, the dust, the poor illumination, the insufficient heating of the classroom, the letters too small and too jam-packed in the textbooks, the wrong position of the body during the reading and writing process, the too hasty change of the pupils' habits, the harsh discipline, the pupil's fear of punishment, the prolonged attention, the information which was not adapted to the intellectual capacity of the child, the immense quantity of information to be learned by the pupil in a short period of time, the numerous homework or the never-ending succession of epidemics. Judiciously applied, school hygiene had the responsibility of eliminating all these problems³⁰.

³⁰ I. Felix, *Igiena școlară. Istoria ei, starea ei actuală*, Bucharest, Institutul de Arte Grafice "Carol Göbl", 1903, *passim*.

Besides assuring a healthy environment for the pupils, the Romanian education system from the second half of the 19th century acted also in the direction of teaching the children how to acquire and preserve a health and hygienic appearance. This aspect was more obvious in the half of the system destined to the education of girls, who, according to that time's mentality, were to become in the first place mothers and housewives and were reserved a "glorious" professional career as a seamstresses, cook maids, accocheuses, laundress women or – if they were good at learning – as teachers³¹. Consequently, the list of subject matters for the girls included classes of sewing, domestic economy, needlework, tailoring, knitted work, weaving or personal and domestic hygiene. For example, in the most prestigious education institution destined for girls from Craiova – "Elena Cuza" Boarding School for Girls – the subject matter "hygiene" was taught for one hour every week and only for the girls in the fifth year (which was the terminal one)³².

In conclusion, the process of modernization initiated by the central and local authorities in the second half of the 19th century succeeded in transforming Craiova in a more modern and (relative) hygienic one. In this immense effort, a valuable instrument was the education system, which not only that provided a safe environment for the pupils to learn in but also taught them how to keep a healthy constitution.

³¹ Maria Bucur, Mihaela Miroiu, *Patriarhat și emancipare în istoria gândirii politice românești*, Iași, Polirom Publishing, 2002, pp. 13-18.

³² Th. I. Ionescu, *Scurt istoric al învățământului particular din Craiova*, Craiova, Tipografia "Fulgerul", 1906, p. 11; Nicolae A. Andrei, Gheorghe Pârnuță, *O prestigioasă instituție școlară: Liceul de filologie-istorie din Craiova*, Craiova, Scrisul Românesc Publishing, 1985, p. 43.