

## REMINISCENCES

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It was not until the summer of 1919 that I first saw and talked with Charlotte Mason, but many letters had passed between us since early in 1917 when five of our schools began to work under her. That first visit to Ambleside, when I stayed with her for two or three days at Scale How, now the Charlotte Mason College, was followed in the next three years by two others: and in June, 1920, she came to Gloucester to meet and talk to the considerable number of teachers who by that time were working with her in our Gloucestershire schools.

The days spent with her were memorable. When you first saw her, knowing that she had been an invalid for many years, and must have suffered much, you looked perhaps for marks of pain and weariness and weakness. But there were none. After an hour you never thought of that again. Years had written many lines upon her face, but they were not those lines. They spoke perhaps of the passage of time, but not of age; unless age is what gives and does not take away. You no more felt that she was old than that she was frail and weak of body. She had

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quietly—she was always quiet—put pain and weakness and age away from her, and you were conscious only of what she had—of her surpassing gifts; it did not seem to you that she lacked anything. Her face was full of light, of wide sympathy and understanding, of delicate humour and gentleness and love.

When she talked with you she brought out the best that was in you, something that you did not know was there. That is a rare gift. The learned and the great are seldom so endowed. We admire from afar—and remain afar. She caught you up to her level, and for the time you stayed there; and you never quite fell back again. She had given you new light, new power. She expected much of you, more sometimes than you knew that you had in you to give. But as always she was right; you had it and you gave, and of course gained by giving.

Her power to inspire deep personal affection in the hearts of many who never saw her was remarkable. Though she taught a new thing, a new way, and in teaching had to show the old things and the old ways for what they really are, her criticism left no sting. She could not be anything but generous and the ways of her mind were wide. So she did not make you feel small and foolish. You did not bite your lip or flush with vexation. She lifted and inspired. She did not drive: she led, and you went with her by happy choice. In any difficulty she always saw the right way. With few words, always perfectly chosen, yet coming naturally and without trace of effort, she said what you knew at once to be the right thing, though you had groped long and had not found it. The right thought and the right word were always there.

For many years the P.N.E.U. found its field of work in home schoolrooms, literally all round the world, and in the small groups of children or private schools taught by students whom Miss Mason had trained in the educational philosophy and the teaching methods, that she first expounded in *Home Education*, at the College at Ambleside which she opened in 1892. I cannot do more here than give a brief summary of their leading principles.

But first, in order that their full significance may be appreciated, let us look again for a minute at what was happening to the boys and girls taught by the traditional methods in every

type of school in the country in 1917, the year in which we made our first trial of her methods in Gloucestershire.

Of course it will be understood that no method of teaching can prevent able children from making their own forceful way. We need never worry very much about them. It is the average boy and girl who are our concern, for everywhere they are sacrificed to their abler fellows. And the slow child suffers still more, and as we shall see presently so unnecessarily.

Who is it that answers the questions in the all-fashionable oral lesson? Always the bright child. Who fills the bill in the arithmetic lesson, oral and written—too often the one and only subject on which the child in the elementary school can really bite his teeth and do solid independent work, the subject by his attainments in which his general ability is in the main assessed? Always of course the clever child. The slow child gets no chance: he can never shine. His sums are wrong: he does not understand problems. In oral questioning he is always too [p 69]

slow with his answers, even if he can arrive at them at all. He cannot spell: he cannot express himself on paper: he is not allowed to talk. He is deprived of all initiative: he may only listen. So he is written down as an inferior being who will do no good at school, and he accepts the verdict. If he is sensitive and self-conscious he writhes and wilts under the constant criticism and the harsh comparisons, and he hates work and hates the school. It should not be and need not be. School can be a happy place for the slowest child, and he can both get knowledge and use it with effect if he is allowed to do so, if in fact his individuality is recognised and treated with respect. At present he is lost, miserable and ashamed, in the class which, because of the elementary school tradition inherited from the days when it was bookless, is still commonly the unit in the teacher's mind, the unit for which his technique was devised, though schools are no longer bookless.

But perhaps someone will say, 'This is all very well, but what authority have you for the unfavourable picture that you paint of modern schools and modern teaching?' It should be plain by now that I know what I am talking about, but I accept the challenge.

