WHAT GREATER GIFT

"What greater gift can we offer to
the state than if we teach and train
up youth?"

CICERO

IN MEMORIAM

MARGARET FULTON COE

1893 - 1956

Distinguished Pathfinder in Modern Education
Beloved Friend of Children
and Their Elders

*

THE PARK SCHOOL

Baltimore, Maryland

1957

Written and Compiled by Katharine R. Foster
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PREFACE

This book invites as it remembers.

A well lived life lives on in us who walked the world with Margaret Coe. Her book recalls the quality she gave to this companionship. Good it is distinctly to remember. Remembering how high her sights were set, how sturdily and simply followed, captures for all a vision of the greatnesses there are in teaching.

Her book will have two sets of readers or, perhaps, two ways of being read. It will be read by those who have been in and of a school and knew its heroine. Their look will be to find the stories and the words which kindle best their sense of their inspiring friend. It will entice perusal, too, from those who search that teaching of itself may grow—who know a learning and a growing are, hand-in-hand, the shapers of our lives.

We never had the chance to do full public honor to Miss Coe by thanking her with gift and rite and words of estimate and love. Have no regret for this. She trusted us. This won our trust. Our trust was her applause. For all her years of leadership and work she lived within this sound of our ovation.

This book invites as it remembers.

HANS FROELICHER, JR.

Nothing that is written about Margaret Coe can add to her stature. Her life and her work, which were synonymous, cannot be made greater in the telling than they were in the doing. Yet this little book by her friend and colleague, Miss Katharine Foster, may serve to bring to some who did not know her an insight into her dedication. For those who were fortunate enough to be associated with her directly it will evoke warm memories and generate emulation.

ROBERT A. THOMASON

PHOTO BY H. E. TOMPKINS

FOREWORD

If you didn't know Miss Coe . . .

There is a difficulty which an editor of a memorial to Margaret Coe faces at the outset. She verged on the incredible.

The plain picture of her life's work, derived from many sources, may appear to be colored with the superlatives of esteem and affection. There is no sure way of averting such an estimate. The picture can only be composed with sincerity equal to the esteem and affection felt by so many, and be based on the testimony in rich detail of many sorts and conditions of men.

In viewing the picture, if one's thoughts wander off to the widely known dedication and selflessness of men like Albert Schweitzer, or Gandhi, such thoughts must be soon recalled by the realization of her dismay and true distress if she had ever dreamed of any implied comparison with such world figures. How she would have repudiated it all!

We must come to the comment of someone who long knew her as one of her staff, and as the mother of half a dozen of her pupils. Her comment is hardly helpful in grappling with our difficulty. Indeed, it points up the difficulty. She said, "If you didn't know Miss Coe, you wouldn't believe her!" Readers who knew her will see her again in this little book, perhaps in larger perspective than before, and will "believe her."

This larger perspective may for some include her part in the pioneering phases of modern education, both within and without The Park School. It is a part significant alike for those who knew her and those who did not; for all to whom education is important. In this sense, she does not belong to The Park School alone, nor do her work and her influence.

KATHARINE R. FOSTER

NOTE

It was impossible within any reasonable time to discover and get in touch with all who might have wished to express thought and feeling about Miss Coe. This memorial is the poorer because of that fact. When more than one person supplied the same idea, the comment chosen for inclusion was that one which best fitted into the given chapter. Sincere thanks are owed to all who provided material, large in amount or small, included here or not.

Children mentioned in these chapters are assigned initials which in no case are their own, and every effort has been made to afford them complete anonymity.

Chapter I

LERNE AND TECHE

"Gladly wolde he lerne
And gladly teche."

CHAUCER

Five years of teaching in the schools of Baltimore County lay behind her, as she mounted the steps of the old red brick building known as a mansion, that was in obvious truth The Park School. A small boy—one of those she was about to teach—could have thrown a stone across Auchentoroly Terrace and right into one of the most beautiful urban parks in the country, Baltimore's Druid Hill Park.

She was young, for teaching had begun when she was eighteen. She was shy and lovely, with brown hair that curled softly about her head, and clear quiet eyes of grey shading into brown and green. Slender, characteristically erect and outwardly poised, she walked into the school which was to be the home of her spirit for thirty-nine years. Perhaps she blushed more than once during that day in 1917. The sensitiveness to the needs of others which was to be the hallmark of her lifework was also a personal sensitiveness in those early days, betrayed by the surging red which she longed to control.

Such has been the impact as an educational force of Margaret Fulton Coe—of an almost uniquely dedicated life—that it may not be only the young or naive who find it hard to believe that she trudged up the pedagogical path like others, gaining by unending effort the insights and skills which later made her touch so sure, her understanding and compassion so warm. Therefore, let the educational pioneer who was the first Headmaster of The Park School, Eugene R. Smith, speak of apprenticeship days in the new "Progressive Education."

