

Last August Mrs. Elsa Neustadt-Greger died. With her disappeared another of the persons who fought and strove for Dr. Montessori and her cause.

There have been periods in Dr. Montessori's life when scientific truth versus compromise raised violent storms, but she withstood all that tried to obliterate her like a rock among raging waves.

At different times and in several countries, Montessori organizations - by introducing changes which eliminated religious, political or educational objections - had attracted the favour and the support of influential people and so had become powerful. Through their activity 'Montessori' had become wide spread and popular. They expected Dr. Montessori to be happy and grateful to have her name emblazoned in the minds of the nation. She was not, however. She protested that her aim was to continue to reveal the real child who appeared when he was protected, when his needs were understood and when consequently conditions were created in which his potentialities could have the chance to develop. 'If to assuage public opinion these conditions were denied and the children's potentialities were buried, whatever personal glory and fame she achieved were not only empty, but a betrayal to the child', said Dr. Montessori and she denied the organizations.

Then the storms broke and she, the rock, was engulfed by the waves. Her fame was obscured and her person ridiculed by the very organizations that bore her name. A few persons, often deprived of fame or lofty qualifications, chose to share the storm and to help her in her task. One of them was Elsa Neustadt, who later married Dr. Ernst Greger.

With others she started a new Montessori group in Germany. She followed Dr. Montessori to England, France, Italy, so as to perfect her knowledge by taking all her courses and thus being able to help better in the national and international organizations. When the Nazi movement destroyed both Montessori Societies in Germany, she left her country and was made secretary of the Swiss Montessori Society. When conditions in Europe finally became impossible, she emigrated to America.

The war interrupted communications between her and her teacher: Mammolina, as she and a few other intimate friends, called Dr. Montessori. But her faith and devotion never failed to the moment of her death. In America she dedicated herself to the care of mentally handicapped children and worked in obscurity, but her memory will continue to be fulfilled in the mind of those who knew her.

The following article she wrote about her work in America, illustrates indirectly her innate qualities to give real love to those who needed it most.

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