

OUR FOUNDER: CHARLOTTE M. MASON

(1842–1892 *only*).

By ELSIE KITCHING.

I am greatly honoured by the invitation of the Committee of the P.N.E.U. to put before you some account of Miss Charlotte M. Mason. We are all rising up in spirit to repeat the motto of our Conference, 'The merciful and gracious Lord hath so done His marvellous works that they ought to be had in remembrance,' and 'all' includes more than those who are happy enough to be here, for we are only a very small section of those scattered to the remotest outposts who rejoice with us to-day.

The verse I have quoted was the daily Grace that Miss Mason said with her students at our midday meal, year by year, and the students who sat at her table soon realised how much that Grace was part of Miss Mason's daily life when they listened to her gentle, gracious voice telling of what she held in remembrance from her daily reading or daily drive. And, as she called forth contributions from those sitting at her table, they learned to co-operate with her in a matter she considered of great importance, which was that a well nourished mind was as necessary to life as a suitably nourished body. In writing to the P.U.S. children at the Whitby Children's Gathering, in connection with this verse she says: 'Let us remember that the works of man indirectly, and the works of Nature directly, are the great and marvellous works of God. Thinking of these things, we shall be meek and very ready to learn, and so we shall find [p 635]

out that "the meek shall inherit the earth," for those things that we love and delight in are far more truly ours than the things, so easily spoilt, which money can buy. A famous school-master was asked by his boys to explain that saying of our Lord's about the meek, and he said, "Napoleon thought he inherited the earth by force of arms, and he died on St. Helena. Wordsworth had no such proud thoughts, but he *did* inherit the earth; all the Lake country and much of the world besides belongs to him still."

And we may truly say that the promise was granted in full measure to Miss Mason. I should like to accentuate the word 'so,' because it gives us a key to the joy that is added to the coming into knowledge. Miss Mason told us that knowledge was a state. Her own coming into knowledge was so much in evidence in the spirit of joy which was always present throughout her life.

In the Preface to Volume V of *The Saviour of the World*, she writes that 'we are apt to put two or three legitimate desires before what should be our primary aspiration; to *have* good—the cult of prosperity—is the prayer and effort of the natural man; to *be* good—the cult of sanctity—is the desire of the spiritually-minded; to *do* good—the cult of philanthropy—sums up the "religion of humanity": these things we should have, be and do, but we are becoming aware that there is a further duty which we may not leave undone.

'Our Lord's promise concerning the teaching of the Holy Spirit implies this further obligation: "He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." "All," "whatsoever," a sort of double superlative, lays upon us the duty of detailed devout study of each one of the divine sayings: for, how can we remember that which we have not fully

known?’

There were few people beyond her own students who knew Miss Mason face to face, for she was an invalid for thirty years and seldom saw visitors; but there are many thousands who have known her and still know her in spirit. It was not her habit at any time to talk much, and she said once or twice that she had no wish that her life should be written. She kept no letters

[p 636]

nor any diary, but she wrote down once for all in her books the wisdom garnered from wide experience in matters dealing with the education of children.

After Miss Mason’s death in 1923 I was asked to write a short account of her life, and for the last thirteen years I have been collecting fragments here and there from various sources. These will eventually form a consecutive, if short, narrative.

I take it for granted that everyone here will have read the ‘In Memoriam’ volume,¹ with its witness to the wide-reaching influence of Miss Mason’s thought and work. It contains a paper called ‘The Beginning of Things,’ dealing with the starting of the P.N.E.U., the Parents’ Union School, and the House of Education. Miss Mason had then reached her fiftieth year (1892). But I should like to put before you some brief extracts from ‘Before the Beginning of Things’ which may waken echoes in your minds of personal memories of Miss Mason. It is interesting to trace in the various circumstances and thoughts of her early life the continuous chain of thought which led to the growth of Miss Mason’s work as we know it to-day, for Miss Mason passed on bearing in her heart and mind the harvest of a life of work such as falls to the lot of few.

