

From the Memorial Address for Marie Steiner

by Dr. E. Pfeiffer

December 30th 1948 at Headquarters.

My dear friends,

Marie Steiner died on Monday, December 27th, at Beatenberg, Switzerland, where she had lived in recent years. She would have been eighty two years of age in March.

It is hard to find the proper words for this personality who is, I am convinced, next to Dr. Steiner, the greatest the Anthroposophical Society ever has had. It was she who supported Dr. Steiner to such an extent that one can say - as Dr. Steiner himself said - : Without her, Anthroposophy would not exist. She has been so much misunderstood and misinterpreted, that there is no better way to honour her memory than by quoting what Dr. Steiner himself has said regarding his co-operation with her. These words are in his autobiography and were written at the time when he was before his own death, in 1925. At this period when he was looking backward at his own life, he wrote of the role of Marie Steiner, then Marie von Sievers, from the time when they had come in contact with one another about the beginning of the Century.

From recently published early letters, we learn how alone Rudolf Steiner felt in the Weimar period. There was almost no person to whom he could talk of his longing to tell of his spiritual research. And in *The Story of My Life* he has described how he felt this necessity to speak about that out of which Anthroposophy developed, the true insight, the true spiritual experience as it opened itself to him. started to give his first lectures leading towards Anthroposophy. He writes:

"At these lectures there appeared one day in the audience Marie von Sievers, who was chosen by destiny at that time to take into strong hands the German section of the Theosophical Society, founded soon after the beginning of my lecturing. Within this section I was then able to develop my anthroposophic activity before a constantly increasing audience." (Page 286, *The Story of My Life*, translated from the original by Olin D. Wannamaker, published 1928).

Reference to "eine Anthroposophie" is already made in the title of one of his lectures at that time.

To the honour and memory of Marie Steiner, we have to say that she was one of the very first who recognised Dr. Steiner's spiritual leadership, who recognised the spiritual entities that acted

through him. She was *one* of the first who built a platform on which he could be heard.

In the beginning, Rudolf Steiner had no platform except the theosophical Society. She helped him to find proper independence and to preserve the cleanliness and purity of his Anthroposophical Teachings. She gave him the chance to separate himself from the chains cast about him.

All this is what happened 46 to 48 years ago. It is forgotten by many, but it is a fact. We would not be able to be sitting here, if these things had not happened at that time. To continue with Dr. Steiner's own words:

"Such was my orientation of mind then, in 1902, Marie von Sievers and I entered upon the leadership of the German section of the Theosophical Society. It was Marie von Sievers who, by reason of her whole being, made it possible to keep what came about through us far removed from anything sectarian, and to give to the thing such a character as won for it a place within the general spiritual and educational life" (Page 298).

I emphasize again - because I myself have seen, have witnessed the Co-operation between Marie Steiner and Dr Steiner - I re-emphasize his words that it was she who "made it possible to keep what came about through us far removed from anything sectarian, and to give to the thing such a character as won for it a place within the general spiritual and educational life".

Dr Steiner said further:

" Marie von Sievers and I soon became great friends, and on the basis of this friendship there developed a united work in the most varied intellectual spheres and over a very wide area. Anthroposophy, but also the arts of poetry and of recitation - to cultivate these in common became for us the very essence of life.

"Only in this unitedly cultivated spiritual life could the central point be found from which at first anthroposophy would be carried into the world through the local branches of the Theosophical Society." (Page 298).

At another point in his autobiography, Dr. Steiner discussed in more detail the significance of their co-operation:

"And here I feel that it has been a peculiarly fortunate destiny for the Anthroposophical Society that I received in Marie von Sievers a fellow-worker assigned by destiny who understood fully how to nourish from the depths of her nature this artistic, emotionally charged, but unsentimental element.

"A lasting activity was needed against this inwardly untrue sentimental element; for it penetrates again and again into a spiritual movement. It can by no means be simply

repulsed or ignored. For persons who at first yield themselves to this element are in many cases none the less seekers in the utmost depths of their souls. But it is at first hard for them to gain a firm relation to the information imparted from the spiritual world. They seek unconsciously in sentimentality a form of deafness. They wish to experience quite special truths, esoteric truths. They develop an impulse to separate themselves on the basis of these truths into sectarian groups.