In 1921 there was issued the Report of the Departmental Committee which had enquired into the position of English in the educational system of England. 'The tradition of older Codes,' the Committee say, 'still weighs heavily on methods and curriculum. The real teachers of literature are the great writers themselves—the greater the work the more clearly it speaks for itself; but this only leads to the conclusion that for teachers we must have those who will not come between their pupils and the authors they are reading, but will stand by them sympathetically, directing or moderating the impact of the new experiences upon their minds.' Those are the words of the Committee, but behind them, it is safe to say, there lies the inspiration of Charlotte Mason.

In 1927 that report, widely as it had been circulated and read, had had as yet no marked effect upon the teaching methods in the London elementary schools, for in that year the Board of Education issued a Report on the Teaching of History in those schools, and what the Board's inspectors say in that report would be true of the teaching of history and much else in many, if not in most, of the elementary schools elsewhere. 'Mere knowledge of historical facts,' they say, quoting from a report of the London County Council itself, 'is no guarantee of historical understanding.' But they did not find—even knowledge of the facts. 'Whether the children acquire their facts from the book or the teacher,' continue the Board's inspectors, 'unless they

can be given opportunities to sort out and arrange the facts they have acquired, and to express these facts in a connected form in speech or writing, it is probable that their possession will be but a transitory one.' They were dissatisfied with the quality of many of the text-books in use; and they criticise the oral lesson. 'The almost invariable practice in the lower classes,' they say, 'is the oral lesson. The teacher is the narrator pure and simple, and the quality of the narration is not on the whole high . . . Even in the upper classes the oral lesson is still supreme. In most London schools a visitor, on entering a classroom during a History period, can rely upon finding the teacher addressing rows of silent and apparently attentive children. It is probably safe to say that the majority of the

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children in London elementary schools spend at least seventy-five per cent. of their time during History periods as passive listeners, and in some schools it is difficult to ascertain what else they do.' 'When a child has mastered the mechanical difficulties of reading,' say the inspectors, 'books are the best source from which to obtain information, and the function of the oral lesson is largely to elucidate, illustrate, and amplify the facts which the child has learnt from books. A few schools only have learnt this. In one, a girls' school in a very poor district, where no less than two hours are assigned every day to the private study of History and other subjects, the children proved to have a greater power of description than in any other school tested.'

It is of interest to observe that the girls' school thus singled out for praise was one of the few schools in London that were employing the Charlotte Mason methods of teaching, and following the programmes of the P.N.E.U.

There is the same complaint in America, for oral teaching and the text-book have gone round the world. In 1938 *The Times* and other journals published extracts from the report of a protracted enquiry conducted in Pennsylvania under the auspices of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. From it we learn that (as in London) 'Lectures and lessons proceed with a flow as steady and inexorable as time.' Yet 'the real reasons for the existence of a teacher [are not] the imparting of information as hitherto understood: . . . not to give knowledge, but to turn knowledge into wisdom.' And again, 'Generally speaking it is observation and books, and the casual commerce of mind with mind that brings to the student his serviceable store of knowledge.'

And what is the result of all this misdirected energy? Why, exactly what a distinguished professor said a few years ago, only he put the blame for it on the pupil instead of on the teacher and his methods, where it belongs. 'Our English children,' he said, 'are not consumed with anxiety to learn anything: least of all has it ever crossed their minds that they must learn English.' What a damning indictment of the current methods of teaching, and all the more damning because unconscious! Nobody can go into a school taught as Charlotte Mason bids us teach without becoming instantly aware that the children have an insatiable hunger for knowledge, and that they do learn English.

What sort of knowledge? Well, they want to hear of Odysseus and Nausicaa, to read the immortal stories of Herodotus, and Plutarch's *Lives*; they want to listen to the tale of Thermopylae and Salamis and to learn how democracy raised Athens to her height of glory and then ruined her, and why; to learn about the majesty and fall of Rome, and the meaning and heritage of both for good and ill; about Merovings and Carolings, Seljuks and Ottomans, about

the Crusades and the making of Europe (for he who knows not history, as Cicero said, remains a child); about Buddha and Mohammed; about Rembrandt and Beethoven; about Edmund Spenser, Dr. Johnson, Ruskin and Carlyle; about the wonders of the heavens and the earth, and all the romance of science—which the laboratory too often misses.