In writing the general preface to the ‘Home Education’ Series, dated 1905, Miss Mason says: ‘For between thirty and forty years I have laboured without pause to establish a working and philosophic theory of education; and ... each article of the educational faith I offer has been arrived at by inductive processes; and has, I think, been verified by a long and wide series of experiments.’ This ‘thirty or forty years’ before 1905 brings us back to the sixties; but we may start even earlier, for there exist two unpublished fragments which Miss Mason wrote, giving impressions of her early childhood, one of which describes the way in which her vocation came to her. The only other reference to her childhood is contained in the mention in ‘Home Education’ of the little girl of eight who sat listening to ‘Anne of Geierstein.’

[p 637]

APOLOGIA.

An Unfinished Fragment.

‘I am an old woman, a very old woman, but also, I believe, a multi-millionaire, and, as we are beginning to understand, millionaires are people of many perplexities. It is not an easy thing to know how to make use of vast wealth. My vast wealth would amuse a rich man, for it consists of a few, a mere handful, of ideas. But those few ideas have ameliorating, invigorating, exhilarating powers that have already been of some use in the world and should help to solve most of the problems which perplex the world to-day. Therefore I shall do my best to put them

down in 'black on white.' But 'How did he come by it?' is what people ask of unusual wealth, and I shall try to answer the question faithfully, though the answer certainly does not tend to personal glorification. I shall try to seize those moments when such ideas dropped into me, so to say, as have since come into play in educational work. I shall have to go very far back, because the ideas one receives as a child, or rather, those one selects, in a whimsical and unaccountable way produce extraordinary effects in after life; and what would one not give to have the very beginnings of a hundred great discoveries that have made for the amelioration of human life?

My father was a Liverpool merchant proud of his city, concerning which he used to quote the prophetic descriptions of the ancient Tyre whose merchants were princes. On account of my mother's delicacy we used to live a great deal in the Isle of Man, which was within easy reach of Liverpool, and one or two recollections of those quite early days have been of great use to me. One day my mother was lying down and reading, and with the idle curiosity of a child of four or five I asked what she was reading. She looked up with a smile and said, 'Pope's Homer's Odyssey' in the way in which we give answers to children which it amuses us to know how little they will understand. I think the subject was never referred to again, but I found out then, though my mother did not tell me any tales of Ulysses, that

[p 638]

strange names offer no difficulties to children, and to-day I know that small children in elementary schools will talk glibly of Nausicaa, Telemachus, Agamemnon; that in fact they never turn a hair at the most difficult names associated with interesting ideas. One other memory I got from seaside life which has affected my general trend of thought. I was being bathed from the shore one day, and somehow my father fell and I was dropped in. My mother was swimming at a distance and swam to the spot, where no doubt I was all right by then, but the beauty and desirableness of swimming and all athletic exercises have influenced my thoughts of education. The years '48 and '49 proved disastrous for my father, as for many another, and for some years we lived in small furnished lodgings. But all the time my parents read, and the first book I remember as a book was the big volume of Layard's 'Nineveh.' The text was nothing to me, but the strange, monstrous pictures opened a new world, a sort of 'milky way' of knowledge, and I think this little incident has led me to the conclusion that the whole field of knowledge should, as far as is any way possible, be opened to children. Gifts were few in our family of three because for years we were very poor, but my eighth birthday brought me a gift of 'Robinson Crusoe.' Meantime my parents, who were glad of the occupation, educated me, my father taking some subjects, my mother others, at first through the medium of Butters' Spelling Book, with its long lists of hard spellings, its Æsop's Fables and Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son. I do not know that Mr. Butters did much for me beyond proving that Æsop's Fables were entirely congenial to a child's mind, a crumb of experience which I have since found useful.

