

MEMORIES OF SCALE HOW

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(one of the Fifth Set of Students)

In September 1894, Charlotte Mason accepted me as a student, though I was younger than she preferred her students to be; on condition that I remained with her for eighteen months instead of the, then, one year's course of training. Before that time had expired, Miss Mason not only considered *me* not ready to launch out, but that all her students needed to be with her for a longer period—as *they* also felt—and she accordingly inaugurated the two years' course. At that time the Seniors (January arrivals) lived with Miss Mason herself at Springfield, and the Juniors (September arrivals) at Kelsick House, under Miss Bull (Languages Mistress, using the Gouin Method) and Miss Hodgson (Nature Study and Handicrafts), meeting for all lectures in a hall near the present post-office. As this left us with more free time, we were each required to produce a pair of child's knitted socks each term, done at odd moments!

The only rules I remember were that we must not go out alone for walks, nor boating on the lake without a boatman, and must not use ink in our bedrooms. When we all moved into Scale How in January 1895, to these rules were added that all students must be in the classroom as the clock struck 7 a.m., for an hour's study before breakfast; and that all must be *in* bed, with lights out and silence imposed at 10 p.m. One other regulation was asked of us, but dropped by Miss Mason when she found it was not popular—that after midday dinner we should spend a quiet half hour in our bedrooms doing Bible Study. I do not think there were any other rules when I went there, but by degrees individual student's foolish actions made others necessary, such as the length of our walks without the aid of a coach ride. For in those days coaches (with horns) and charabancs, waggonettes and cabs were the only public conveyances, and women's bicycles did not then exist.

No one then present will ever forget our first experiences at Scale How, in February and much of March 1895. For we had barely settled down when that unforgettably hard winter began. After three days of deep snow and hard frost the whole College, (consisting of thirty-eight students, Miss Mason, Miss Kitching, a housekeeper and a few maids) had only melted snow for *all* purposes; and though huge fires did warm the few nearest desks and two oil stoves did their best for the rest of us, 'This can't go on,' said Miss Mason (but it *did* for six weeks, although the water pipes did function again after a day or so) 'so you must do an hour's study and then go out and walk to keep warm for the rest of the daylight.' This we did, and those who liked skating soon had plenty of that sport to enjoy, for Windermere eventually had fifteen inches of ice covering it, bringing skaters and ice-yachters from far and wide. Before the thaw set in three of us decided to explore the Kirkstone Pass road and found it warming work, for though the road had been cut to twice our heights, we yet could sink up to our knees in places; and when at last we did reach the inn at its top we were greeted with open arms and [p 137] delight, for they had not seen a fellow creature for three weeks, so 'Would you post some letters for us?'

When at last Wordsworth's lovely poem 'Written in March' became true again, what a

new world it seemed and what a hot and glorious summer succeeded the cold.

At that time the College year was divided into two terms, from January to July, and September to December, holiday posts being taken during either recess. The Practising School was held in what is now called the Beehive, its pupils being day scholars from Ambleside, who obtained their education free there in return for being 'practised on by the students.' The present Barn buildings were stables for Miss Mason's pony and trap. 'Who is going to be my Jehu this afternoon?' she would ask during dinner time; for it was not until nearer the end of my two years there that she became an invalid and unable to take the lead in everything, and Miss F. C. A. Williams was installed as Vice-Principal while Miss Mason directed from her couch in the drawing-room.

Our days began with study from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m., breakfast following. Classes were from 9 a.m. till 1 p.m. with ten minutes break at 11, often followed by Gym on the terrace outside the front door, taught by a sergeant from the village. Walks were from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., a 'Walking List' for the term being made out for each student so that all in turn might meet personally, the only exception being when one's turn came to be 'in school' for a week, or one was one of Miss Hodgson's four companions for a Nature Walk. These walks taught me more than all the books I have ever come across since (and how I hated Nature Study when I went to Ambleside, and how I love it now, through Miss Hodgson's right handling of the subject with us). After tea there was study until 7 p.m., supper at 7.30, prayers at 9 p.m., lights out at 10 p.m.

Thursdays were days of dread and joy. Dread when it was one's 'Crit Day,' joy for being free until 9 p.m., unless there were a Hygiene Class to attend in the village, or wood carving there during the winter. Saturday too was a half-holiday. Sundays were a pure delight—church morning and evening, with the afternoon quite free (there were no walks except voluntary ones, and those were generally to either Braithy or Rydal Churches after tea).

Soon after 4 p.m. we all assembled in the drawing-room for what to me is one of my most hallowed memories of those days and of Miss Mason herself—her Bible Study talk, in which she made the very language of the Bible, especially the Gospels, absolutely *live*, without dressings or explaining, but by becoming pictures in words. Then came tea, followed by church, with bread and milk for supper, which was served in a large soup tureen from which we helped ourselves. Prayers followed, then bed.

During Sunday afternoon Miss Mason's own library was at our disposal, and she had much to say about our choice of reading at various times. Another memory of Sundays at Scale How is that as long as she was able to walk to church on Sunday mornings Miss Mason always had one student at a time whose turn it was to accompany her and sit with her there. And in the afternoon we took turns on that day to prepare and take her tea to her before her Sunday talk to us; so the personal touch with her was great and precious.

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To us who knew her personally she is still a character, outstanding and revered and loved, for she was always fair and just and understanding, though quite capable of righteous anger when it was needed. Yet when she found she had been wrong in a judgment, for instance of a book she found lying about, she called us all together, admitted her mistake and said that after she herself had read it through she hoped we all would do so too. (So different from our experience of another visiting headmistress of a famous college, who gave us a lecture on

'Teachers' Faults,' quite unconsciously exemplifying it in her own treatment of one of Miss Mason's own students.)

An interesting visitor we had during my time was a Japanese lady, Madame Shimoda, who was touring England, Europe and America with a view to the education of the future Mikado, then a young prince of school age. She had also to found a school for the daughters of peeresses, which she eventually did. She charmed us all, cutting out without lines wonderful pictures of court ladies, and putting on her court dress.

Then, too, we all loved Mrs. Dallas-Yorke, mother of the then Duchess of Portland, who sent us each a handkerchief from the Louvre after her visit to Miss Mason, telling us that the Duchess had helped her to choose them. It was Mrs. Dallas-Yorke who provided the design of our certificates.

It was about this time that our Badge was created, of which a gold copy was presented to Miss Mason by her 'Bairns,' and she was with great difficulty persuaded to have her portrait painted, which is so very like her, especially the pose of her hands during her talks to us.

Of local friends of Miss Mason whom I can remember there were Miss Armitt (of Bird Watching fame), Mrs. and Miss Firth and their two adopted children, Lily and Patricia, Miss Arnold (youngest daughter of the great Dr. Arnold) at Fox Flows, and dear old Dr. Johnstone with his irresistible sense of humour, his side-whiskers and his attempts to read *Helen's Babies* at a Penny Reading. He was Dr. George's father.

But I cannot end these memories without a tribute to Miss Kitching, then like a daughter to Miss Mason, and always at hand when needed and so self-obliterating always.

I wonder if the musical training at Scale How is still on the Mrs. Curwen method as it was in our day? It certainly taught rhythm and time.