"We-Uns Has Come—Larn Us"

The Pathetic Plea of Georgia Mountain Children to the Berry Schools. Martha Berry, Founder of These Unique Institutions, Has Just Been Awarded the Pictorial Review Prize for Outstanding Achievement

By MARY FIELD PARTON

"Back Beyond" in an Ontario "forgotten section"—Haliburton, parts of Muskoka sections of Victoria, Hastings and Renfrew counties, we had a very similar condition to that told in the story of the Georgia "Poor White Trash." The Department of Education, the Red Cross and several missionary ministers have improved the sad conditions in these backward parts of our fair province. The work is not yet completed—much is yet to be done. Possibly the story in the New York Tribune of Martha Berry and her work may be an inspiration to our Government to apply the same principles for the betterment of our own under-privileged children.

Twenty-six years ago, on a Sunday afternoon, a star must have hung low and luminous over a little log cabin in the mountains of Georgia. Here, in obscurity, a dream was born to a gentle Southern girl. Few were wise enough to foresee the significance of her vision in the lives of thousands of poor and lowly folk.

To-day, however, that dream has become the brick and stone reality of a great training school for the boys and girls of the Appalachian Mountains; a nebulous dream has become the Berry Schools for the "poor whites" who live their starved, proud lives on remote upland farms in ignorance and poverty.

Moreover, to-day, Martha Berry, the founder of the schools, is the recipient of the annual achievement award of $5,000 given by "The Pictorial Review" to that American woman who within the last ten years has made the most distinguished contribution to our national life in letters, art, science or social welfare.

During these many years lanky boys and girls in ever-increasing numbers have been coming down from the uplands, trudging weary miles, hungry for "larnin'." Ragged, dirty, barefooted they come, all, all they possess on their backs and in a shoulder bundle.

"I come to git me larnin' hyar," they say simply, dropping their burden at the entrance to the grounds of the school, whose wide gates swing open onto the paved-elm-arched "Road of Opportunity."

"We-uns has come, ma'am. Larn us, they say with the dignity of old little children, a tragic dignity which offsets their rags, their untutored speech.

Martha Berry, the founder of the unique Berry Schools at Rome, Georgia, was born to far more cultured associations than those of the simple mountain folk of her country. For her was planned a more romantic future than that which she elected. Behind her lay all the gracious Southern traditions of story and picture: a great plantation, a white pillared house with broad balconies and overhanging wistaria; servants to fetch and carry; the polished education given to the girls of wealthy families. Her days were to be those of the aristocratic Southern belle . . . a laughing, joyous girlhood; a brilliant marriage; an assured social position. Then came the Sunday adventure and out of it a dream which cut athwart social conventions.

It is an old story now in the mountains, worn old as a folk tale by twenty-six years of telling and retelling—the story of the humble beginnings of the Berry Schools. . . . A summer Sunday afternoon when Martha Berry, a young girl just home from finishing school, told Bible stories in the cabin on her father's estate to three dusty mountain lads she chanced upon as she drove home from church. Perched on a soap box, with the children squatting on shuck mats at her feet listening breathlessly, Martha Berry realized the poignant hunger of these starved children for knowledge.

"Pa ez got him a Bible, on'y he cain't read it," sighed a lad.

The next Sunday—"There's white trash chil'uns waitin' to see you," announced the old family cook.

"We brang us some sisters," said the boys.

Cleanliness and Godliness

Martha Berry looked at their hands and faces, caked with grime and soil; at their matted, unkept hair; at the rags they wore. She saw with quick sympathy that their neglected bodies needed training and care as well as their darkened little souls. To the telling of Bible stories were added lessons in washing.

Every Sunday that summer brought more children, walking miles to hear the wonderful things the "Sunday Lady" told them; stories about Adam and Eve, about germs, about George Washington. But it was not until fall that Martha Berry discovered that she had begun a life work, started a career that she could not stop; that she had lighted the candle of hope in darkened lives around whose flickering flame she must cup soft, white hands lest it blow out. Parents began to come down from the mountains begging for "larnin'" along with their children.