And how does Charlotte Mason bid us teach? First and chief of her principles is this: every child is a person with a person's rights, and his individuality must be respected; not repressed so that he may fall into

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line with a class, nor so dominated by the teacher's personality that he learns to lean upon another instead of thinking, judging, acting for himself. It is not for us to tell the child what to think, what opinions, what judgements to form. He must have liberty to deal with knowledge in his own way, the way natural to him, and not in our way. He will be ready enough to do it.

'It has come to us of the Parents' Union School,' says Charlotte Mason, 'to discover great avidity for knowledge in children of all ages and of every class, together with an equally remarkable power of attention, retention, and intellectual reaction upon the pabulum consumed. The power which comes into play in the first place is, of course, attention, and every child of any age, even the so-called "backward" child, seems to have unlimited power of attention which acts without mark, prize, place, praise, or blame.'

And,

'We have made, too, a rather strange discovery—that the mind refuses to know anything except what reaches it in more or less literary form. It is not surprising that this should be true of children and persons accustomed to a literary atmosphere, but that it should be so of ignorant children of the slums points to a curious fact in the behaviour of mind.'

And again,

'Mr. Fisher says, "there are books and text-books," and the day is at hand when we shall all see that the latter are of no educational value.'

'It stultifies a child,' she says elsewhere, 'to bring his world to the child's level.' Yet it is being done to-day in many schools, and alas even in some that had found the light and revelled in it: for they have been compelled to leave Charlotte Mason's way; compelled to go back into the darkness and take up once more the old graded readers, in order that the great gods Organisation and Uniformity may be served.

All children then can be interested in real books that convey ideas and feed their minds—books that really set them thinking. But interest is not all. There must be attention if the subject matter is to be mastered and knowledge assimilated. The mind must concentrate upon what is read. And here comes in the well-known practice of narration. The child reads or listens once and once only, and then he tells orally or in writing what it has meant to him. Then he knows. We do not really know until we can tell, as experiment will prove to anybody, and when we can tell we do know and we do not forget. Always in narration the mind is asking itself that question, what next? But if there is to be concentration the teacher must not interrupt the reading with explanations, or the narration to correct mistakes. The little explanations that may be necessary is done beforehand; the correction is done afterwards.

And even 'ignorant children of the slums' respond to these methods. I am tempted to leave the straight course of my story and let another tell what happened when those slum children were brought out of the darkness into light. Enclosed with one of the last letters that

Miss Mason wrote to me, early in December, 1922, a few weeks before she died, she sent me a letter to read from the headmaster of a boys' school in Middlesbrough. 'Those slum schools,' she said, 'are miracles of grace

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are they not? They confirm us and cheer us in our work. The right note is struck I think.'

'We are approaching the conclusion,' said the writer, 'of our third term's attempt to carry out P.N.E.U. methods, and whilst I know you already have some measure of the effect of these methods in elementary schools, I think further testimony will be of interest.

This is a slum school, 200 yards from the river and docks, surrounded by the lowest type of brothel, "doss" house, drinking bars, and farthest removed of any school in Middlesbrough from green fields and lanes.

Most of the children are unshod, ill-clad, under-fed, and live in overcrowded rooms—very often unfurnished—without conveniences for the ordinary decencies of life. There is an entire lack of discipline—mental, moral, physical—in the homes and surroundings.

In the schools there is much repression and excessive corporal punishment (I often wonder if you *realise* the tawdry soulless sham that passes for education in many urban schools) and this school was no exception.

The day I took charge (May 2nd, 1921), there was an uproar in the street. A boy had been severely punished; another had slipped out of school, and roused the neighbourhood. A semi-drunken slut rushed into the school "to twist the b—y teacher's neck."

Daily squabbles with parents about punishments were taken by the staff as a matter of course.

Now teacher and scholar are bright and eager in their work. Irregularity and unpunctuality are reduced to a minimum and *there is no corporal punishment*. The work to the scholar is becoming a much more important thing than the teacher is. And there you have what is to me one of the most important features of the P.N.E.U. methods. They compel the teacher to study the child, in setting this task, and discovering the why of that failure: and with this study "all other graces follow in their proper places.'