But about this time came my vocation. We were lodging in one of a row of small brick houses, and on the opposite side of the road was a wall overshadowed by trees belonging to a big house at some little distance, and one day down this shady footpath passed a tall lady with a dark shawl thrown scarfwise across her shoulders, a bonnet whose black strings floated, and a whole train of tiny children holding on to her skirts and following her. We were all interested, and my mother found out through a friend who visited the school that this was the mis-

[p 639]

tress of a girls' school nearby. The idea did not take shape at the time, but somehow I knew that teaching was the thing to do, and, above all, the teaching of poor children like those I had been watching. We got to know this lady. I found that her graceful appearance did not belie her. She took me to her school now and then, and I sat beside her on what was called a monitor's box and was all ears for the teaching of the 'great girls.' And then came to me another fertile idea. The girls of the first class ranged between fifteen and seventeen, I should think, girls who would now be doing great things at a high school. They belonged to the professional classes, girls who wore watches and, sometimes, rings, and who read English History out of a miserable little book a quarter of an inch thick and entirely uninteresting. I found out from that lesson how necessary it is that children should have books, good books, considerable and well-written books, for notwithstanding Butters we read books at home and at the time I was reading the *Waverley* novels. How our friend contrived to get the little children about her I never found out, but probably they were attracted as I was.'

Miss Mason lived to be 81, so that she outlived most of her contemporaries, but a very early friend of hers, with whom Miss Mason kept in touch all her life, was so generous as to allow me to look through a number of letters starting in 1861, and to make a few extracts before they were destroyed. From this friend, who expressed a wish that she should only appear as 'E.G.,' I learned that Miss Mason's parents both died when she was 16, and that she was left without means and desolate, for her parents were only children like herself, so that she had no near relations. Then the idea came to her that she might take some training, with a view to helping the children who were always in her mind. The only training open then to teachers was for work in elementary schools, so Miss Mason went to the Home and Colonial Training College, where she found as fellow-students 'E.G.' and 'S.H.' She was always very delicate, and even at college suffered from the heart trouble (though it was not diagnosed then) which limited her active life

[p 640]

in later years. After about a year at college Miss Mason was advised to continue her study and practical work in a school by the sea at Worthing, and here it is possible to take up the narrative again in the words of 'E.G.' or of Miss Mason herself. I went to see 'E.G.' in 1923, soon after Miss Mason's death, and she wrote me later: 'I have not been unmindful of my promise to tell you something of the early years of my dear friend. A day or two ago I summoned up courage to open the pages of the past. A formidable task lies before me. I have carefully preserved every letter of a correspondence of more than sixty years. From 1862 to 1880, when Miss Mason came to me in Bradford, I never failed to receive a weekly letter. They number hundreds. The difficulty of deciphering them will be great, as they are mostly written on very thin sheets and the writing crossed. However, I have so far arranged them into periods representing each phase of her life, and hope ere long to be able to read them through.'

May 31st, 1923. 'In regard to the letters, there may be much that is helpful to your members, and to that end I will see what may be gleaned. At the same time, they are of so intimate and personal a character that much of their contents would hardly be suitable for publication—I mean in this way: as a girl she was ever spiritually-minded, and the letters reveal the earnest striving of the soul for the light which in after days she found in full measure.'

Twenty sets of the verses which were published in 'The Saviour of the World' were written at this time and reveal much of Miss Mason's thought at 25.

June 14th, 1923. 'Miss Mason's first undertaking was as Headmistress of the Davison Infant School at Worthing. This Church school was said to be the first of its kind in England, and had no connection with the Government. It was under the control of Mr. Read, the minister at the Chapel-of-Ease, and his daughter. At that time there was no provision anywhere for the education of the daughters of the middle-class beyond private schools. To meet an urgent need, Miss Mason became a pioneer in a new movement, in establishing a girls' Middle School in connection with the Infant School. Her two closest friends in [p 641]

Worthing were Miss Brandreth and Miss Read. Miss Mason found a double interest in her friendship with Miss Brandreth, on account of the three delightful children who shared her home. They were the children of Mr. Arthur Brandreth, Secretary to Lord Lawrence, with whom he shared the dangers and horrors of the Indian Mutiny.'