Against the opposition of friends and shocked relatives, Martha Berry opened her first day school in the following spring; a one-room cabin with planks laid across soap boxes for the children's benches, a large packing box for the teacher's desk. Reading, writing, ciphering, Bible stories—this was the curriculum. From miles away came mountain boys, walking barefoot up and down the stony trails. Their number grew.

"Larn us, Miss Berry," they said. "Larn us what you-all know."

Old As Well As Young

But for each child who came, hundreds there were who could not make the long journey or whose parents thought "larnin'" a waste of time or whose labor was needed on the farm. Martha Berry discovered hundreds of such children when she rode on horseback through the highways and byways of the mountains, coming upon weather-beaten shacks filled to the door and window sills with ragged children.

Everywhere on these journeys she found dirt, illiteracy, illness. Everywhere she found weary, worked-out men unintelligently endeavoring to wrest a bare existence out of the poor soil of the mountain side with the most primitive tools; everywhere tired women, bent over wash barrels or cracking corn between flat stones or doing the work of the beasts of the field. And everywhere, too, she found tall, gaunt, blue-eyed men and women of her own proud Nordic stock who fiercely rejected even the "larnin'" they craved because they were too poor to pay for it.

"Thy people shall be my people," said Martha Berry as she consecrated her young life to the "poor whites" of the mountains.

The Project Started

Her next step was to open at her own expense schools nearer to the remote settlements of the people, but it was not long before she realized that her efforts on behalf of the children were defeated by the home environment. Of what use to talk about cleanliness and godliness to children whose parents were too poor to buy soap and combs? It wasn't Sunday schools, it wasn't week-day schools that these children needed. It was a boarding school, a complete change of environment that was essential.

So Martha Berry deeded her share of her father's estate to the first of the Berry Schools, a dormitory which she built with her own money. From the inception of the school it was decided that in return for an education, for food and lodging, the boys could work. They were too poor to pay; too proud to accept charity. A dozen boys came.

"You aim to larn us?" they asked.

"Yes, I aim to."

"Well, we-uns has come, ma-am."

So in return for the opportunity to learn there was wood to cut, land to clear, a cow to milk, crops to sow and harvest. Gradually the plan and type of school most needed for the mountain children took form in the mind of Martha Berry; education, she decided, must be like the mystic Trinity, threefold yet one; of the hand, of the mind and of the heart. Education must teach these raw minds and untrained hands to think, to do and to feel. Essentially it must be agricultural, fitting lads to return to the soil from which they sprang.

With the coming of spring, six more boys came, one of them walking forty miles, driving a yoke of oxen.

" 'Tis the fee for larnin' me, ma'am," he said proudly. "They're broke ter plowin'."

From a distant valley, leading his "fee" by a rope, came a lad with a sow, starved and dirty as the lad himself. Others came, bringing chickens, ducks to exchange for an education. More often they brought nothing but strong, willing hands. Tall, lanky boys came who, at the age of fifteen or sixteen, could not read or write but who in three years showed as great progress as the average senior in a northern college.

So the school grew. Martha Berry's resources were exhausted. Still, not until she had literally sold or deeded all that she had given to the poor did she turn to outsiders for help, did she go beyond the disapproving circle of her friends with the story of the mountain boys begging for an education, willing to work long hours with plow and axe and scythe that they might know something of the world of books, might learn how to live more intelligently.

Money Secured

Money began coming in from her "begging tours," as she called them . . . and ever more children kept coming, making more and more money necessary. From all over the country tiny streams of contributions began flowing over the Appalachians into Georgia to the Berry Schools. Yet never, never sufficient, never commensurate with the need of the children of the uplands. An unending file of boys kept trickling down the mountain trails, their packs on their backs, their overcoats patched, their hats battered. Footsore, shy, they stood gazing through the open grates down the "Road of Opportunity."

Gradually the story of the Berry Schools and the sublime devotion of its founder spread beyond the state of Georgia. Men like Andrew Carnegie heard and heeded the story and started an endowment which assured a small annual sum. Women's clubs heard. Churches heard. Theodore Roosevelt exclaimed: "This is the real thing!" when he listened to Martha Berry tell the story of her school. "There should be a school for girls, too," he announced.

