

NOTES ON THE BADGE AND THE MOTTO OF THE PARENTS' UNION SCHOOL  
by ELSIE KITCHING

*I am, I can, I ought, I will*

There are many things to think of in looking at the beautiful badge designed as a labour of love for the P.U.S. children by Miss Dorothea Steinthal, who was herself one of the first children to belong to the P.U.S., and whose mother was one of Miss Mason's oldest friends.

In 1903 Eric Bishop wrote to Miss Mason and asked if it would be possible for the P.U.S. to have its own badge. There followed a great deal of correspondence as P.U.S. children were asked to make suggestions both as to the badge and the colours. In 1910 a letter appeared in the *Parents' Review* from the Secretary of the H.O.E. Students' Association saying, 'that the general feeling seems to be for a badge in the form of a brooch, a circle bearing a motto round the edge and a lark in the centre, the colours, brown and white for the lark, blue for the sky'. This badge was a coloured button brooch, but in 1915, at Miss Mason's request, Miss Steinthal designed the badge which has been in use till now, and to which she added a wreath of daisies, because, as she said, 'the daisy is the symbol of childhood'. Mrs. Bishop gave us this badge in memory of her son Eric, and she also contributed to the new badge.

But the badges were made by various firms, and the bird seldom looked like a lark, and Miss Steinthal suggested in 1930 that she should draw a simpler design which could be patented, so that *every* child should have a beautiful badge. Miss Steinthal, herself an artist and a bird-lover, wrote, 'Nothing could produce the beauty of the lark's quivering wings, only an attempt has been made to suggest their being filled with air—beating it down so as to rise. The open beak and the head thrown back are to remind the children of the joyful energy of the skylark's song'. The plain circle gives room for the name of the Parents' Union School as well as for the motto, and the circle may also be taken as symbolic, (1) of the fact that there are P.U.S. children at work in every part of the world, and (2) of the sky towards which the lark is soaring. In the coloured badge the bird's distinctive markings are shown in the short crest, the light eye stripe, the spur and the white feathers in the tail. The P.U.S. owes a debt of gratitude to the artist for this beautiful, singing and soaring lark.

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It was a great happiness to Miss Mason that the lark was chosen, because she connected it with the line in Wordsworth's sonnet—'True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home'.

'Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!  
Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound?  
Or, while the wings aspire are heart and eye  
Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground?  
Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,  
Those quivering wings composed, that music still!

'Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;  
A privacy of glorious light is thine;

Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood  
Of harmony, with instinct more divine;  
Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;  
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!

The lark is like a final seal upon our charter. Our motto is our charter, for it includes all we are, all we have, and all we can be—'I am, I can, I ought, I will'. But like the lark which is 'True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home', our motto can only be true for us in so far as we remember that Heaven and Home are the most important places for anyone. 'Home' means in the first place the Heaven from which we come, next the family into which each of us is born, and next the 'home' in which our grown-up life is spent—of which we may also say—'I came not to my place by accident, it is the very place God made for me',—and, at the last, we go back to our Heavenly Home. We have to remember each clause of our motto in connection with Home: what we bring to it as 'I am'; the service we give to it as 'I can' and 'I ought' and 'I will'. The soaring lark comes to us with special messages and we must watch a lark long and constantly to know why. For instance, you will remember the Ascension-tide prayer in which we ask that 'in heart and mind we may thither ascend', and, I think we may add, ascend with eager desires and a singing heart to what Wordsworth describes in the sonnet as 'a privacy of glorious light'; then we shall descend, still singing, to the duties of every day, to the 'I am, I can, I ought, I will', in the little details of daily life. Then we shall also, as Wordsworth says, find our happiness not in roaming and in seeking it elsewhere, but in being 'True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home'.

Let us now think of the motto which Miss Mason chose for the Parents' Union School—the school which has no building to mark its site, but which is the 'blessed company' of P.U.S. children all over the world who are using the same programmes, taking the same examination papers, wearing the same badge, and most of all, we hope, thinking about and acting upon the same motto. I wonder what the motto means to each one? There is so much to be said about it that it is not possible to do more than touch upon a few of the wonderful things. Indeed each one of us must keep the motto in mind and learn more about it day by day.

