

The Messenger

The Bible is a very wise book. You are constantly running on to passages which experience has confirmed the truth which only the ones who have had much experience ~~that they~~ have any sense of the extraordinary understanding of man and his ways that is found in the Bible. There is that comment which ^{one} in/form and another runs through both old and new Testament - the gist of it is that God has chosen the weak to confound the mighty. (1)

^{was} It/the reappearance of Maria Wolteas last night that set me to thinking on the strength of the weak and the weakness of the mighty. There is the weak like Maria Wolteas who all her life has seen one great and beautiful truth and found joy in passing it on. ~~Truth that is the essence of life~~ The future of the world is all centered in the child, always has been. - in this child - joyous and strong - training him ^{labor, to} to/love knowledge and be willing to struggle for it. Maria is no advocate of easy ways,, she is the strictest disciplinarian because she knows how only through discipline the essences ^{ever} of life are/even suspected. To all this she has given herself to the child as her name shows which is Dutch. She got the best of training some place, but I do not know where, but it was a cultivation of mind and training of heart. This has made her the most delightful and lovable little creature to be near and to listen to. It is largely because

1) I. Corinthians, Chap. I. 26th verse.

of her voice - the perfection of her speech. Just to hear her talk with her lovely choice of words and just a shading of foreign pronunciation, and in the kind of voice which you never find excepting in those you may call the pure of heart - the pure of heart who has seen a lot of life and have a sense of humor. Maria's voice seems to come from something deep within her with a purity and a gaiety and a sweetness that is music in itself. Her voices also show _____ the inner thing. Worldly experience takes the loveliness out of voice, gives it a harsh and vinegary quality. Ambition gives it an ugly eagerness. No voice can withstand the inroads of _____ in the spirit. Maria's voice shows only the goodness and gaiety of her heart, goodness and gaiety because she has the chance to labor and to sing in which she believes above everything else in the world, and that is the child. And her voice would not be so sweet if she had not felt so deeply the tragic sorrow that besets so many, many children in the world. She wrings her hands to tell you, "Oh, if you could have seen the children of Europe after the war carrying the burdens. If you could see the children of the Orient bearing the burdens. They must somehow be released. Nothing but stopping war is ever going to ~~amst~~ release it, otherwise we will have no future men and women. You can't make men and women out of these over-burdened little children."

When I first knew Maria she was living down near Gramercy Park and spending her days in the laboring streets close to the river where there lives many, many poor people with many, many children who ran the streets in off hours and who you only had

to look at to know did not have enough food. Maria could not stand that; she had a tiny income - she had never known how much - but I think \$500.00 a year is putting it high. But she had that and so Maria determined that henceforth she would make it her work to see that these children so pale from lack of food had at least one grand bowl of soup and hunck of bread every day. And how was that to be accomplished on \$500.00 a year?

She took a tiny room, a cheap room, over in the quarter where most of the children seemed to be. Now among her many accomplishments, and I should say for the sake of those who hold accomplishments high, that Maria had all that thorough training gives, she knows her music, she knows her languages, ~~she knows~~ she can repeat to you by the yard beautiful French and German and English. She is a cook - every woman who lays any claim to cultivation should be, and man, too, for that matter. Maria knows how to make wonderful soups, and so in this little room with a big kettle which she bought at a second hand store she began her labor of feeding.

Over on Second Avenue there is a wonderful market and here early Mornings Maria could be seen selecting the cheap but juicy pieces of meat - bones - to be crushed to get her marrow. And very carefully choosing her vegetables. And when these people in the market who know all about what it is to see hungry children learned after a time what this funny little lady with the sweet voice was doing, buying for a penny or two pennies, these bits of scraps, they began to save them for her and gave them to her for nothing. She would take them at a very low rate, but

not for nothing because as she told them, "You who have come up earn your living and I have something and my friends have something."

And so it happened I had the happiness through the kindness of a noble woman who had long known Maria to make my little contribution every now and then to the soup kitchen.

