

LETTER BAG

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DEAR EDITOR,

As an ordinary parent living in the heart of the country, I am inexpressibly grateful to Miss Mason and the P.N.E.U. which she founded for having helped us for several happy years to educate our children at home, and for having led us—parents and children together—to find a deeper joy in the things around us and a better understanding of and love for each other.

I think the strength of Miss Mason's philosophy lies in her insistence on the fact that the child is a *person*, deserving and capable of using the best that we can give in the way of training and education. I think it is owing to her emphasis on the respect due to the personality of the children that we find ourselves now real friends with our girls, taking and giving advice and help from each other. The four years of learning together contributed to this. In Nature Study, Music Appreciation and Picture Study we were fellow explorers and now have these tastes in common.

The programme of work with its wide range of subjects and interesting books is Miss Mason's philosophy put into practice, and the outcome of her theory that education is a science of relations. So many doors of interest were opened to the children and vital relations established with the world around them. They learned too to love books and could be trusted to work alone when I was busy with household affairs. The greatest treat was the daily reading aloud in the evening. I think one of the most helpful things on the practical side was Miss Mason's insistence that children should be allowed to learn for themselves from good books and not be taught and explained to all the time.

I first came in contact with the P.N.E.U. seven years ago, when Canon Boyd of Killaloe gave me some little pamphlets to read. One or two phrases attracted me especially. One was to the effect that some people love books while others may have merely passed examinations! Another said that if children read and loved Shakespeare at ten years they would understand him at twenty. These appealed to me as so true that I wrote to Ambleside for more information, telling something of my two girls of nine and seven, and of what and how I was teaching them. The answer I received gave me another pleasant shock. My children were spoken of by name and such wise advice was given that I felt we must join this surprisingly different school! We did, and from that time forward there has been no cessation of that personal interest and we feel that the P.N.E.U. only exists to help us. After studying some of Miss Mason's books I realised that, in this treatment of us parents, her teaching on the sacredness of personality is being carried out still. Each of us is treated as a 'person'!

Another thing which attracted me from the first was the religious foundation of the education and the deeply spiritual atmosphere of Miss Mason's books. When I read 'Home Education' I wished most earnestly that I had known about it when the children were smaller; it was so full of wise advice. I have since lent it to many young mothers. The section on out-of-door life appealed to me especially as full of suggestiveness, and the chapter on habits is most convincing and convicting. In this and other of her books there is the most searching insight into the detailed needs of *all* sides of a child's life, body, soul and mind. If we parents really studied

them, and put into practice what we learned, I think homes would be happier places where parents and children would have mutual interests and love and respect for each other.

Yours, etc.,

CATHARINE HIPWELL.