Let us consider the first clause, 'I am'. You will remember the story of Moses and the burning bush. 'And Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight".' You will remember also what followed. *When* the Lord saw Moses had turned aside, *then*, but not till then, he called

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him and put before him his life's work. Moses, knowing he could not go in his own strength, asks but 'Who am I?' and he receives God's promise—'Certainly I will be with thee'. Once more he hesitates. 'How shall I persuade the people of my mission? Suppose they ask who sent me and what is his name? What shall I say?' And then God reveals his name. 'Thus shalt thou say I AM hath sent me unto you'. And each child is allowed to say 'I am, because I am a child of God: I am a gift of God to my parents because of their love for each other'. But because there is only one great 'I AM', the Father of us all, children must be distinguished by added names, even John and Mary is not enough: we bear our parents' name, our family name, as well—John Smith, Mary Jones.

Now Miss Mason tells us about the meaning of the motto in a book which she wrote called *Ourselves*. We do not care to think much about ourselves, and sometimes we get unpleasant surprises! We come across things that we do and think which have an ugly look. But Miss Mason helps us by showing that each of us is a kingdom of Mansoul, a great and rich country with a government and officers of state and four Chambers (not only two like our Houses of Parliament); that the kingdom has a King and that it is subject to assault by its enemies. She tells us that many people never think what it means to say 'I am, I can'; that they never stop to consider that they have a great inheritance and great powers which they must exercise in order to make the most of that great inheritance. She tells us that the four Chambers (or Houses) where the ministers (or powers) sit are those of Body, Mind, Heart, and Soul. We can only learn gradually all Miss Mason has to tell us about the work of these powers, and how we may make use of them or hinder their work. For instance, we are hungry, and we learn that Hunger is one of the Esquires of the Body; we want to know, and we learn that the Desire for Knowledge is a Lord of the Exchequer; we love our friends, and Love is a Lord of the Treasury; with Intellect, the Foreign Secretary, we may travel in the thoughts of great writers; by the help of my Lord Chief Explorer, the Imagination, we can picture things we cannot see; the Lord Attorney General, the Reason, shows us where our thoughts and actions may lead us; the Lord Chief Justice, the Conscience, guides us to the good and warns us of the evil; while the Prime Minister, the Will, gives a final decision. Most important of all there is the Holy of Holies, the Soul, where the King holds his most private audiences.

When we have learned about and said 'I am' we say next 'I can'. Now 'I can' means I have the power, and in saying it we recognise that we have the power to enter into the inheritance of 'I am'. But the kingdom suffers from assault by enemies. What these assaults [sic] are and how they are to be met you will read in Miss Mason's book. They come to every part of the Kingdom of Mansoul: sometimes we do not even know that they are assaults until the kingdom has suffered. Then we turn aside to the King in the House of Soul, and the King calls us and shows us what He would have us to do, our Duty, and we know then what we owe to Him and can say 'I ought' with understanding.

Wordsworth calls Duty 'Stern Daughter of the Voice of God', but he also says:

'Nor know we anything so fair  
As is the smile upon her face'.

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But what about the last clause of our motto, 'I will'? We have seen that 'I will' is the Prime Minister, the head of the responsible government of Mansoul under the King. To say 'I want' is easy, but to say 'I will', is the hardest and greatest task that falls to Mansoul. Even when we have said 'I ought' we sometimes go no further; but when we remember 'for Jesus Christ His sake' we can say 'I will' knowing that the power to act will be given to us.

Tennyson writes—'Our wills are ours to make them Thine'. Another poet (Drinkwater) writes in 'A Prayer'—

'Knowledge we ask not—knowledge Thou has lent,  
But, Lord, the will—there lies our bitter need,

Give us to build above the deep intent  
The deed, the deed'.

Let us remember lastly that Miss Mason chose the title 'Ourselves' from the prayer of solemn dedication. 'And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice unto thee ... that we may be fulfilled with thy grace and heavenly benediction'.

