

MISS MASON'S MESSAGE TO THE CHILDREN.

Read by MISS PARISH.

House of Education,

Ambleside,

June 15th, 1915.

My dear Children,¹

It is a great pleasure to me to greet you again assembled in a *visible* School. I was going to say actual instead of visible, but I recollected in time that you *are* an actual school bound to each other by delightful ties and with a strong *esprit de corps*.

I heard the other day of some girls who had a House of Education governess going to make acquaintance with other girls who were taught in the same way. Said one haughty little person, "One thing I do know; I shall not say one single word about school or lessons!" The governesses were amused, because the children of the two families had not been five minutes together before they began an eager discussion about their favourite passages, personages, pictures, birds, flowers, all the thousand and one things that make school hours delightful.

Then, too, as a school, you do not forget. I heard last week of a boy of fifteen who had distinguished himself in literature, gaining a scholarship at his Public School. His father asked him when he began to care for books. "Oh," he said, "when I was in the P.U.S." Now that was surprising, and encouraging to children in Class II., because when he was a

[p 586]

little fellow of eight it had become necessary to send him to a Preparatory School which does not belong to the P.U.S., and yet he believed that the work he had done there put him in the way of getting his scholarship. I suppose he meant that he had learned to love books and to pay perfect attention to what he read or listened to.

Do not think that history and sums and so on are ridiculous in these days of the Great War, that children are of no consequence, and that it is only fathers, uncles, and grown up brothers that matter. These do matter a great deal; they are to the rest of us a shelter in a storm, a shield in battle, a life-buoy in a storm at sea, a tower of defence for us who are weak and helpless, and never can we think too much and too gratefully of our heroes at the front!

But I know you are rather sad sometimes that you cannot be doing something to serve England. I know of a little girl who thought that because she was small she could run between the legs of the German soldiers and trip them up; and we all envy that girl whose "voices" told her how she should save France. I believe if all the castles in the air that you build were suddenly to appear we should see many a lovely scheme for helping England and putting an end to the war.

I have to tell you very earnestly that two of the greatest tasks before us are in the hands of children. First, because the English people of the future must not be ignorant and proud and greedy of money, it rests with the children of the present to read wise books, to learn to think wise thoughts, in order that they may be gentle and dutiful and of a sound understanding. These things you do in your School. The second is even a greater task, and all we older people will have reason to be grateful to you if you perform it steadily. You must say your prayers, such wise-hearted loving prayers, so earnestly offered, that God will certainly hear and answer them generously and wonderfully; in this way a single child may bring down blessings on the whole nation.

But you will say that you are foolish and not wise, so how can you say wise prayers? Our dear Lord thought of that, and gave us the wonderful prayer which asks God for everything it is right to want. What we have to do it to get up half an hour earlier in the morning and think of that prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to help us to pray it.

When we say *Our* we shall think of our home friends, of all our men at the front, and of our allies, and of *our enemy*; of

[p 587]

their friends and families at home, of the workpeople, of our King and his Ministers, and of us all; and we shall say, "Our Father, look kindly and fatherly upon us all"; *which art in heaven*, "grant that we may all in heart and mind thither ascend and with Thee continually dwell."

Hallowed be Thy Name; "Make our bodies the temples of the Holy Ghost and grant that we may all think of Thee, say our prayers, love Thee, and serve Thee to-day."

Thy Kingdom Come. "Thy kingdom come, O God, Thy reign, O Christ, begin; Thou who art our Ruler and Governor, make us all do right to-day. Thou who dost refrain the spirits of princes and peoples and art wonderful amongst the kings of the earth, rule all our hearts to-day and incline us to righteousness and peace." [sic]

Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. There is a story going about of how a body of our men were hemmed in by the enemy during that terrible retreat of Mons, and how angels came and stood between them and the enemy, who fled in fear. Perhaps the story is not true in a visible way, but I should think that is just the kind, ready, helpful way in which the angels do God's will. So we may pray, "Help us all to do Thy will as the angels do it, and wilt Thou do Thy blessed will and bring righteousness and peace out of this dreadful war."

Give us this day our daily bread. "Thou hast said, O Lord Jesus, 'I am the bread of life;' give us all this bread to-day that our hearts and souls may be alive; and grant bread to eat to all hungry persons like the Belgians and the prisoners of war in Germany."

And forgive us our trespasses. Forgive us for all those things we have left undone which we ought to have done, and those things we have done which we ought not to have done.

As we forgive them that trespass against us. Yes, we must forgive our enemies, and pray that God will forgive them, too;—even that enemy who has brought death to so many that are dear to us.

And lead us not into temptation. "Save us to-day from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul."

But deliver us from evil. "Save us from all harm that may happen to the body, especially our soldiers, from loss of limb or eye or other hurt."

For thine is the Kingdom, and we are all under Thy rule and governance; *and the power*, Thou art able to do all these things that we ask of Thee; *and the Glory*; we praise Thee, our

[p 588]
Father, for all the good and kind and wise things Thou art continually doing for us all, *for ever and ever. Amen*.

Pray this prayer, dear children, day by day, and you will help to keep us all in *the peace of God which passeth understanding*, a peace which our soldiers at the front may enjoy even under the heaviest artillery fire.

If you find the prayer too long for one day, divide it; but do not let your thoughts wander from thinking nor your heart from wishing while you pray, and then, only our Father in heaven will know how much you do to help us all in these anxious days.

I do not say a word about helping with your hands all you can; that, I am sure you will do; but I do say to you work at your lessons that you may grow up wise, thoughtful people, of real use to England; and work in your prayers, for that is the greatest service that anyone can do for the nation; and be good, for we are told that it is the prayers of good people that avail much.

With loving thoughts to each of you, whether present to-day or not,
I am, your always affectionate friend,

CHARLOTTE M. MASON.

¹ A message to the P.U.S., sent in the first place to the children who attended the P.N.E.U. Conference.