There were 200 children at the Davison School, and Miss Mason's letters in 1861 give her first impressions of the school and of her joy in being with the children. There are also references to a correspondence with Mr. Dunning (the Headmaster of the Home and Colonial School). She had evidently written full of fears lest anything she should say or do should hinder or offend the children who were in her charge. Again she writes: 'This is the first Infant School ever established in England, and it is extremely interesting to have the different stages of educational progress in the old books and old apparatus. All that Mr. Dunning has ever told us about the history of education is exemplified here. I am happy in my work. My heart is getting wrapped up in my school. I have some such interesting children. There is one, a dear little baby just two years old. Then there is my monitors' class, consisting of twelve children, which I teach in the dinner hour. They are all such nice children. You do not know how soothing and comforting I find all this. I think it is specially sent of God as balm to my rather troubled heart.'

All through the letters there are touches of humour and of love for her friends, and an earnest striving after the knowledge of God which she received in such full measure.

Again she writes: 'We have recommenced our night school, and have a few fresh pupils. I am having a terrible struggle to get my school under Government and am in hopes I shall succeed. Will it not be a good thing? I have, as usual, been making wonderful resolutions about what I shall do when we begin school again. I mean to be so firm, so kind, so loving, so altogether admirable. I really feel half inclined to fall down at the feet of what I mean to be, and say to it, "Stand there, and be my admiration and my praise." Alas! I may do so, but what I mean to be is the only part of myself that I shall ever be able to admire.'

[p 642]

And again: 'Truly parents are happy people to have God's children lent to them. I do nearly feel like Tennyson's "Princess" [sic] that it is an unfair dispensation that the married people should have the joy of children, and that they ought to grow in the meadows for spinsters.' 'I love my children dearly. How a mother must learn to love her children, when even one who sees so little of them can find so many beautiful and lovable traits of character. Have you ever noticed in an infant school how intensely fond of each other the children of the same family almost invariably are, how the little ones cling to and lean upon the elders, who bestow upon them all a parent's solicitude and tenderness?'

In 1863, as the result of her educational studies in reading and in practice, Miss Mason received a first class certificate from the Home and Colonial Training College.

In 1864 Miss Mason writes: 'I am as soon as possible to have a girls' school of my own. Of course this involves a great deal of thinking and planning and changing and watching and waiting and seizing the opportunities as they occur. For instance, after Christmas we are making the fees in the middle school one guinea a quarter, and various other changes are in prospect to be worked out in their time. Miss Read goes heart and soul into all I propose. Don't you think that this is work for me, and one of the sort of works for which I am best adapted? We have made a good many steps onward already. I could not bear for the work to stop, because I feel it to be so really needed. I believe that one of the main causes for the evil of which I complain is the shallow, superficial notions the children of the tradespeople get in private schools.' 'There is a work to be done in Worthing that I feel it is possible for me to do, indeed one of the very few things that I am at all fitted for.'

This same year appears a letter written to Mr. H., which dates Miss Mason's first visit to Ambleside. He writes in August, 1864: 'Your Ambleside letter I duly received, and was greatly pleased to hear of your enjoyment and to have your description of scenery which you have enjoyed so much. When speaking of the Poet's Seat, I began to be almost persuaded that he had left his glowing pen by it, and that you had picked it up
[p 643]

and were giving me a poet's-eye-view of the enchanting scenery.'

But I must digress a little to account for the visit to Ambleside. 'S.H.,' the second of Miss Mason's college friends to whom I referred, had finished her training in 1861 and had been asked by Miss A. J. Clough to come to her as first mistress of a school for middle class children which she founded in Ambleside.

Miss Clough was over twenty years older than Miss Mason. She too came of a Liverpool family, and had taken much interest in the work of children in National Schools and in Sunday Schools. In 1849 she took a short course of training at the Home and Colonial College. In 1871 she became the first Head of Newnham, but from 1852 to 1862 she was in Ambleside and carried out a cherished scheme with a small school for middle class children. Some of her pupils are still in Ambleside. When Miss Clough left Ambleside in 1862, 'S.H.' took over the school and carried it on in different houses until 1892, and it was in this school that Miss Mason used occasionally to spend her holidays.

