LAW OFFICES
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1317 F STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D. C.

10 May 1933

My dear Miss Tarbell:

I have been informed that you are a member of the committee on Award of the Pictorial Review Achievement Prize. May I take the liberty of calling your attention to the peculiar merits of a most unusual woman? I refer to Miss Mary Virginia Merrick who lives in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Last year Miss Merrick's name was presented to the Pictorial Review by Miss Jane Hoey.

This wonderful woman - an invalid for many years - has been the inspiration and moving force back of what is known as the Christ Child Society, which she organized in 1890 when Miss Merrick gathered a group of girls around her bed to make layettes for "the poorest babies to be found." This modest effort marked the beginning of the Christ Child Society. In 1896 this group had greatly increased in number and was organized by Miss Merrick into a welfare Society called the Christ Child Society.

The object of this society is to give aid and instruction to the under-privileged child; to uplift and brighten their lives; to further their spiritual and material advancement. No child in need, regardless of its race, color or religion, is alien to the sympathies of this Society.

Under the leadership of Miss Merrick, this Society has extended its influence until it has become a nation-wide organization with branches in thirty-six cities of twenty-two states of the Union. Indeed, the scope of the work is more than national; it has so far expanded that it has reached to Las Cruces, Mexico. The main object is to provide poor children with clothing; to conduct classes in hygiene; to care for infant life; to conduct in classes cooking and domestic science. In London, England, and Rome, Italy, it is preparing to open branches.

Here in Washington she has established a community settlement house located in the heart of what would be called the tenement district of the Capital of the Nation, where facilities are provided for the entertainment and cultural development of boys and girls. In addition, through the work of Miss Merrick, there has been established near Rockville, Maryland, a convalescent home for poor children.

The policy of the National President, Miss Merrick, is to leave the type of work to be done in each branch to the peculiar needs of that particular place, that is not being covered by other welfare agencies; consequently, it is usually a pioneer in its work.

To meet the present existing distress the Society had added to all approved phases of settlement house work such correlated institutions as mothers' clubs, day nurseries, food and milk stations, maternity wards, in various cities throughout the country.

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This letter but poorly states the extent of the noble activities of Miss Merrick who, for a period of forty-three years, though unable to leave her house, has been the inspiration behind the activities of this Society. Indeed, her physical disability makes her success the more outstanding in inspiring those - the rich as well as the poor - who have come in contact with her, to use their time and means for the uplift of their unfortunate brothers and sisters. Her interest has not been passive in any degree; constantly, from my own knowledge and Mrs Tumulty's association with her, she is in touch with every detail of this vastly humane organization. Modestly, unostentatiously, humbly, Miss Merrick has carried on her great work, making life easy and tolerable for the poor and the needy, who have become the easy victims of Miss Merrick's obsession - her obsession of charity and service to others - helping and loving and lifting burdens from backs already weary. A recognition of this woman, whose whole life has been so much given to unselfish devotion to others, would be a fitting climax to a career that, amidst all the tragedy of this critical hour, has carried on - neither retreating nor marking time, but constantly moving forward toward a great goal, ministering with uncomplaining patience to those who have been the objects of her kindness and charity.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs Tumulty

Miss Ida M Tarbell
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