"My first memory of Margaret Coe goes back to her coming to The Park School as a grade teacher. The characteristic that is

strongest in my thought of her as a young teacher is her modesty, which was at first almost shyness. She was quiet, serious, and unassuming.

"In observing her in her early days, as administrators must watch and judge any teacher who joins a faculty, our principal concern was with the degree of assurance and firmness she would show in holding her pupils and meeting any situation that might—and would—arise. However, we soon found that her quiet and modest personality did not mean weakness or inability to be firm when an occasion demanded it.

"She was always cooperative and ready to learn, and was intelligent and understanding in using what she learned. Her relations with her pupils during the early years showed the progress she was making and made any discipline less and less necessary. She early showed a response to young people that was genuine and was free from sentimentality. Her analyses of her pupils were valuable and her guidance of them was particularly sympathetic. Perhaps the word 'sympathy' in its best sense comes close to being the key to her influence and success.

"One of her important qualities was the ability to grow in educational and social stature. She never lost the modesty which was so natural for her, but she developed markedly in poise, in the breadth of her mastery of educational theory and procedure, and in her ability to win the confidence of children and adults alike. So it was inevitable that she would be given increased responsibilities, and would become the Head of the Lower School when that position was open. In this position her share in the management of the School was an important one, for no complete school can be successful unless the work with the younger pupils is well done. Neither can it be completely successful unless there is cooperation—good team work—between the ones in executive positions, and between them and the other members of the staff. Those who worked with Margaret Coe in later years can tell better than I how thoughtfully cooperative she was in all her relationships; but I can testify from my all too brief conferences with her in recent times, as well as from my visits to The Park School, that she was a person that any school would be fortunate and proud to have as an important member of its staff.

"Whatever Margaret Coe received from The Park School she gave back in full measure in loving, devoted service to the institution, to her colleagues and to the pupils whom she influenced so greatly."—*Eugene R. Smith*

During the school year of 1918-19 the Lower School became a unified department of The Park School with Miss Margaretta R. Voorhees as its head. She was Margaret Coe's supervisor for what Miss Voorhees calls "six short years." Most of her account of the young teacher in those days of beginnings might have been written at almost any stage of Miss Coe's career, clearly showing how consistently from the first the pattern of development unfolded, based on the broad foundation of character.

"Her approach to children, her methods of administration in dealing with children, parents, faculty, and friends, and her broader contributions outside the school must be left to those who were associated with her during the time that we were separated by miles, as well as years. There is something, however, that is peculiarly mine. It is the conviction that Margaret's steady growth in the development of a rich and controlled personality was the foundation stone on which her broad success was built.

"In spite of seeming to be pedantic, I should like you to see through my eyes a quality that was outstanding, but unproved, when we started our work together. I seemed to feel instinctively that here was a person who would never fail to give her best, and that her best would always grow out of a complete dedication to her responsibility as she saw it. Time proved that my first judgment was justified. At that time I could not anticipate, of course, what her best would be, or from what it would stem. The years took care of that . . . her ability to meet all persons in all situations with marked sincerity and no self-consciousness, (was) because of her genuine, outgoing, and exceptionally well balanced personality."—*Margaretta R. Voorhees*

When Miss Voorhees left The Park School, Miss Coe took over the supervision of the Intermediate Department, and Miss Kathrine Masters became similarly responsible for the Primary Department. From Miss Masters we have the impressions of a contemporary in the early days.

"I sat back, closing my eyes, and began mentally to wander through the halls of the old School. Almost immediately I came upon Margaret, with brown hair a bit windblown, having probably just come in the door from the playground, perhaps from a session with her 'Brownies.' She was apparently amused, and began to tell me something that one of the chidren had said or done, giggling a bit as she finished—or perhaps I should say 'chuckling,' although I seem to recall that occasional girlish giggle, when she was in no way obligated to dignity. I was glad to get that note of humor to begin my recollections, for it was an essential facet of her individuality, although perhaps gradually overlaid by her natural dignity. Her appreciation of the humorous angle was usually a part of her discernment of the picture, and must have contributed to broaden, without distorting, her judgments.

"The sparkle in her hazel eyes was warm. In fact, she was far warmer than she at first appeared, for her approach was not that of personality, which many teachers depend upon and exploit. One felt a certain measured quality in her response—warm, sympathetic, yet measured, in terms of integrity and perspective. With all her modesty, I always felt that in wisdom and judgment she was a Solomon. (Providing that Solomon had a sense of humor!)