I should like to draw special attention to one of the paragraphs which Miss Mason contributed to Miss Clough's Biography, because it gives us the key to one reason for her being obliged to work largely on her own lines.

'I attached very particular weight to Miss Clough's opinions, not only for the sagacity which everyone recognises as her gift, but because I knew a good deal of her work in Ambleside. ... I knew that she, almost alone, I thought, among educationalists, had very strong sympathy with parents. She united in a unique way the old and the new. She understood and believed in parents of the sort who educated their children quietly on the lines of "Evenings at Home," etc. ... Her respect for parents and her regard for their convenience and consideration for their wishes were very pronounced; and from her I felt I should obtain real and active sympathy in a movement intended to bring parents to the front as recognised educators of their children.'

A friend who went to the Ambleside school has very kindly given me some 'scattered memories' of Miss Mason.

[p 644]

SOME SCATTERED MEMORIES OF MISS MASON.

'What tiny insignificant memories and yet how large a whole they make—for me! The first must have been in July, 1887, I think. In the big schoolroom (at Bellevue, Ambleside) one morning we were all feeling restless, picking up loose threads of work preparatory to 'going home for the holidays,' when 'Girls, be in your places by eleven; Miss Charlotte Mason is coming to speak to you.' 'Who?—why?—oh, bother!—a friend of Mrs. F.—but why?—never heard of her—well, my mother knows her,' and so on, a somewhat disgruntled, restless atmosphere, and certainly a very uninterested company of very ordinary schoolgirls. But what was that sudden quiet which closed upon us so that one could almost feel it?

A very ordinary looking little lady sitting in the midst of us, motioning us to draw up closer round her. A voice so quiet that one must concentrate if one wanted to listen, a smile that took us all with one sweep into very confidential partnership. This was no Dictator, no Lecturer, no superior Being talking down to us from a height; rather did she seem a fairy godmother with a wand which, touching lightly many quite ordinary thoughts and facts, made them glow with colour and mysterious light giving a hint of hidden treasure within.

Speaking to us who were 'leaving,' there was no oration on the subject—that *too* well-worn theme—of what we were going to do with our lives, to become, to train, to work at—no warnings against this or that. Rather with that confidential smile, that hidden wave of her wand, she showed us what wonderful, even charming, creatures we were with just one boundless outlook, one limitless possibility and opportunity.

We were women—each would become a mother or an aunt to children somewhere—children with their responsibilities, sacred ground, eager feet not to be shackled.

That gentle but so decided voice set up 'a little child' in the midst of us, and to one at least of her listeners Life opened out as a great and gracious adventure wherein the stony places and briars, the tiring climbs with aching feet, often through mists,

[p 645]

were as nothing compared with the joys of finding hidden treasure, sudden beauty in unexpected places, wide possibility of helping to clear tangled ground and to hear in silence the song of joy. It is difficult to recapture, after so many years, the memory of anything definite said by Miss Mason that day; still more difficult, perhaps, to disentangle that memory from later ones. But one fact remains very strongly with me, that she touched upon the everyday familiar details of the daily life of the home and left them with a light upon them which in nothing has ever been dimmed.

After that year I remember no personal contact with Miss Charlotte Mason until the summer of 1890, though I had heard her speak at a drawing-room meeting in my own home and I read eagerly anything she was writing. It so happened that in the summer of 1890 I left home to take a post in a big school, and before leaving I had the opportunity for a visit to Miss Mason in Ambleside one afternoon. My recollection is that she talked chiefly to me of her scheme for a college to give training to students of Home Education; my own disappointment

was great that it came into being just too late for me, and I remember her gentle teasing, her generous advice on many points, and finally that she parted from me as her 'messenger' — wings to one's feet! Not for some years did I discover that this visit was no accident, as I had supposed, but a definitely planned opportunity for personal talk and encouragement.