Shortly before the War began the London Education Committee were struck by the more satisfactory attitude of the pupils in the senior schools towards handwork than towards the academic subjects, and the superior quality of their achievement in handwork. 'This difference in the attitude of the children is probably of wider significance than has, as yet, been generally recognised,' says the Chief Inspector. 'It throws up the problem: "Why are senior school pupils more successful in craft than in academic work?"' His own answer is that the 'children are not being made clearly aware through their work in school that subjects such as history, geography and science, are intimately related to their lives outside school. They tend to regard these subjects as essentially concerned with the learning of facts that, as usually presented, have no particular significance for themselves as individuals.'

Precisely. But when these subjects are presented in another way—in Charlotte Mason's way—the children do find them to be intimately related to their lives, whether outside school or in; and so taught they can interest and humanise even 'ignorant children of the slums' such as attended that Middlesbrough school.

The Chief Inspector was disposed to think that the lack of an intellectual environment at home also contributes to the child's failure to be interested in the academic subjects. 'If the intellectual background of

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his home is narrow and he receives little or no attention at home in his early years,' he says, 'his own ideas and vocabulary tend to be limited. He is accordingly at an educational disadvantage and carries on his schooling under a heavy, and sometimes even an insurmountable, handicap. Unless exceptionally gifted, such a child cannot compete with his more fortunate fellows on terms of equality in work involving bookish interests and knowledge.'

But the Middlesbrough experience and the experience of more than 300 schools in Gloucestershire proves beyond a peradventure that the Chief Inspector was mistaken. The only irremediable handicap they suffer under is the type of book used and the teaching methods employed. That is what comes of spending at least seventy-five per cent. of their time as passive listeners. And unfortunately that is not all that comes of it. The child is the father of the man. The passive listeners for the most part remain passive listeners all their days. That is why in politics both sides, right and left alike, are given to the vain repetition of undigested formulas and empty slogans accepted ready made from platform speakers and the party press. They have not advanced far enough into the fields of knowledge to be able to admit their lack of it or to feel a wish to learn. They cannot think for themselves. There was more independence and originality when there was less schooling. That is why Mr. J. B. Priestley was so distressed at what he saw at Blackpool during the week of the illuminations. (*Rain upon Godshill*, p. 240).

'The free-and-easy gusto that I remembered from the Blackpool of my youth seemed to have gone, and in its place was a kind of weary mindless quality, an empty idiocy, which was being exploited with ruthless efficiency by large-scale commercial interests.' As we shall see later the children who are taught as Charlotte Mason would have us teach them develop into men and women of a very different type.

And Charlotte Mason's methods are employed even in the Infant School. The teachers no longer tell stories there in baby language: there are no oral lessons of the London type. For one must not talk down even to six-year-olds, or assume that they cannot understand. They listen with rapt attention to the beautiful stories written by those whom the world has acclaimed as master tellers, and narrate them with enthusiasm. I am tempted to find room here for just one specimen that I discovered in a little two-teacher country school of 40 children which a few years before had been on the verge of inefficiency, and the teacher used to put forward the same sort of excuses for the poor work and the lack of interest that the London Chief Inspector offers. It is a school where acting is a joy. The children dramatise anything and everything. They act for sheer delight in their playtime and in the dinner hour, and the little ones at no other bidding than their own desire sit and watch their elders. That term the play on the programme was *The Merchant of Venice*, and a little six-year-old had been much impressed by Shylock: so one day he came to his supplementary teacher and demanded to be allowed to write about him. It was entirely his own idea. What he wrote is not exceptional in any other way. Many children of six are writing with the same freedom. There were four and a half pages of it, but perhaps it will be enough if I give two, beginning where Antonio asks [sic] Shylock for a loan. The child wrote, it will be noticed, of what he had seen and heard on the playground stage.