"Margaret's interest in growing things, plant life as well as children, paralleled my own devotion to gardening. My most vivid recollections of her home life are connected with her affiliation with her father in his interest in his growing things, from his vegetables to his vines and fruit trees, and his roses. While it took additional effort on her part to help and encourage him, it was also a congenial outlet for her. The Park School garden interest, apart from its educational value, was an integral part of the richness of our experience there, and Margaret's joy as well as pride was, I feel, to try to carry on the beauty and continuity of the lovely perennial border which Mr. Smith had gotten so well started. After he had left, there were many times when she and I would wander along its length and discuss the inevitable changes, and 'Mr. Snelling's' interest in the border. I don't know to what extent the children's gardening experiences were carried out in the later years, with all the necessary changes

due to the years, but I know that feature of the environment was a real part of the 'curriculum' to Margaret, as it was to me, and she spared no effort (and it took plenty) to make it function realistically.

"Her earnestness and idealistic convictions helped her to work out of an obvious shyness and excessive modesty, as she had to face an enlarging sphere of influence. Her deep assurance of the educational rightness of her position, together with her obvious love for and interest in children, presented an increasingly disarming vantage point in her contacts with parents, evident even before I left."—*Kathrine W. Masters*

So began the service of a career-educator, who was to become known sometimes—without derogation from the authority or competence of the various headmasters under whom she served—as the "Headmistress" of The Park School.

CHAPTER II

TO THE THRESHOLD

> *"The teacher . . . gives not of his wisdom but rather of his faith and his lovingness. If he is indeed wise, he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind."*[1]
>
> KAHLIL GIBRAN

Margaret Coe expressed this thought many times in varying ways. The expression which follows is taken from a paper she presented some years ago, following and replying to a paper on Education and Psychoanalysis by Dr. Jenny Waelder Hall.

"We need to be as fully aware as possible of what I have referred to as 'the whole child.' We must realize that he brings to school both his ancestors and his aspirations, his emotions as well as his mentality. He brings potential of ability and of interests, some of which may not be readily discernible. To discover it and get it to functioning may call first for an act of faith on the teacher's part, then warmth and skill. Too, it should be said that interests may or may not be ends in themselves; frequently they are means to ends.

"This act of faith on the teacher's part calls for sincere interest, acceptance of the child, and the ability to impart to him the fact that the adult is his friend and guide. In 1912 there was written into the creed of the newer education this statement: 'The teacher is a friend, not a taskmaster.' A seven-year-old entering a school after having had a taskmaster experience in another school, and being confused and troubled by it, said to his mother one day a few weeks later, 'I think Miss So-and-So has a little boy.' 'Oh, do you?' said his mother wisely. 'Yes, and I might be that little boy.' "

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Few of us have known how to "practice what we preach" as did Margaret Coe. This chapter is the substance and the evidence that precept and practice were one.

At the time of Miss Coe's death, several children are reported by their parents to have brought home the unhappy news in practically identical words. "Mommy, they said Miss Coe is dead. She was my very best friend!"

A Trustee of the School, an alumnus and himself a former pupil of Miss Coe, wrote: "When recently one of our children was unable to cope with reading at public school, Miss Coe . . . found time to run down for us several possible tutors; and when ultimately it appeared that our solution lay in transferring the child to Park School, Miss Coe was instrumental in creating such a friendly and understanding atmosphere that the child not only made tremendous immediate strides, but a week after his transfer, when he was enumerating his friends, he listed Miss Coe as 'my best friend.' Both my child and I lost a 'best friend.' "

The lasting impression made by such relationships is evidenced in a few words from a graduate of the School. He recalls: ". . . the love that most of us had for Miss Coe. This love was evident when, on May Days, I was proud because 'my friend, Miss Coe,' was standing up before all those people, and was starting that magic day that came once a year."

Tangible evidence of the children's response came, in the words of a present staff member, in ". . . the look of confidence and trust of each small child who wished her good morning, or brought something he had made to show her; in the innumerable slices of birthday cake that found their way to her desk—all the birthdays celebrated at school were shared with her."

An Upper School teacher's schedule years ago sometimes permitted her to slip over to the sixth grade for its afternoon dismissal. "Miss Coe stood at the front of her classroom receiving each chubby, often grimy, little hand as its owner was ready to depart. This was no regimented, formal line of children, chafing to be gone. Each one was experiencing a personal parting from his teacher, and was sped upon his way wearing a smile of delight at this personalized end to his school day. It was worth going over from the Upper School, and brought warming to an adult heart also."

Dr. Esther Crane, formerly Head of the Goucher College Education Department, explains in part how Miss Coe made friends of her children—something which really devoted teachers have not always been able to accomplish.

She showed "respect for and interest in all of the child's efforts to learn, and quick recognition of and warm praise for his more successful attempts. She was interested in all of a child's learnings, in the simple coördinations he needed to master in order to get himself into his sunsuit; the number combinations; the painting of a simple picture; or the complex technics by which a child must learn when to give another child more than half, and when to stand up for his own rights. *Therefore, every child came to look on Miss Coe as his friend,* wiser than he was, but sharing in his purposes and helping him to realize them when possible. If she forbade him anything, he knew she understood his desires, but saw consequences he didn't see himself. Even children who were too young to understand these things intellectually could feel her compassion and her friendliness."