How like Miss Mason!

Of what she said I have no recollection, but I assume that it was on that evening that she put into my mind the two intangible but vitally necessary factors in all intercourse with a child—reverence and a sense of humour. Some months later she wrote to me asking me to take a post with some people who wanted a teacher trained by her for home education. Her college was then in its infancy and she had no one ready to leave it.

So I received my commission!

It is interesting, perhaps, to recall the educational movements for reform which were in existence between the 'fifties

[p 646]

and 'sixties. England of all the Protestant countries of Europe was the slowest to develop an interest in popular education.

The S.P.C.K., 1699 (founder, Dr. Bray); the Sunday School Movement, 1782 (Robert Raikes); the Foreign and British School Society, 1808 (Joseph Lancaster); the National School Society, 1809 (Andrew Bell); the Infant School Society, 1824 (Robert Owen), all dealt with education for the children of the poor. The universities and certain boys' schools had been at work for centuries, but no provision was made at all for the education of children of the middle classes except in a few private schools.

In 1836 the Home and Colonial School Society for the training of teachers was started by Charles Mayo, and in 1843 the Governesses' Benevolent Institution was founded by the Rev. David Laing for the purposes of registering and granting diplomas to governesses. It was discovered how very poorly most of them were qualified for teaching at all, and in 1847 the house next door was taken to which Queen Victoria gave the name Queen's College, and the professors of King's College were invited to give lectures. The first head of the College was F. D. Maurice, and Dean Plumtre, Charles Kingsley and Dean Trench were among the lecturers. The College was soon able to admit other women, and Miss Buss and Miss Beale became students.

The Duke of Newcastle's Committee of Enquiry in 1856 was followed by a second Enquiry Commission, and then in 1866 came the work of Miss Emily Davies, the founder of Girton in 1869. But the movement begun by Miss Emily Davies with the help of a number of other distinguished women became a strong women's movement which led to the starting of the High Schools in 1872, and the opening of the professions, step by step, to women.

It is necessary to bear this in mind because Miss Mason identified herself with work of an entirely different character, though she too, like Miss Davies and Miss Clough, Miss Beale and Miss Buss, was concerned for the education of the middle classes.

There exist three undated letters (probably 1866, to judge by the ink) written from Worthing in which Miss Mason

[p 647]

goes into full detail as to the organisation of a middle school, the fees, staff and different grades of pupils. One letter describes briefly the organisation of her own middle school, and she

adds: 'For lads it would be a preparation for a University, or, still more important, a substitute, really making a liberal education possible to youths not intended for Universities, by giving an opportunity to continue their education to an age when they would be overgrown boys in a school.'

The record made by Miss Mason for 'Who's Who' says 'that after a short training and some experience in schools of various grades and in a training college, she perceived certain principles leading to a reformed theory and practice of education, and to further such reform wrote several volumes, lectured, founded the P.N.E.U. (1887), the House of Education (1892), the Parents' Union School (1891), and the *Parents' Review* (1890). She lived to see a pretty wide adoption of her principles and methods in elementary schools, secondary schools and home schoolrooms.'

So from 1866, at least, Miss Mason was working out in practice and in theory a philosophy of education which as a result of her discoveries was to secure 'a liberal education for all.'

In *An Essay towards a Philosophy of Education* Miss Mason sketches briefly the steps by which she arrived at some of her conclusions:—

'While still a young woman I saw a great deal of a family of Anglo-Indian children who had come "home" to their grandfather's house and were being brought up by an aunt who was my intimate friend. The children were astonishing to me; they were persons of generous impulses and sound judgment, of great intellectual aptitude, of imagination and moral insight ... I was reading a good deal of philosophy and "Education" at the time, for I thought with the enthusiasm of a young teacher that Education should regenerate the world. I had an Elementary School and a pioneer Church High School at this same time, so that I was enabled to study children in large groups; but at school children are not so self-revealing as at home. I began under the guidance of these Anglo-Indian children to take the measure of a *person* and soon to suspect that children

[p 648]

are *more* than we, their elders, except that their ignorance is illimitable ... I was beginning to make discoveries, the second being that the mind of a child takes or rejects according to its needs.