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'So he (that is Antonio) went to him and said will you lend me three thousand ducats and I will pay you when my ships come back from sea But Shylock wanted to trap Antonio and he thought whiche way would be the best to trap him so he sat very still and quiet thinking the best way to trap him for he was very wicked and tried with all his might to trap him But he could not get him trapped But he could not so he thought again this time he had a splendid plan and said if he did not pay the money back on a sertan day he would have a pound of his flesh so Antonio said it should be done so he sinend the paper and said it should be done and said allright But when he had lent the money to Antonio friend the ships all got lost and Antonio was not able to pay back the money to shylock and when the sertan day had past Antonio was unable to pay back the money to shylock and he was put in prison and when the friend had herd he went to shylock to give him the money but he would not take it for he wanted to have the pond of flesh form him.'

That is what infants in a village school can do. *Ex uno disce omnes*. If the home lacks intellectual background these children soon begin to give it one and they set their parents reading the school books.

It is impossible to set out the programmes for each year of school age. I can only give here a specimen of one of them from an old programme for a single term that I have by me. Let it be for a child of 10 or 11.

To a large extent the programmes are built up round the history. Indeed Charlotte Mason herself says, 'Next in order to religious knowledge history is the pivot upon which our curriculum turns.' And history means much more than a little English history predigested and diluted in a history reader, for it is our business 'to get in touch with other persons of all sorts and conditions, of all countries and climes, of all times past and present.' That term the period to be covered in English history was 1629-1756, and it was studied in Arnold Forster's *History of England*, an 8s. 6d. book. The same period was studied in Mrs. Creighton's *First History of France*. In ancient history the children were reading a period in Malet's *Ancient World* and a portion of a little book on ancient Crete. As the children get older they are introduced to an ampler measure of Greek, Roman, Indian and European history.

For Citizenship the children of 10 and 11 generally have in one form Mrs. Beesley's *Stories from the History of Rome*, and in the other one of Plutarch's *Lives*, but that term instead of Plutarch they had Bunyan's *The Holy War*.

For Geography, besides Allen's *Asia* or one of Miss Mason's *Ambleside* books, they had Parkin's *Round the Empire* and Hakluyt's *English Voyages*.

For Natural History and Science the books in use were Arabella Buckley's *Life and Her Children*, or Kingsley's *Madame How and Lady Why*, and Holden's *The Sciences*, together with a little book on Wireless, and another on Astronomy.

For literature they had *As you Like It* (they have a play of Shakespeare every term and love it; it will fit the period in Ancient or in English History when that is possible). They had Scott's *The Pirate* (nearly every term they have Scott, for he ranges over seven centuries) and Bullfinch's *Age of Fable* or Keary's *Heroes of Asgard*—both

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favourite books. Then there was poetry from *Lyra Heroica* and Drinkwater's anthology *The Way of Poetry*; there were six of Ruben's pictures for study; and in the lucky schools where there are

capable musicians, or a gramophone, studies in musical appreciation. And of course there is English Grammar.

Alongside this wealth of studies go on the handwork to which Charlotte Mason attached as much importance as anyone, the out-of-door lessons in geography and natural history, the gardening, domestic science, and physical instruction and country dances.

These books of course are very expensive, and if every child had every book no local education authority could possibly afford them. I had to find some way round that difficulty, and the teachers discovered it for me. Some books are only provided in single copies to be read aloud by the teacher, more at the bottom of the school than at the top, but some everywhere. The programmes prescribe that. The rest we provided in the proportion of one to every three or four or five children, according to the organisation preferred by the teacher, who breaks his classes up into that number of groups. The schools work by group time-tables and not by class time-tables. Economy dictated this procedure, but it has justified itself on educational grounds. The child gets more liberty, for the teacher cannot dominate four groups as he can dominate a class, and the opportunity for narration is multiplied.

But there was another result, quite unexpected. The group method of teaching spread downwards to the infants. Reading lessons taken round the class, each child in turn reading a few lines, with that pitiful waste of time for the brighter, and that wholly inadequate amount of practice for the slower, disappeared. Even the five-year-olds will read in groups and begin to read jolly little booklets to themselves for the sake of the story. In many a rural infant class under a supplementary teacher it would be possible to find children under seven who can read any book in reason that one likes to put before them. In that little two-teacher school of 40 children mentioned above I once heard two seven-year-olds read from *The Midsummer Night's Dream* at sight to the amazement of their teacher. Our Gloucestershire children of eight are reading habitually books listed by the publishers for children of eleven and twelve. Their 'ideas and vocabulary' do not 'tend to be limited'. Both expand at a pace that would amaze the Chief Inspector of the London Education Committee.

