

P.N.E.U. DIAMOND JUBILEE REPORT

News Chronicle

THE WOMAN WHO LED A REVOLUTION IN TEACHING

Notables will gather in London to-day to honour the woman who first proclaimed that the child of the poor is just as capable of development as the child of the rich.

Charlotte Mason was born in Bangor in 1842, when poor children went to the factory instead of to school. The only child of well-off parents who were only children, she would sit by the window and watch other children play, longing for their companionship.

In these lonely hours—all the lonelier because she was frail—she had visions of helping all children of whatever class.

Orphaned at sixteen, she became a teacher, working out an original and revolutionary philosophy of education which meant a new way for all, and fighting ceaselessly ‘the self-destructive elements of a blind democracy and a selfish aristocracy’.

The whole weight of society was against her, but she went on with a courage which was all the more amazing because she spent 25 years of her later life on a sofa or in a wheelchair, and had to be carried upstairs.

Briefly, she believed in every child’s natural powers and his sacredness as a person. Feed his mind as amply as his body, and his mind would grow. Develop his capacity for concentration and judgment and he would put his whole being into acquiring knowledge.

Draw parents and family life into the broad scheme of education, and nourishment would be complete—physical, mental, moral and spiritual. These principles underlie the Education Act to-day.

The crown of her life, Charlotte Mason often said, was when in 1913 the first State school adopted her teaching. Over 200 elementary schools were to follow this example.

She was 46 before she founded the Parents’ National Educational Union, which celebrates its Diamond Jubilee to-day. It united the parents of all social classes—a thing unheard of at the time. And it was the forerunner of the parent-teacher association movement. [p 102]

She also founded the *Parents’ Review* and Parents’ Union School, a correspondence scheme for home classrooms in isolated places, and a Secondary Training College for Teachers.

Year by year she read papers from nearly 4,000 children in every rank of life from schools and classrooms all over the world. To-day children in every part of the globe, united by her teaching, still send their papers to the P.U.S. Headquarters at Ambleside.

LOUISE MORGAN