'From this point it was not difficult to go on to the perception that, whether in taking or rejecting, the mind was functioning for its own nourishment; that the mind, in fact, requires sustenance as does the body, in order that it increase and be strong; but because the mind is not to be measured or weighed but is spiritual, so its sustenance must be spiritual too, must, in fact, be ideas (in the Platonic sense of images) ...'

Again, 'The Scottish school of philosophers came to my aid with what may be called their doctrine of the desires, which, I perceived, stimulate the action of mind and so cater for spiritual (not necessarily religious) sustenance as the appetites do for that of the body and for the continuance of the race ...

'Then arose the question: Cannot people get on with little knowledge? Is it really necessary after all? My child-friends supplied the answer: their insatiable curiosity showed me that the wide world and its history was barely enough to satisfy a child who had not been made apathetic by spiritual malnutrition. What, then, is knowledge? was the next question that occurred, a question which the intellectual labour of ages has not settled; but perhaps this is

enough to go on with; that only becomes knowledge to a person which he has assimilated, which his mind has acted upon.

‘It is difficult to explain how I came to a solution of a puzzling problem—how to secure attention. Much observation of children, various incidents from one’s general reading, the recollection of my own childhood and the consideration of my present habits of mind brought me to the recognition of certain laws of the mind, by working in accordance with which the steady attention of children of any age and any class in society is insured, week in, week out—attention, not affected by distracting circumstances.’

After Miss Mason had worked at Worthing for twelve years the strain of the work proved too great, and she had to take a

[p 649]

necessary rest. It was then suggested that she should take up work in the first training college that was started for ladies with a view to getting teachers of another class into the elementary schools. The Principal of Bishop Otter College invited Miss Mason to go at first as Lecturer in Education and Human Physiology. In this capacity she was also Mistress of the Practising School. She eventually became Vice-Principal, and two of the students who worked under her were well known in later years to members of the P.N.E.U., one, Mrs. Washington Epps, the author of *The British Museum for Children*; another, Miss F. C. A. Williams, who after much experience in teaching, and then as Head of the Kildare Teachers’ Training Department in Dublin, became Vice-Principal of the House of Education in 1898, which post she held until two years before Miss Mason’s death.

The strenuous work at Bishop Otter College made another long rest necessary, and for a year Miss Mason was recuperating in Switzerland and in Ambleside.

She then went to Bradford to her friend ‘E.G.’ who had, by that time, founded a middle school on the lines of the middle school Miss Mason had herself started in Worthing. Here from 1879–84 Miss Mason was still able to keep in close contact with children, and it was here that she prepared girls for the Senior Cambridge examination. Here, too, she wrote the Ambleside Geography Books, started after long walks in Hampshire, and here, in 1885, she offered a series of lectures on ‘Home Education’ as a contribution towards a Parish Room at St. Mark’s Church—lectures which laid the foundation stone of her life-work of which we are keeping the Jubilee this year. In Bradford Miss Mason had a wide circle of friends, amongst them Mr. and Mrs. Steinthal, in whose drawing-room the preliminary meeting for the P.N.E.U. was held.

The principles contained in ‘Home Education’ had been brought home to Miss Mason during the long years of her work with children and young people, and a single idea was gradually taking shape, how to approach parents without appearance of presumption and to offer them a few principles which seemed a very gospel of education. At the end of 1886 Miss Mason begs

[p 650]

‘that she may have sea-room amongst all the vessels laden with gifts for Queen Victoria’s Jubilee for a vessel laden with a gift meet for a Queen.’ She drew up a syllabus for a Parents’ Education Union, which contains in germ almost every detail of the work as now carried on. The scope of the work and the ideas that inspired it are put forward in considerable detail in the ‘In Memoriam’ volume, but ‘Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life’ dates from the notes

in connection with the first draft proof which was issued in 1888.