"The important thing is to make the right the sole directive force in the Society, so that those erring on the one side or the other may always see again and again how those work who may call themselves the central representatives of the Society because they are its founders. Positive work for the content of anthroposophy, not opposition against outgrowths which appeared this was what Marie von Sievers and I accepted as the essential thing. Naturally there were exceptional cases when opposition was also necessary." (Page 332)

In this union of Rudolf Steiner and Marie von Sievers, we can see the source from which Anthroposophy could flow. That we can be Anthroposophists now, has become possible through the co-operation of Marie von Sievers and Rudolf Steiner. I feel obliged to say this because Dr. Steiner's entire spiritual entelechy *was* first recognised by Marie von Sievers; she was able to approach him and say, "I know Thee." She was able to remove physical hindrances, caused by over zealous admirers, and to protect him in his spiritual research. It would go too much into the intimacies of their co-operation to give more details. She enabled Dr. Steiner to do his work. Then came the moment when the Anthroposophical Society was first founded :

"We were forced to found the Anthroposophical Society independently." (Page 300).

A few words about the personality of Frau Dr. Steiner: She had always shown a clear mind, a power of penetrating into situations, and sometimes even a pitiless criticism. This created a lot of enemies for her, who were afraid of her criticism. She was a fighter through and through. But it is interesting that if you stood upon your own ground, you could co-operate with her - if you faced her open-heartedly. She did not dwell on feelings, particularly mystical feelings. She tried to face the realities of life, to such an extent that she was sometimes called harsh. But she was helpful in this "harshness", for life itself is not sentimental, realities are harsh. She had very clear blue eyes, penetrating at times, understanding at times. She *was* completely impersonal, she did not like personal mention of herself. Recently, she had been ailing, and almost blind, and she had an ailment, with open sores, for thirty years. I never heard a single complaint from her about the pain these caused her.

This picture of will power, of the spirit conquering physical handicaps, can be stimulating to

us. Nothing existed in her entire life except her devotion to Rudolf Steiner. She lived to protect him, to work for him, and to execute his wishes and desires. This was frequently misunderstood, particularly in recent years. But the fact remains that she was the first one who discovered Rudolf Steiner. She built the platform for him. You can understand that such a person has a right to think and act differently than others who appeared later as followers. Her concept differed from what we late-comers can have as concept. It *was* the concept of one who has been helping with origins. This we need to consider in order to understand her and her task. Her concept was greater than that of those profiting from Anthroposophy but not present at the birth pains of Anthroposophy. To quote again from Dr. Steiner's autobiography:

"Through the activity developed by Marie von Sievers there came about from a small beginning the philosophical-anthroposophical publication business. A small pamphlet based upon notes of a lecture I delivered before the Berlin Free Higher Institute to which I have referred was the first matter thus published. The necessity of getting possession of my Philosophy of Spiritual Activity - which could no longer be distributed by the former publisher - and of the attending personally to its distribution gave the second task. We bought the remaining copies and the publisher's rights for this book. All this was not easy for us. For we were without any considerable means". (Page 31.2).

Not only did she give of her means for this, but she supported, in every possible way, the physical existence of Dr. Steiner. He once told of how in the earliest time they had to do everything themselves, even the mailing of invitations and the like. They addressed them together and then carried the letters between them in a laundry basket, to the post-office. And always there went forward the artistic co-operation already referred to Dr. Steiner said:

"To Marie von Sievers and to me it was important to make the artistic also alive within the society (Theosophical). Spiritual knowledge as an experience takes hold, indeed, of the whole human existence. All the forces of the soul are stimulated. In formative fantasy there shines the light of the experience of spirit when this experience is present" .....(Page 317).

"Marie von Sievers had her place in the art of word--shaping; to dramatic representation she had the most beautiful relationship. Here, then, was sphere of art for anthroposophy in which the fruitfulness of spiritual perception for art might be tested" ..... (Page 318).