With that analysis we move into the area of standards, and Dr. Crane's observations are reinforced by those of three present staff members.

"Her standards for the children's behavior were high. There was no false permissiveness, no laissez-faire 'let-them-do-as-they-please' attitude. She was firm in her expectancy of fulfilled potentialities, and firm in providing a framework for permissible behavior. Her calm sureness must have been for the children one of her most comforting and strengthening qualities." "No one could be more adamant in upholding a decision she considered right. No one could more graciously compromise when the situation permitted. I think the children sensed this." "She let the child know she *expected* his best behavior and nothing else would be accepted."

And after testimony as to practice, let Miss Coe herself state precept. These notes seem to be those of a talk to parents after there had been "open house" at The Park School. "Some one wrote me not long ago, after having seen the School a few times, 'I never saw so many happy children.' It thrills us that they are happy, but we are not here with happiness as our goal. We know it will be an end-product if we succeed with some other things."

She went on to emphasize two "other things": that the child must earn and have the respect and consideration of his group; that he must "produce," according to his possession of one talent, or two or ten.

It is evident that she was never in sympathy with the excesses of freedom and irresponsibility permitted children by some believers in modern educational principles. Two little stories will illustrate her varying approach to varying situations.

The first story comes from Miss Eva Palmer, long a beloved and effective member of the Upper School staff. "One day while passing through the hall I met little K., who peeped through his fingers, so ashamed that he had been naughty and sent to Miss Coe. She spoke to him softly, 'I am busy now. So look at those books and toys for awhile.' Later she came to him saying, 'Go back with the other children and play.' No reproof, only gentleness. That little boy, now a famous musician, will not soon forget her tolerant, loving personality."

That story belongs with many others of tenderness and understanding, without retribution. But occasionally the situation called for quite a different approach. Teachers of one period will well remember the adventures of N. N. was a small boy who day after day found the greatest delight in fomenting a juvenile riot among the other children in the homeward bus. When nothing else availed, Miss Coe took measures. She arranged her own schedule so that she could get away, and then she set out with him on foot for his home, about a mile away. At mile's end N. went up his own front steps by crawling, partly from weariness and partly to dramatize his indignation. But thereafter there was peace in the bus. What the child never knew was that by arrangement a school bus had been following the two at a distance, so that if it was too much for the little fellow, rescue would be near. The story ends here, but we can hope that the bus returned Miss Coe to the School.

One of the staff said: "I don't mean to imply that she was never angry. I have seen her flash out, white-hot, at some outrageous child because he needed an instant jolt to stop his error right there. But it was a clean, impersonal anger at the act, not the child—and the child knew it."

She could also use some old-fashioned remedies, if she thought them called for. Mouths that uttered profanities have been taped up; obscenities have brought a washing out with good strong soap—but seldom, it should be added.

Returning to her paper in which she was replying to Dr. Jenny Waelder Hall, we find a spelling-out of what a child must learn to face.

"Reality, to which Dr. Waelder Hall referred, is an inescapable part of life. One psychiatrist has aptly put it that we 'need immunizing doses of reality.' What are some of the constituent factors of this 'reality'?

1. A realization that there is such a thing as authority—in the universe about us, in our requirements for social living, implicit as well as expressed on many sides.
2. The facing of the impacts of living in and with a group . . .
3. The readiness to accept success and failure, and the ability to take care of one's self in either case . . .

"There are several ways of providing the note of reality which seems essential, and which constitutes a part of necessary guidance:

1. At times prohibitions or mandates are necessary. We don't throw stones, or damage property, or hurt people.
2. Understandings can be developed which lead to acceptable practices: We must take turns in talking and listening; we do not walk in front of people; we do not push ahead of those preceding us in line. . . .

"We must believe that a child wants support and guidance, and in order to give it effectually, must cultivate our own understanding of human material. . . ."

It is hard to come to one facet of Miss Coe's approach to children and say of it with finality: this is the very core and heart of her educational method. Yet one idea is expressed over and over in a multitude of ways by almost everyone who speaks or writes of her.

"She often called the children 'little people,' and she gave these 'little people' the respect she felt was due to the dignity of man, whether child or adult."