The effect of this way of teaching upon the slow child, the dull child, has been almost miraculous. For the slow child and the clever child are catered for alike. As Miss Wix, the former Head Mistress of Overstone School, the P.N.E.U. public school for girls, has beautifully said:

'It is as if a number of children are set to run across a field to see how many daisies each can pick. A quick child will gather a huge bunch, another child will have a good-sized posy at the end, while another again may only manage to get three or four flowers. This slow child may well have derived more pure enjoyment from the picking of so few daisies than even the child who gathered the biggest bunch. Anyway, he picked them himself, he stooped down for them, and saw—who knows how much? Just imagine the foolishness of the teacher who should press into his hand a bunch of picked daisies to add to his own precious few!'

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So the slow child no longer feels, and is no longer regarded as a dolt. He wants to get knowledge just as much as any other; he delights to be read to just as much. And if he is asked to tell what he has heard he does it as well as another, and sometimes better. He can at last take pride in achievement. He could never feel that pride before with those impossible arithmetic problems to solve, those subtle deductions to make and rapid questions to answer on the moment. So he gains confidence: he makes brave efforts: and things that were



impossible under the old methods become possible now under the new. He finds out that what he can tell orally he can write, and he begins to spell. The teachers have been amazed by the progress made by children of this type.

But the teacher must have faith in the child's wish and power to learn. To this day a young teacher fresh from college cannot read poetry to a class without halting at the end of each verse to explain it all. What really matters about poetry is that the child should enjoy it, not that he should be able to explain the precise meaning of each word. If he enjoys now he will be able to explain hereafter at the proper age. But the teacher is never satisfied, whatever the subject that he is presenting, until, so far as in him lies, all the children see all that the adult sees, forgetting that the half—and a different half perhaps with each—which they get to-day by their own efforts with enjoyment is worth infinitely more than the untimely and distasteful whole which it is sought to thrust upon them. The one lives, takes root and grows: the other most often perishes leaving no mark behind.

Of course it is not always easy for teachers who have been trained in the traditional way of teaching to adjust themselves to a new way that, in the words of one of them, 'turns our old training college methods upside down.' 'We hear her voice going for fifty minutes out of every hour,' said a head mistress to me one day of a clever young graduate who had just come from a modern university, and who was only doing what she had been trained to do and knew she could do well. The training colleges and training departments do not like this turning upside down. As the principal of one of them wrote, 'What little I know of it [the Charlotte Mason method] has led me to regard it as the negation of teaching and the elimination of the teacher.' That of course is nonsense. The teacher has more to do than ever, and the better the teacher the better the result. But the teacher's mission is no longer to display his own ability and impress inspectors by the excellence of his oral teaching or the ingenuity of his questioning. He is content to be judged rather by the spontaneous activity and the power of self-expression exhibited by the children.

It was only late and with difficulty that Charlotte Mason found an opportunity of showing what her methods would achieve in the elementary schools. She could do nothing without the books, and no elementary school could get them. Then early in 1914 came an unexpected and almost un hoped-for opening. A generous friend offered to provide the books for a brave head mistress at Drighlington, a colliery village in Yorkshire, who studied the principles and methods and, having the books, very soon proved that the colliers' children were just as well able to profit by a liberal education as any others. As one who visited that school wrote: 'Their bright, happy faces showed that Miss Mason's idea that

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a child was naturally anxious to know, and would be intensely interested in feeling that he was getting fresh knowledge by his own endeavours, through quite a new way of looking at the teaching problem, was a real incontrovertible fact. The treating the child as a pitcher into whom so many facts were to be poured was to be discontinued entirely, and the laborious task of the teacher in lecturing to a class who never tried to give their attention was to be exchanged, to the great comfort both of teacher and pupil, for a system by which the child was the labourer, and pleased to be so, whilst the teacher guided, and explained difficulties and was at hand to help if required. Thus putting an end to the ingrained idea of so many, indeed the vast majority,

of teachers of the old method, that for both master and pupil a terrible amount of “drudgery” was inevitable.’