The recitations of Marie von Sievers at these ceremonies were the initial point for the entrance of the artistic into the Anthroposophical Society; for a direct line leads from these recitations to the dramatic representations which then took place in Munich along with the course of lectures on anthroposophy.

"By reason of the fact that we were able to unfold art along with spiritual knowledge, we grew more and more into the truth of the modern experience of the spirit. Art has indeed grown out of the primeval dream-like experience of spirit. At the time in human evolution when the experience of spirit receded, art had to seek a way for itself; it must again find itself united with this experience when this enters in a new form into the evolution of culture". (P.319).

Telling of how work developed still further, Dr. Steiner said:

"Besides, we had reached a time when the art of declamation and recitation developed by Marie von Sievers by working out from the inner force of the word had arrived at the most varied points from which further fruitful progress could be made in this field". (Page 338).

I remember once hearing Dr. Steiner lecture on Novalis, with recitation by Marie von Sievers of the "Marien Lieder" of Novalis. The blending of the spiritual insight and the truly artistic recitation gave those present an experience hard to tell of in words. There was a complete blending of these two personalities in the spirit of Novalis.

Dr. Steiner and Marie von Sievers travelled together, both for lecturing and to study works of art and the culture of past periods.

"In this way I pursued an advanced course in the study of art from the beginning of the century and therefore during the fifth decade of my life, and together with this I had a perception of the spiritual evolution of humanity. Everywhere by my side was Marie von Sievers, who, while entering with her fine and full appreciation into all that I was privileged to experience of perception in art and culture, also shared and supplemented all this experience in a beautiful way. She understood how these experiences flowed into all that gave movement to the ideas of anthroposophy; for all the impressions of art which became an experience of my soul penetrated into what I had to make effective in lectures". (Page 330).

Dr. Steiner asked some of his pupils, among whom I count myself: "*In all circumstances stay by Frau Dr.*" Out of this fact I am grateful, although sad, to be able to say these words concerning Marie Steiner. The suffering she bore because she was unable to carry out the duties, the task, which she had been given by Dr. Steiner - well, sometimes there were conflicts. We can understand this and say Yes to it. Marie Steiner felt the need to set something right, not out of choler or any emotion, but out of meditation, out of consideration of her task given by Rudolf Steiner. This we owe to her memory, that we keep it in mind.

In recent years it has been, unfortunately, forgotten. She felt that those who raised their hand against her, raised their hand against that part of the work of Rudolf Steiner which had been

entrusted to her. She felt in recent years that she might not succeed in the anthroposophical work entrusted to her.

Recent letters from her were clear and logical, almost Hegellian in their logic. There was no evidence that she had become old, senile, not quite in her right mind, as some said. It was not the mind but only the body which ailed. She realised that she was able no more to imprint on the Society that which had developed in her co-operation with Dr. Steiner. She felt that something had developed in the Society that *was* not in what Rudolf Steiner and she had created together. (We do not say this for or against. We take it as a fact. But we have to keep in mind how Dr. Steiner felt about this co-operation).

This year 1948, in early March, Marie Steiner felt that she was not any longer able to give the Society what she should give it. She said: It might be necessary to do a deed of will to counteract the forces of despair and spiritual danger. It will need a deed of will, a sacrifice, like that of Strader to counteract the forces of despair and destruction. But this deed will have to be paid with life.

Marie Steiner made these words true. When she felt that her task could no more be completed in this Society, she had to leave.

I would like to insert here an experience one can have in connection with the realm of the dead.

Our relationship to the souls of the deceased is entirely different in accordance with the different relationships we had to them before they died. The eternal entelechy (soul and ego) expands after death and becomes a surrounding sphere, as the planetary system and zodiac surround us in the physical realm. There is a time when we find ourselves entirely inside these spheres, which are formed by the souls of the dead. We are then like inner organs and experiences to these souls. Now there is a tremendous difference of experience, depending on whether the individual soul departed from us in peace, so to say with a well-balanced karma, or departed in dissonance, fighting. There is nothing as inspiring from the other world as a relationship of deep friendship and co-operation between two souls, one there and one still dwelling on the earth. Peace and love then form a bridge of mutual recognition, and an unbreakable contact is established. Entirely different is the relationship when the other person departed on a note of dissonance, of hatred or any other separating soul force. Then we cannot find the contact with the other person, and the other soul cannot recognise or communicate with us.