Through his influence it became possible to build the first girls' dormitory, "Sunshine Shanty." With the opening of this dormitory, slim, sunbrowned girls in sunbonnets, calico aprons tied about their waists in the manner of little old grandmothers, walked down the trails their brothers had walked to enter the Berry School, to work with their hands for the privilege of an education.

"We-uns has come," they said. "Wimmin-folks wants larnin' same's men-folks."

So the school grew and grew; grew from its dozen into the hundreds, from its dozen into the hundreds. Buildings multiplied. More teachers came. More acres were cultivated. There were additions to herds and flocks. And with the growth of the school its undaunted founder faced continually the problem of money for its maintenance, for equipment, for teachers.

It is now twenty-six years since the three little dusty boys listened to Martha Berry tell magic stories in a tiny shack. They are grown men now. And Martha Berry, white-haired, gentle, with eyes both brilliant and tender, looks down from the "House O' Dreams," which the boys and girls themselves built for her on the summit of Lavendar Mountain, upon the spreading realization of her girlhood's dream.

Nearly all the buildings have been constructed by the boys themselves. In the warm meadows beyond the campus sturdy boys in the uniform of the school—overalls—are plowing. Girls in blue dresses and pink sunbonnets bend, like flowers themselves, over flower gardens and vegetable rows. "Blue ribbon" cattle graze in the meadows. Fruit ripens in the orchard.

The Harvest

From the very first the Berry Schools were essentially agricultural. The five courses that are given—agriculture, home economics, mechanics, literature and science and a normal course—train boys and girls for a practical, work-a-day life. To-day, when a mountain boy graduates from Berry he not only has an academic education, but he is an efficient farmer, who has leared farming by doing it. He knows the care of herds and flocks. He can build with wood and brick or the stones of his mountains. He is ready to take up life on the soil intelligently. He has been taught scientific methods of cultivation and fertilization; how to put nitrogenous cover crops back into the earth, how to select seed, how to rotate crops, how to carry on the daily routine of farm an ddairy A generation separates him from his father. Two hundred years separate him from his father's understanding.

When a girl leaves Berry she is an efficient homemaker, a good mate for her farmer husband. She can cook and preserve and sew. She can keep house, barnyard and dairy tidily. She can weave and spin—ancient arts. She can work out a family budget and a balanced diet as well as an algebra problem. She is prepared for wifehood and motherhood, for the physical care of herself and those dependent upon her.

She is but a generation separated from her mother. Two hundred years separate her from her mother's understanding of life. She may become a teacher to little mountain children, but in all events, both boys and girls leave Berry to become crusaders to their kinfolk, eager to battle against ignorance and poverty.

There are no servants at Berry. All must work. All want to. It was a new and difficult idea to spread in the mountains that hand labor is dignified and honorable. Martha Berry taught lads that lesson, working a profound psychologic change in the male point of view Many other subtle things are taught—an appreciation for the beauty that lies all about them, of the power of character. Martha Berry counts 2,500 boys who have gone out from her school skilled farmers. 371 who have become teachers and principals in rural schools, 307 housewives, 25 nurses and 6 preachers. Others fill secretarial and office jobs. She sees her school and it methods copied by other backward sections. The harvest is in.

Perpetuating in Picture the Balaclava Charge

INTO THE VALLEY OF DEATH RODE THE GALLANT SIX HUNDRED

The charge of the Light Brigade at the battle of Balaclava, re-enacted by British cavalrymen at Aldershot for a film of the battle in 1852.

"TOC H" PADRE HOME

Rev. "Tubby" Clayton arrived in England after a tour of three months spent in South America in the interests of the "Toc H", of which he is the founder.

A Mystic

By deep self-probing he aspired to find
The key to knowledge in his own deep mind;
Until, nerve-racked and with tormented soul,
He lost his mind when he had neared the goal.

—Stanton A. Coblentz in the New York Sun.

Little Girl (to her playmate): "When I was born I was so s'prised I couldn't speak for a whole year and a half!"