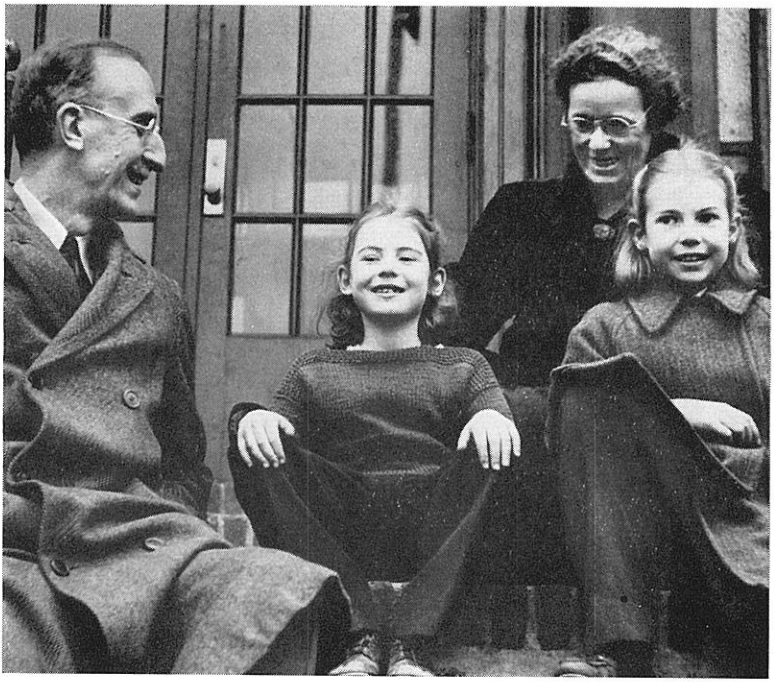

PHOTO BY H. E. TOMPKINS

From a staff member of many years' standing we hear of an approach that never varied or lessened. "She made each child feel that he was some one 'special.' That she was his friend and wanted to help. She respected each child's feelings, never embarrassing him—letting him 'save face.' "

Others comment to the same effect. "Children were never lumped together as a group . . . 'the group' was, on the other hand, that to which an individual was related . . . each child was a person in his own right, with character and personality . . ." "Each child was approached as an individual—and an important individual. Each child was invested with dignity. Each child was liked for himself, so that he might learn to respond with liking." "She could identify herself with children of almost any age, and communicate with them without talking either 'up' or 'down.' "

From Mrs. Stella W. Crigler, long a staff member on whom Miss Coe relied: "She profoundly believed in her work, its dignity, its effectiveness, its inestimable value. She wanted above all to understand the individual child . . . to her this was the basic need. To reach this understanding she had the requisite patience, insight, and sense of justice which endeared her to children and established the camaraderie of close-knit friendship."

One of Miss Coe's former pupils found the understanding she had herself experienced repeated in the handling of her daughter. "When our daughter, D., then about seven years old, was apprehensive in general, and specifically about her ability to go on to the next class, Miss Coe, with her instant understanding and flexibility, sent for D., broke the rule or custom of not revealing test results and sent back to us a more sure, happier, and therefore more capable child."

We have other witnesses to her way with children. "My experience was that even when she had to recognize certain negative qualities in one child or the other, at one time or another, she couldn't bear to express it except in the most general and, if possible, somehow favorable terms. I believe that . . . she was always protecting the child's right to grow his own way."

"When they were having air raid drills, outwardly they did not affect our first-grader, A. But at night he would walk in his sleep, put on his clothes hurriedly, take all the pictures off the walls, and cry that the planes were coming. In talking to A., Miss

Coe found that he worried because he did not know when the drills were going to be. At once she let him decide when the school should have the drills. He would arrive at her door and announce that it was time. Then he and Miss Coe would direct them. At once his night terrors ended. After about three drills one little girl said to A.: 'If we had a real raid, would you still hold Miss Coe's hand?' He looked up to her and said, 'It's all right now, Miss Coe,' and went with the other children."

"A child's bad habits were treated as a hurt finger . . . with sympathy, with understanding of pain involved, whether real or imaginary, and with the sure emphasis that with proper treatment it would heal. It is important, I think that whether talking to a parent or a child, Miss Coe never treated the pupil *as* a problem . . . her approach was always to see the child as *having* a problem. *Here was her secret, I feel . . . never to lose touch with the child's personality,* in her search for the disturbances which might limit his growth . . . always loving the child for what he *was,* for what he had to offer, and on this foundation of his individuality to help him to grow more surely . . . and the measuring rod was never outside, but always inside the child himself."

A graduate of the School writes: "Miss Coe never forgot that children grow up. When she signed my brother's and my 'Brownie' after we had 'graduated' from the Lower School, she started out the message as follows, 'To my two good friends.' When I (a junior by this time) was assisting at a primary recess which Miss Coe was supervising, she treated me completely as a co-worker. She explained in detail the . . . problems. . . ."

Her understanding and sympathy seemed boundless. One teacher cherishes the memory of a brief scene. A very "bad" little boy, who had been making himself thoroughly obnoxious, left Miss Coe's office after a long interview, in which he had not yet visibly melted. Miss Coe's only comment was, "Poor little fellow! He's *so* unhappy."