While the first situation fills us with bliss, the second can point only to the action of karma, for we are unable to correct the condition until another life shall enable us to undo karma. Both souls will experience the spiritual suffering of separateness. When, however, the separation has been accomplished in peace and love, the deceased soul will be nearer in spirit than it ever could be in body, for you are part of that soul's own being. Only because of the extraordinary occasion

on which we are united in memoriam of Frau Dr. Steiner do I dare to speak of such a thing.

It is needless to say anything about the outer work of Marie Steiner, the publication of Rudolf Steiner's work, his books and lectures. All this is well known, and it will find acknowledgement sooner or later.

I tried recently to get Frau Dr. to write of her memories of Rudolf Steiner. But, true to her character, she would not consent. She thought it too personal. She has, however, written a little paper which starts:

*"It is the duty of those who feel united with the work of Rudolf Steiner and the Goetheanum to do everything possible to maintain the Goetheanum."* Then she pictured how, gradually, the Goetheanum developed out of the Mystery Plays at Munich. It was the desire of members that a building be erected there for the plays and lectures, but the counter-forces were too strong. Then friends in Switzerland made it possible for the Goetheanum to be erected in Dornach. Lectures in Basel, on the St. John's Gospel, preceded the determination of how the Goetheanum was to be built. Then Dr. Steiner and Frau Dr. moved to a rented villa. There they spent one week in complete solitude, "eine Versenkungswoche", they called it - a week of contemplation. And during this time, the plans of the future Goetheanum were perceived.

It was a week in which Dr. Steiner had also quite a few spiritual experiences concerned with the "Fifth Gospel", having to do with the temptations of Christ. And the peculiar meditation of Dr. Steiner, the "Cosmic Lord's Prayer", has been perceived by him during this week.

Dr. Steiner entered the spiritual spheres at that time, and they showed him the future Goetheanum - that he would build it and it would be destroyed, that he would build the Society and his body be destroyed. This and many more things were shown him, particularly on one night of that week. Frau Steiner continues:

"There were peculiar things that Dr. Steiner experienced that night. The next morning, when he came out of his room, it was clear that he had to fight off a severe, grave experience. With difficulty was he able to cast away the dark shadow it imposed on him. That day we walked in the high hills, and looked down on the future sight of the Goetheanum."

That night, Dr. Steiner experienced the future fate of the Goetheanum, of his life and of the Anthroposophical Society. Dr. Steiner and Marie Steiner faced, with full consciousness, what happened since. The best that we can say for ourselves is, we were blind. But we cannot say that these two personalities went unconsciously or half-awake into that which happened to the Goetheanum and the Anthroposophical Society.

I can now mention what happened at one of the last personal talks that I had with Dr.

Steiner. He spoke of the necessity of adding a Michael Festival to the other three festivals of the year. He thought it important for the future of humanity that this festival honour Michael, our leading Archangel and spiritual leader. Dr Steiner said that it was necessary to do this, but on condition that we have fully conscious, spiritually awake human beings to celebrate this festival. And he said: There are not enough yet. He counted very few who were able to do it. And these are so few that up to the present this Michael Festival can still not be celebrated. But I can say: In his counting of names it was evident that he and Marie Steiner knew consciously what should be done.

Such words would never have been spoken except for the fact that we, in grief, are here facing the companion of Rudolf Steiner in the spiritual life, and there is nothing we can do to get right what was done wrongly. There is not any way to do this any more for this incarnation of Marie Steiner. Karma must take charge.

But I feel that we can greet her across the Threshold. She is moving rapidly to be re-united with Rudolf Steiner and to be able to see him face to face again. And this is her consolation in the face of all the grief she had to suffer in being united with our Anthroposophical Movement on earth.

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Then Dr. Pfeiffer rose, and the members rose with him and stood while the Meditation given by Rudolf Steiner for the Dead was spoken.