

## HOW PAST STUDENTS CAN KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE NEWEST FEATURES OF THE TRAINING AT SCALE HOW.

[p 59]

In opening this discussion the point I wish to maintain is that, in a general sense, there are no new features in the training at Scale How. If some features appear new, is it not because stress is laid at one time on a subject that has been weak, and at another time an opportunity arises of getting an expert to teach some other subject? On looking back over the nine or ten years that I know well, it is plain that this has often been the case, and that the subjects so cultivated have been on the P.U.S. programmes all the time.

For example, in 1901, my first year at Scale How, we enjoyed a delightful fortnight of drill and dancing under one of Mrs. Wordsworth's trained teachers, traditions of which still linger in the ball drill, practised by each generation of students. Since then Swedish drill has been in the ascendant, and it was taught by short visits from teachers trained at Bedford until a House of Education student was qualified to take the post of resident drill-mistress. Another instance of expert teaching occurred when Miss Stephens, with her London B.Sc. in mathematics and astronomy, was appointed to give nearly all her time to the teaching of

[p 60]

mathematics, and she also gave the lectures on astronomy, which were already on the timetable, arousing mingled feelings of fascination and despair in her hearers. One subject often loses, while another gains, as time brings changes. Picture-talk suffered a hitherto irreparable loss when Mrs. Firth left Ambleside. But the children in all classes of the practising school have music lessons from the students, as well as opportunities of hearing the music set for each term, as a consequence of Miss Cruse's talent. Just so scouting, which had been on the programme for years, first became organized when Miss Smith was inspired with the idea of carrying it out here with the students and practising school children. The want of Miss Barnett's experience in elocution has lately been supplied by a week's visit from Mr. Burrell, who teaches reading as a work of art. And Miss Mason's often-expressed wish that students should make their own designs for handicrafts—although attempts had been made to do this in clay, leather and wood—is being fulfilled with better success, thanks to four lectures on design given last term by Mr. Phillips, who now inspects both drawing and handicrafts. Miss Krüger's visit to explain her method of teaching of French phonetics reminds us how much value has always been attached at Scale How to a beautiful French pronunciation, and, indeed, to the perfect pronunciation of any language. For in 1902, an Italian lady, staying in Grasmere, was invited to give us two lessons in Italian pronunciation, which were quite a revelation to me.

No doubt students who knew the other twelve years of the House of Education had the same experience as mine, and found that Miss Mason has always shown us, whenever she could secure the best teaching to be had in the subject concerned, how much she values such things as good reading, beautiful pronunciation, a wide acquaintance with good

[p 61]

music and great pictures, inspiring ideas in science, field work, and handwork.

If a subject were ever so expanded as to seem a new departure, it would doubtless be as fully explained to past students as scouting has been both in the *Children's Quarterly* for the last two years, and in the *Parents' Review* for September, 1910, and September, 1913.

But my best reason for maintaining that there are no new features in the training at Scale How, is that there are none in the Parents' Union School programmes. I have seen the original programme for Class II, dating from July, 1891, and it contains the same directions for work as those for the current term in all respects, except that fewer books are quoted, because twenty-two years ago many of the books we use were not written or not published in an accessible form. Does this seem at first sight a damaging statement to put forward in favour of Miss Mason's work?

But its continuity is due to its sound foundation upon "a philosophic theory of education." Applications of the method in detail, new books that fit the need, are, of course, included in the school programmes, always after a great deal of careful consideration. And the thoughtful study of each programme with the time-table belonging to it, does much to remind us of our training. In writing an essay, such as the present attempt, one is constantly referring to the title and examining the full scope of the words as they stand, to see whether one has kept to the subject suggested. So in teaching a subject in school, such as geography, whenever a doubt arises we may refer to the programme to see how the books used and methods indicated express the intentions of our Principal, that we may compare our achievement with her intention. Such a comparison is often forced upon us at the end of the term when the examination questions show what should have been our aim. I choose

[p 62]

geography as an instance, because it was the criticism lessons in geography which first impressed me with the fact that lessons are still criticized for the same faults or praised for applying the same principles that characterized them twelve years ago. The methods do not change, because the principles remain the same. And not long ago, in preparing, with Miss Mason's help, to expound to a meeting of teachers our methods of teaching each subject in the Parents' Union School, I discovered again that "Home Education" and "School Education" fully explained how each lesson should be taught. "Home Education" was first published before the House of Education was founded, yet the letters of the *Times* of 1912 proclaim the same principles that were advanced in 1886, and that are expanded and applied in the papers written by Miss Mason for successive annual Conferences, and published in the *Parents' Review*.