November is the month of the axe. First the politician gets is, then the turkey.

"A Hunting We Will Go"

WHEN THE BUGLE OF THE HUNTSMEN IS SOUNDED

This fine hunting picture was taken while chilly autumn winds blew at the start of the Essex Fox Hunt at Brady's Gate, Gladstone.

British Empire Called Big Factor in World Peace

Sir Austen Chamberlain Says Canada's Counsel Will Be Highly Valued

Ottawa, Ont.—Canada's part in interimperial and international affairs was the subject of two inspiring addresses given by Sir Austen Chamberlain, British Foreign Secretary, as the guest of the Canadian Government.

While Canada's increasing influence contained elements of danger, Sir Austen had a profound faith that "always our commons sense will solve these difficulties as they arise." He considered that the British Empire was a factor of immense importance for the peace of the world, and "we will welcome any counsel and criticism you may contribute to the foreign policy of the Empire."

Sir Austen said it was geographically impossible for Great Britain to be indifferent to the peace of Europe; but he looked for the dominions, from their more detached positions, to be ready with their counsel and advice. He designated the British Empire as a constant puzzle to the rest of the world, but as a puzzle that was being solved with amazing success, "guarding peace among ourselves and workin for peace throughout the world."

W. L. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, spoke of Sir Austen as being as distinguished as his great father, Sir Joseph; of his having filled nearly all the portfolios in the Cabinet, and of being the "Locarno peace pact itself."

Sir Robert Borden, former Premier of Canada, referred to their guest as the exponent of a rare and sane idealism, and greater in peace even than during war.

The Lady of Tears

Marie Feodorovna is dead—the "lady of tears," the most tragic figure among the crowned heads. Not even the Empress Eugenie's chronicle of misery and grief exceeds hers. Both were as if created to convince the world that the path of glory leads but to the grave as surely among queens as among peasants; that royalty wears no talisman against sorrow. Born the Princess Dagmar of Denmark, fate affianced her to the Czarevitch Nicholas of Russia, and fate stole him away from her through his death from lung trouble a few weeks before the date for their marriage. In accordance with his dying request, she married his brother on October 26, 2866. Fifteen years later, the Czar Alexander II, her father-in-law, was assassinated by Nihilists as he was driving through the streets of St. Petersburg. Her own husband, Alexander III died in 1894, at the age of 49. It was her son who was the last of the Romanov czars. It was her son to whom she once said, "Nicholas, be Czar"; he who called the first Hague Conference for peace, whose statesmen later insured the World War by mobilizing after their feeble Czar had ordered them to refrain. It was he who with his whole family, was murdered in that horrible cellar at Ekaterinburg. But not in her belief. To her end she was persuaded that he lived in hiding. Before her collapsed the whole great Russian fabric, the great empire built of blood and tears and human misery that the Romanovs might rule and the aristocrats play in the splendor of their riches created by by the backs of the mujiks. Only Denmark was left to her, and Maria Feodorovna returned to her ancestral home, if not to her ancestral faith, but not until the war had ended and the revoluation had plainly come to stay. And there she died.—The Nation, New York.

Dome Lights Restrain "Petters" in Japan's Cars

Seattle.—Automobile makers in America have been advised of the "anti-necking lamp law" in Japan, one of the most peculiar of many governing the operation of motor vehicles in the empire. The recent statute requires that all motor cars must be equipped with dome lights which must be lighted when driving after dark. While the law was designated to protect passengers, it has since been called the "anti-necking lamp law." Unless cars are so lighted at night the Japanese police confiscate them.

It Was a Thing of the Past

More than once the head of the household had had to rebuke ten-year-old Joan for her excessive eagerness to begin her dinner before grace had been said.

Finally he determined to teach her a lesson in the presence of visitors. So, in his usual formula, he included this:

"For what we are about to receive and for what Joan has already eaten, make us truly thankful."

Second son of the former kaiser is to marry a womn who has been twice widowed and once divorced. He'll learn all about husbands from her.—Border Cities Star.

"Did your grandfather live to a green old age?" "I should say so! He was swindled three times after he was seventy."