Nobody could have been happier than she was, nobody could have been more eloquent, more touching, than when she told you so pityingly of the children to whom she was daily giving this bowl of soup, "Christmas was coming." She was eager to pack baskets of food for them. And that was made possible by what she was able to pick up. And then just a few days before Christmas Maria rushed to me as her nearest friend to say that she had just learned that her only sister, "and you know what it is to have only one in all the world and she dying, dying off in Los Angeles and I must go. And my poor children and their baskets - what shall I do?"

Well, that was easy. There was someone in my neighborhood that I knew would ask nothing better than to see that the baskets were distributed. And so Maria went off. That was four years ago. I had often wondered what had become of her and her sister, and I thought, well - hoping that this was true - that the sister was better and that the two were together and they were living in that sunny land and Maria was not seeing children who bore burdens or children who were white from lack of food.

Every now and then she came through my mind and then the other night my bell rang and who should come up my stairs but Maria herself. How had she been and how about her sister.

"Ah, but the sister is dead, and what it is to have one die when you have only one - oh, how it aches your heart. But there are so many things to do in the world and there are always the children, the children that people must understand if this world is to be saved and must have their burdens lifted, must be made strong and well and happy, and learn how to do things. After my sister died I went to China."

"But how did you go to China?"

"Well, it only took \$75.00 and there was Red Cross work to do over there and I knew about the children so I went to see. I was two years in China and Japan and always I saw how little food the children had and always I saw it was because of war, and so I said, we must somehow stop the war because the little children would not be strong and well and grow up to make this a better world. It all depends on the children. If they are like this there is not going to be a better world ever. All that is good in the world will die out if we do not stop the wars. And so I said everybody must be made to understand."

"When you feel that way there is only thing you can do and that is try to make other people see how you feel. I wanted many people to understand - and they must be strong people, they must be people who could persuade others. And so I said to myself, I am going about in China and Japan to the people in the schools and I am going to ask them to sign a petition to the world asking that it put an end to wars because otherwise the little children can not grow up strong and good and be trained for right and beautiful things. All the good men and good women of the world must put their names to my paper asking that wars be stopped. And

now you see what I have done."

She was carrying a little flat bag, something like a brief case. She began to pull out papers talking all the time. And here is the petition. It was crazily worded but that is what it meant, what I said, that the world must stop the wars in order to give the little children a chance. If they did not give them a chance then all that was beautiful would die out and the world would be ^{more and more} a bleak and ghastly place.

She gave me her book - names, names, names. Some in Chinese script, some in Japanese script, some in English - men and women. There were scores upon scores of them from the Orient.

"After two years I came back to America because I want many American names. I have been back a year now and I have been traveling all the time getting names."

"But Maria," I said, "it takes money to travel."

"Oh, not so much money. You know I have a little money. It is quite wonderful in this country how you can travel so beautifully with so little money. I came ^{from} California through Washington, Montana, from Minnesota, from all the great Universities, from all the Governors, all through the West and North. I did that all on \$45.00, traveling in buses. It is so cheap and so comfortable and it is such fun, you find such nice people, you see such wonderful things. I don't go at night because I was always going to some town where there was some great man or woman that I wanted to tell about stopping wars in order to save the little children."

"And Everywhere people gave me their names. Everywhere they asked me what I was going to do with my book. It is not what I do with the book - that is not important - it is that you put your name, because when you put your name then you remember what is so necessary that we stop wars for the sake of the little children. I have travelled all through New England everywhere to all the Governors, and all the great colleges and I have names, names and names."

And she did - they were all there, scores upon scores upon them.

"And it only cost me \$24.50 to travel through all this New England on this great and beautiful bus. Oh, it is wonderful what we do in America for people. And now I am here and now you see."

And I saw - there was Nicholas Murray Butler, and there was Alfred Smith and there were scores of others as you knew there would be - those who might not themselves feel they could carry a message in Maria's way, but you could see that this was a messenger and who might say to themselves, "God has chosen the weak to confound the mighty."

So here goes my name. She is going on gathering names. She was headed for Washington. "Someday I hope, she told me, to go to Europe. Oh, I think in Europe where they are making the next war and putting more burdens on little children. You know they can't stand it long - the little children - they have so much put on them, so many burdens now, they can't stand another

war. And the men of Europe must see that. And so I am going and showing all these names and ask them if they will not stop for the sake of the little children, and put their names down." If you put your name down, you know, you remember better."