Perhaps it is a new feature that by a happy thought of Mrs. Franklin's every senior student must now prepare a paper on "How to teach," a single subject: e.g., natural history to Class II, literature to Class IV—anything that is on the school programme. It is done by referring to the Home Education Series, to the school programmes, to notes of lectures on practical education and of criticism lessons, to the Ambleside Geography books, in short, to the teaching received at Scale How. And, of course, the writing of this paper prepares a student to emulate those who have done the same thing so beautifully at many a P.N.E.U. Conference.

Everyone who has a thorough knowledge of the books which form the basis of our training is qualified to explain P.N.E.U. methods and principles. But I fear lest we ex-students deserve to be accused, with other members of the P.N.E.U. of whom Miss Mason wrote in 1912, that they "hardly seemed to realize that we stand for the most

[p 63]

advanced, and, I suppose, the final movement in educational philosophy."

I am inclined to think that when we hear of the dramatic method of teaching, of Madame Montessori, of eurythmics, of correlating handwork with bookwork, and of other

devices for “learning by doing” and self-expression—to mention a few of the conspicuous educational products of the day—the ardent teacher imagines that all that is best in these new departures is incorporated with the training at Scale How, and that she is left hopelessly out of date. She longs to keep in touch, and this is a point where it is indeed important to do so, for us who are still under Miss Mason’s roof as for those who are testing her principles in their separate schoolrooms. To quote from Miss Mason’s letter to a headmaster, given in the prospectus for schools: “Those who do not regard education as a vital whole, but as a sort of conglomerate of good ideas, good plans, traditions, and experiences, do well to adopt and adapt any good idea they come across. But our conception of education is of a vital whole, harmonious, living, and effective.”

It follows that we must remain diligent students of Miss Mason’s writings in order to be ready to apply her principles to the newest craze, and see how far it agrees with them. We are not left in doubt as to whether we have judged rightly, for in the reviews of books which appear monthly in the *Parents’ Review*, Miss Mason deals with modern educational works, and shows where the authors succeed, and often how they fail through mistaking a part for the whole. To give only two examples: Miss Finlay Johnson’s *Dramatic Method of Teaching* was reviewed in November, 1911, when Miss Mason suggested that the results were due rather to the children’s natural love of knowledge than to the dramatic method; and of Madame Montessori’s book, reviewed in August, 1912, Miss Mason

[p 64]

said it “seems to err in employing the methods of applied science for a spiritual being.”

In “Three Educational Idylls,” written for the *Parents’ Review*, November, 1912, Miss Mason compares the same two “impressive and picturesque idylls” with the Winchester Conference, and gives us the real meaning of that most encouraging, humbling, and inspiring event. And she prays “all members of the P.N.E.U. to make a thoughtful, earnest, and continuous study of a system which meets the perplexities and aspirations of our age, and which should issue in a generation of men and women, who shall be indeed, beings of large discourse, looking before and after.”

The experience of a number of years must have taught many what I am just beginning to realize, that Miss Mason’s claim that she offers a *philosophy* of education accounts for the unity, the permanence, the universal application, and indeed the success of the principles in which she has trained us. Let us hope that they are becoming, as she wishes, “a usual and natural part of our thinking.” But her thought is so very much condensed that in order to realize the scope of her sayings we must ponder over them, though to students who are accustomed to her mode of expression her meaning should be plainer than to the rest of the world.

Of no book is this more true than of *The Saviour of the World*. But that it should repay study is shown by Miss Mason’s statement in the *April Review*, that “it goes to the root of P.N.E.U. thought.” She has herself told us that she has drawn her philosophy from the Gospels, where we may study and note “the development of that consummate philosophy which meets every occasion of our lives, all demands of the intellect, every uneasiness of the soul.” And so, if we may look upon the issue of this wonderful series of *Meditations* as the latest feature of the training

[p 65]

at Scale How, it has been made possible for every ex-student to keep in touch with her leader, at a time when our knowledge of principles and loyal adherence to them may have an incalculable effect upon the future of our country. For “we have the one thing to offer which the whole world wants, an absolutely effective system of education, covering the whole nature of a child, the whole life of man.”

AGNES C. DRURY