Long before the Parents' Union School was founded, or she had written any of her books, Miss Mason wrote the following letter to a child:

'My news is of a King—a King so sweet  
That might she place her low stool at His feet,  
And sit and watch His face the live-long day,  
"My happiest birthday this", would Susie say.  
But that, for wisest reasons, may not be;  
At least not yet. A mighty King is He,  
And everything He wishes He can do;  
So 'tis His pleasure oft to visit you,  
And every little child whose name He knows.  
But, that you may be in your weekday clothes,  
And may behave as you do every day,  
And not for company your best display,  
He places His dear hand upon your eyes,  
And holds them so—tho' things of shape and size  
You see quite well—you cannot tell when He  
Is standing by, and so your thoughts are free,  
And He sees just what kind of child you are.

'But there is more to tell and better far:  
You know He is a King; but, ah, not proud  
Not palace bright where many servants crowd  
He chooses for His dwelling; the least room,  
The tiniest house that anywhere may be,  
A little maiden's heart, is not too wee  
For Him to enter in and make His home.  
You wonder that He can: the King may come,  
Because He is so mighty, where He will;  
And if you watch for Him, your thoughts quite still,  
You will find Some One good within your heart,  
Who makes you care to choose the better part,

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To be a gentle, thoughtful, loving child,  
Not selfish, disobedient, cross or wild.  
And when He comes, He makes your face so fair,

Your friends are glad, and say, "The King is there!"

Perhaps Miss Mason's reference to 'True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home' in connection with the badge of the P.U.S. should come home to us especially in these days when we are inclined to make education in the school sense the centre of our educational thought. It is a popular view, it is a view expressed in most newspapers, in fact it is education as many people think of it. It was not Miss Mason's conception of education, necessary and desirable as school education is for many reasons, chiefly economic. If we once lose sight of Miss Mason's meaning we shall be lost in a quagmire of petty details. Miss Mason's conception of education comes from *educare*, meaning to feed, to nourish, not from *educere*, meaning to draw out. She tells us herself that she has set forth a children's Magna Carta. It is a Magna Carta which belongs also to each one of us in so far as we retain the inheritance of our childhood. But there is a danger in these days of becoming so anxious about the stops and commas of the Magna Carta that we forget to make each clause common ground for ourselves and the children from the 'kindred points of Heaven and Home'. Perhaps we should remember that a legal charter has no stops whatever! We need a charter, we need lines of conduct brought about by the discipline of habit, but we need also the inspiring idea. We seem to have lost the original meaning of discipline; even the dictionary gives it as 'keeping order in school, in prison, in the Army', and we speak of adversity and privation acting as discipline in mental and moral training. We must go back to its derivation which is that of *disciple*, used especially in connection with our Lord's special followers, and also of the followers of leaders in thought or act. It is perhaps on account of this deterioration in the meaning of discipline that many have lost their faith in it. People are sometimes inclined to think that children are better without rules imposed by others, that personality cannot flourish under discipline; but when we look on discipline in the light of its original meaning we get at once the inspiring idea which gives us the foundation for a charter which shall bring us freedom. Limitations bearing the dignity of the clauses of a charter are acceptable where the imposition of rules of conduct might be considered irksome.

But as disciples, let us beware how we drift out of the sphere of the work for the children as indicated by our Charter. We have a definite mission—to bring fullness of life to the children. It is more possible to carry out this mission in a home schoolroom, because only there can a child enter into his full inheritance; and only in so far as heads of schools can secure the sympathetic co-operation of parents can they prevent the school from becoming a separate compartment of a child's life, one of those places where habits and conduct are local as regards quality! And here perhaps is the hardest part of our crusade. 'I am told that he is an angel at school, but I cannot do anything with him at home', said a mother, and so she decided to send a most fascinating little boy of six to a boarding school. 'If I could see every parent every term, I might be able to do all I want for the children', said a Headmistress. Perhaps a

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discussion on the P.U.S. motto between parents and teachers occasionally might do something to secure for schools what to the teacher in the home schoolroom comes in the day's work. In these somewhat anxious days, when 'Tommy' and 'Mary' must begin to provide for themselves in the way of scholastic acquirements almost as soon as they enter the school doors, we may not lose our belief that it is only fullness of life that will produce a magnanimous citizen who can be 'True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home'.