Others who were sent to her responded more positively. "When my little boy got out of line and had to do his spelling in Miss Coe's office, he would come out cheerful and relieved; chastened considerably, but with the feeling that they were still friends. He needed firm straightening out many times, and because he got it without rancor, he appreciated it."

"In the fourth grade A. came home one night and announced: 'My, they are dumb at Park School! They sent me to Miss Coe's office to punish me. It's a privilege to go to her office.' Also in the fourth grade he told us that he had been accused of letting the air out of the faculty's tires. He hastened to add, 'You don't have anything to worry about. Miss Coe believes in me.' When I asked Miss Coe how she knew that he didn't do it, she said, 'As soon as he walked into the room, before he had said a word, I knew that that child didn't do it!' "

Madame Lash, long-time bulwark of the Upper School, adds this: "As a child expressed it in the 'Lower School Times.' 'when you left her office you felt relieved,' because someone understood and shared. If you had no problem to present to her, you felt her warm personality and the interest she sincerely had in you and yours, and you knew you had a real friend."

From a former pupil: "The most significant memory I have of Miss Coe is of her telling our class, perhaps sixth grade, of a day she spent in the Kindergarten. A child had picked up a piece of clay, and I remember Miss Coe's imitating him with her own hands. She made it clear that he completely expressed his new-found discovery with the one word, 'Squeeze!' . . . This instance, in which Miss Coe displayed a quality of impersonal loving appreciation of children, has been in my mind countless times since, as I have sought that quality in teaching and living."

Let a gentleman for once have the last word. Mr. Hans Froelicher, Jr., Headmaster of The Park School from 1932 to 1956, once summarized much of Miss Coe's way with children.

"MISS COE'S FINAL INSTRUCTIONS!

Now it's o.k. to be gentle,
But *never* sentimental;
Use, if you wish, invective,
Only keep it quite *objective.*
For every little Duffer
Must occasionally suffer
The *sequential* flagellation
Of his sin or perturbation.
With your sense of careful balance,

You'll not forget the other sequence
Of the happy *satisfaction*
That must follow each *good action!*
And as for you, while I'm away,
Keep on *living day by day,*
Keep *whole* each little child
Whether mild, he, or wild;
Let him always *learn by doing*
Even when he's trouble brewing.

I'm leaving you in charge
And that means BY AND LARGE.

H.F." 1935

CHAPTER III

THIRD-NOTE CHILD

Of inspiration Margaret Coe both received and gave. Many things she said attested to the enduring power of what she received as a young teacher under Eugene R. Smith. Filled with joy in teaching and dedication, and sharing these generously with all with whom she worked, she continued throughout her life to find the springs of refreshment for her own need and for the others who were her responsibility.

Qualities of her leadership of her staff can be seen and studied in the written comments which were a part of her administrative work, and in a bit of inspiriation she shared with her teachers several years ago. She wrote:

OUR THIRD-NOTE CHILD

'Once more he stepped into the street

. . . .

And e're he blew three notes

. . . .

Out came the children running:
All the little boys and girls.'

THE PIED PIPER—*Robert Browning*

"The piper knew 'what magic slept in his quiet pipe the while,' and out came all the children running. One or another of his three notes was so compelling to some child or other that not a boy or girl could or did resist the appeal of them. Was not this compelling quality what counted?

"Can we and do we touch the boys and girls in a compelling way? This should not mean that we create anywhere anything of a 'personal obligation' feeling; nor that we make a 'popular appeal'; nor that we mistake the means for the end. It must mean that we are sympathetic enough to be mindful of three types, and versatile enough to touch them all: the steady, balanced, strong child; the interestingly difficult child; the inconspicuous child who is never an agitator or aggressor, who may

drift so quietly that he is out of mind far too easily and too often, and whose commonplace results recede from sight too much of the time. Our tune is played on two notes only!

"This 'third-note child' may not be missed when we do not quite 'have' him; he may let himself be gained without resistance so that we misinterpret the gaining; he may never evidence any very obvious change. Compared to the influencing of a 'problem' child, there is nothing spectacular, nothing of a reclaiming nature, probably nothing even to talk about when this 'usual' child is inspired to better things. He is not unhappy and not maladjusted; he is so entirely 'normal' that a hint of encouragement, a suggestion of a better thought, perhaps a more elaborate way of doing something, a word of appreciation, breaks the monotony of commonplaceness and lifts him a step out of it. Little study or skill is required; results are far out of proportion to the effort involved. Let him not only know intellectually that you are interested in him, but be sure that he feels the warmth of that interest.

"Have we sometimes forgotten him? Shall we not search him out? He is present in every group. Having found him, let us not stand back and wait for what he will give us, but step out to him and recognize something which is of moment to him alone of all the group, perhaps—indeed, better so. Let him know that he counts. Use all 'three notes' until we 'have' all of our children."