In 1887 Miss Mason lectured before the British Association, and in the same year came the letter from Lady Aberdeen² which gave support to Miss Mason's hope of eventually training students.

It was then felt that the society had justified itself locally in the Bradford Branch and that it might be brought before a wider public. Before attempting to do this Miss Mason took counsel with a number of leaders of thought, such as Dr. Butler (of Trinity), Dr. Temple, Dr. Welldon, Dr. Quick, Dr. Percival (Rugby), Professor Max Müller, Sir Joshua Fitch, Miss Buss, Miss Beale, Miss Clough, Canon Liddon, Professor Sully, Bishop Westcott (some of whom she went to Cambridge to meet at the invitation of Miss Clough). Opinions and criticisms were freely invited and freely and cordially given, and Miss Mason felt it was perhaps to this thorough thrashing out that we owe the fact that the P.N.E.U. has worked ever since with hardly a hitch.

In 1890, after much hard work and searching of heart, the *Parents' Review* was started, and this was the only part of her work for which any capital was ever raised. During this and the following year or two Miss Mason was speaking up and down the country, giving courses of lectures and meeting a number of influential people who arranged meetings for her; her long correspondence with Mrs. Dallas Yorke, who became Visitor to the House of Education, dates from this year.

The rest of the story has already been briefly told in the 'In Memoriam' volume, and perhaps it is sufficient here to mention the two great joys which came to Miss Mason in later years,—first, the issuing of her 'Confessio,' as she called the Synopsis [p 651]

of her Educational Philosophy in 1903, and its acceptance by the P.N.E.U. Committee under the leadership of Mrs. Franklin; and, secondly, the entry into the P.U.S. of Council Schools in 1913, thus putting the crown on Miss Mason's long cherished belief, referred to first in 1866, that 'a liberal education for all' was possible. It is good that we have Mrs. Franklin with us here to-day, in ever-constant witness to her life's devotion to Miss Mason's work. It is a great regret that Mr. Household (to whose conviction and enthusiasm we owe P.N.E.U. work in almost all the Council Schools in one county of England) is unable through press of work to do more than send his congratulations on the success of the work to which he has given such generous devotion.

May I close with Miss Mason's own reference to that vision of education which she so actively engaged in pursuing for sixty years, and which has brought fulness of life to hundreds of thousands of children? (It has always seemed strangely appropriate that the motto of the Harrison family should have met her eye daily in a stained glass window as she walked downstairs at Scale How—'Vincit qui patitur.')

'Those of us who have spent many years in pursuing the benign and elusive vision of Education, perceive that her approaches are regulated by a law, and that this law has yet to be evoked. We can discern its outlines, but no more. We know that it is pervasive; there is no part of a child's home-life or school-work which the law does not penetrate. It is illuminating, too, showing the value, or lack of value, of a thousand systems and expedients. It is not only a light, but a measure, providing a standard whereby all things, small and great, belonging to educational work must be tested. The law is liberal, taking in whatsoever things are true, honest and of good report, and offering no limitation or hindrance save where excess should

injure. And the path indicated by the law is continuous and progressive, with no transition stage from the cradle to the grave, except that maturity takes up the regular self-direction to which immaturity has been trained.'

[p 652]

'A discontent—is it a divine discontent?—is upon us; and assuredly we should hail a workable, effectual philosophy of education as a deliverance from such perplexity.'

'Such a theory of education, which need not be careful to call itself a system of psychology, must be in harmony with the thought movements of the age; must regard education, not as a shut-off compartment, but as being as much a part of life as birth or growth, marriage or work; and it must leave the pupil attached to the world at many points of contact.'³

¹ (P.N.E.U. Office, 3/6.)

² See p. 481 of the July *P.R.*

³ From *An Essay Towards an Educational Philosophy*.