It was in November, 1916, that in common with all my fellow directors of education I received from Miss Mason a pamphlet that told the story of the Drighlington experiment. Directors of education are deluged with pamphlets by this excellent society and that, most of which inevitably go unread into the wastepaper basket. By a piece of good fortune I looked at that pamphlet and my attention was at once arrested. I got into touch with Miss Mason and then early in 1917 obtained my chairman’s permission to provide five picked schools with the necessary books. The following year I selected twelve more, and after that the new methods spread as if by some beneficent infection, making their way from school to school until there were only thirty that had not adopted them when I retired in 1936.

And all this work is done without diminishing the time or the interest that were previously devoted to workshop and garden and other out-of-door activities. The education has not become bookish. The practical work benefits by the new intelligence, resourcefulness and reliability. A year or two before I left Gloucester I went to see a small country school where the children managed a large garden and an orchard, and kept bees, poultry and pigs. All their work, whether inside the school or out, reached the same high level of excellence. Yet when I first knew it, it was a poor, lifeless little place, and when I asked why the children were so listless and their work so poor I was given the time-honoured excuse of the inefficient: they were just village children: they had none of the advantages of the town child, and what could you expect of them? Necessarily they are left much of their time to work unsupervised, for the master is too busy to look after them: and they are proud of their jobs and delight in responsibility: it is like being a grown-up. So when I went in unexpectedly I found one boy by himself on the big onion plot which was in his sole care—and the onions took a prize at the County Show—and several boys in one fowl-house and some girls in another clearing out old straw and soil, and creosoting timbers, and all were working away busily under no supervision whatever. If they had been in school and the master outside, it would have been the same. And at the close of afternoon school I saw the children on duty for that week run off to their several jobs—feeding and watering the poultry, or tidying up—before going home. What a difference from the old days when a master never felt safe unless he saw everything done, and very likely did it himself with the children looking on, and longing to be

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allowed to take a hand! That spirit may fairly be said to be typical. And it is in the classroom as a result of Charlotte Mason’s inspiration that these habits of independence and reliability have been acquired.

Before I left Gloucester I took some trouble to find out from forty or fifty reliable teachers what changes they had noticed in the children, and in those who had left school, since their minds had been fed on this richer diet and they had been allowed to deal with it each in his own individual way. On several points there was quite extraordinary unanimity. One was the sudden awakening and rapid progress of the dull and backward children. In the words of one teacher they ‘become more interested and consequently much happier.’ Another is that the children in general do much more work, and that being always and happily busy they are much easier to control. In fact they control themselves, and discipline has ceased to be a bugbear. The Middlesbrough master years ago found the same thing. And speaking of those who have

grown up one says, what many suggest, 'I have noticed that those who were fortunate enough to be brought up in the P.N.E.U. atmosphere have quite a different and happier outlook on life.' 'They are able to more than hold their own in conversation on almost any subject,' says another, and he instances (with examples) Indian, ancient history and archaeology, and the arts. Another says that instead of making for the inn on the occasion of an outing they go off to the church to study the architecture, to picture galleries, museums, historical spots and gardens. Some of them when they go to work in the morning even put a Shakespeare in their pockets to read in the dinner hour. For it is generally agreed that they have formed the reading habit, which in the middle of the nineteenth century, and even at the end of it, was still so rare: and it is added that they are more capable than those who have been brought up on text-books and oral teaching 'of reading their newspapers intelligently, of answering questions from every point of view and forming their own judgments, and of finding interests for their leisure'. In fact something of the trained mind begins to appear.

And with all this there is joy. The distinguished head of an Oxford College, speaking to the company assembled on the occasion of the Jubilee of the P.N.E.U. in 1938, told them how he had overheard his two daughters, who had till recently been under its care, 'talking the other day and using the words "lovely" and "thrilling", I asked the youngest, who is 12, why she thought the P.N.E.U. "lovely," and she said, "We did literature there". I asked, but don't they do literature at most schools?' To that she replied, "Oh, but we loved it". In that artless and simple remark,' he concluded, 'you get great tribute to the system under which they were brought up.' You get indeed the child's own spontaneous testimony to the fact that where Charlotte Mason's spirit rules, the classroom is a place of joyous effort.