She had another way of passing on some of her own inner spark. "The high point in the first day of school was, for me, at the meeting of the Lower School teachers, when Miss Coe gave a pithy little talk on some salient idea, which was always stimulating and inspiring. Drawing on her striking, discriminating vocabulary, adding humor, appreciation of teachers' past efforts, and advice for the coming year, she never failed to impress me. Then we were on our own, and were given pretty free rein in our particular fields. . . . A little note of commendation came from her when she liked something we had done; some tactful suggestion if she disapproved."

Echoes of things explicit and implicit in her "Third-Note Child" of earlier years can be found in tributes written recently by her staff and others.

The former well-loved teacher, Mrs. Stella Crigler, says: "In administering the work of the Lower School, every effort went into making each day well balanced and enriched with its share of work and play. In copies of the daily schedule you will find constructive thinking, careful planning, each thought and plan playing a part in making every child's day worthwhie."

Dr. Esther Crane, formerly of Goucher College, has written: "She always seemed to see the strengths and weaknesses, the ambitions, the desires, and the fears of the teachers and parents almost as clearly as she saw the problems of her pupils; and these insights gave her great compassion, as well as ingenuity in finding solutions which would not frustrate any of the individuals concerned."

Another voice: "She had a great gift for evoking from every member of her staff his very best effort—indeed, his better than best effort. The comments she made in faculty or parents' meetings always made me go away determined to do a better and better and better job. She gave of her support unsparingly, so that those who worked with her felt that they had almost limitless resources to call on."

She did indeed give unstinting support to her staff, new or seasoned. These were the first hours of a new teacher. "How well I remember Miss Coe on my first day at Park School! I had planned to arrive early, and early I was, but not earlier than Miss Coe. She walked leisurely down to my room with me to 'make sure you find things.' She stayed awhile, gave me assurance concerning several matters, and left. Throughout the day she came in and out, always with a reassuring smile. She had given me a list of characteristics concerning each child, so that even on that first day I was aware I was teaching in a school where the administrator felt strongly a knowledge of each child was a paramount consideration. Not only did she know and understand every child in the Lower School, but she did everything humanly possible to help her teachers work with sympathetic feeling for each child entrusted to them."

And these were experiences of Mrs. Clara Smack, a retired pillar of Miss Coe's staff, returning as a substitute. "When I substituted for a sick teacher, she continually boosted me with statements of confidence. I recall the end of one long session when

she took me aside and said, 'I want you to know that I am *completely* satisfied with the progress of these children.' She was most generous with her praise, and had the effect of making one want to merit it."

In 1949 Margaret Coe began the first of several hospital experiences designed to arrest the progress of an arthritic condition. As usual on any absence from school, she took with her a quantity of teachers' reports on children. From Johns Hopkins Hospital she wrote this note to her staff: "Today I finished the good reading the reports make, and as I read I appreciated the clear thinking, the thoughtful appraisal, and the fine quality of unspared effort which not only went into the writing, but has gone into your care of each child these many weeks."

She approved generously, but she knew also how to suggest—never decree—improvements without antagonizing. With pupils, parents, and staff she could "stop a situation cold, if need be, without offending. One person in a million has that gift."

"Her attitude toward children applied equally to her attitude toward her staff and toward parents. Each one was an individual worthy of respect. She gave every one an increased feeling of self-respect and adequacy, but she did not gloss over shortcomings . . . She managed year after year to make a working team out of very diverse faculty members." Surely in this comment we have cause and effect, or at least a large part of "cause." It is by Miss Julia R. Morse, who speaks as an early staff member and long-time friend.

She studied with great care the daily records of each teacher's group work and reports on pupil progress, burning gallons of midnight oil, and devoting much of the school holidays to the task. This was the secret of her amazing grasp of the potentialities and achievement of each pupil, each teacher. Her routine written comments to her staff on their professional success and on pupil progress were anything but perfunctory.

To one young teacher she wrote: "I believe, in spite of their (the children's) ease in becoming disorganized, a smooth-running group would be impressive and compelling to them. With these matters of routine fixed, I believe you will find all of the children more released for conversation, for individual and group thinking,

for imaginative and creative outlets, and for increased stability of effort. You will readily recognize a better focus of effort and ability, and conservation of your and their energy . . . You are putting yourself thoughtfully and sincerely into your responsibility with these children, and I want them to get maximum benefit, and you to derive rich satisfactions. You will find what their real possibilities are when you get these basic procedures established. I am so glad for the kind of touch you have with the individual. I know the group technic will come with clear-cut attack."

Her notes to teachers on individual pupil-progress are fascinating reading to an educator, and might well be collected for use in courses for teachers. There is room here for but a few selected at random.

"T. What a variety of worktime interests! I know part of your enjoyment of T. is due to the fresh, vital, yet balanced meaning which he finds in what there is about him. Just about all that teaching—or life itself—can hold, was in T.'s response the day your smile did the perfect something for him. His funny little refusals are more wishes than determination, I believe; he needs only the satisfaction of wishing, not of carrying them through when properly approached, if I read him aright."

"W. Such a refined rough-neck! W. will make good use of all the challenge his situation holds. Hasn't he a fine balance of qualities?"

"P. So much to learn! But is reaching out in so many directions that he gives us much to go on. The emotional conflict is great and frequent, but I believe he will resolve it. His mother tells me you are reaching him fully and that he is most sensitive to your approach. So, you are happily on the track, and P. is far along compared to a year ago."

"S. I look for new behavior twists, from time to time, with spots where suggestions do not 'take.' She still probably can hardly believe that the school environment is real, in its consistency and rhythm. She probably wants terribly the very things she repudiates. Any personal response will be delayed in showing, I suspect, even though she must be sensing your warmth and understanding."

Margaret Coe was always in close touch with the headmaster of the School on pupil problems. On a professional trip of some

duration, she wrote in a letter to Mr. Froelicher, . . . "a second disturbance with O., or within him, leads me to think we are handling him in the wrong way, or at least not in the best way . . . His inarticulateness makes the thing difficult to get at, just because more is happening inside him than he can formulate. I don't think we have his confidence, and that we must gain first of all, even at the expense of the extent of work done . . . (Miss ——) may have to vary her approach somewhat for awhile, for I believe the wedge lies there—prehaps the block."

Here we note objective analysis of a problem, with only the most indirect, though, on behalf of the pupil, inescapable pointing to need for a change by one of her own teachers.

One phase of Miss Coe's administration was a cause of concern to her staff and other friends. Even after her strength began to wane she continued her custom of taking upon her own shoulders many burdens that could have been allocated to others. In cases of relatively short absences of teachers, even repeated ones, she herself did much of the substituting for the absentee in addition to her own full program, preferring to spare the children the disruption of studying under strangers, and to spare the school additional expense. Also, as was noted by a member of the Board of Trustees and a former pupil, "She tried hard to spare her teachers any extra work outside the classroom and did tremendous amounts of it herself, that in other schools would be done either by the teachers themselves or by an assistant."

Margaret Coe well knew, as did Seneca of old, that "men learn while they teach." She knew it as theory and also as experience. When one teacher, who was coming from the public schools, began her work at The Park School, green as springtime grass about the meaning and processes of what was then called Progressive Education, she asked Miss Coe how to discover in the quickest way what it was all about. Several suggestions were offered, and then Miss Coe said thoughtfully, "I have always found that one learns much from the pupils. I owed a great deal to the tutoring I did with P. when I first came." She never expected the level of full fruition from a beginning teacher, but expected to help her to reach the highest development by providing a teaching situation for her suitable for the teacher's growth together with that of the pupils.

Nevertheless, her standards for the choice of new teachers were high and comprehensive. She was asked to write down a list of criteria for the measuring of desirable qualifications in a candidate or in a successful teacher. Here is the list as she jotted it down.

1. "The need for a teacher who can establish rapport and good relations with children, parents and faculty. Such qualifications as sincerity, ability to face reality, out-goingness, good sportsmanship, resilience, and a sense of humor stack up heavily. Also enters in that implicit but definite feeling which children have of being 'liked.'
2. "The need to accept the working philosophy of the school of which one is a part, believing in it and at the same time actively and constructively contributing to it.
3. "Ability to take a broad view and avoid pettiness and 'tangles' with pupils and staff.
4. "An adequate background of one's own, by which to live and from which to draw for one's teaching. This includes the vision and imagination by which this background is employed.
5. "The desire to grow, and evident effort toward that end.
6. "Careful planning, both in long-range terms and for the details of each day.
7. "Carrying through those plans and appraising outcomes in terms of growing group strength in the children, including efficiency of habits and routines, increasing feeling of responsibility and ability to function concertedly, and the feeling of challenge as related to urge to do and the good feeling of succeeding.
8. "Careful study of individual growth and needs, with constant attention to ways of keeping each individual enthusiastically purposeful, working up to capacity, and looking ahead eagerly.
9. "Keeping abreast of the several organizational demands of a teacher's life: record keeping, report writing, being where needed most by one's children at many times when instruction is not actually in progress. (This may be in transit to bathroom, at recess, etc.)

10. "Having one's room reflect in interesting ways the living and learning which takes place within it."

In rough form and never intended for publication as these jottings are, they reveal her standards, her grasp of the true inwardness of creative teaching, and could, indeed, stand as a portrait of herself in her teaching days.

Chapter IV

WEAVING

We have an invitation here from a present staff member. "Go with me now into a parent conference. After cordial greetings are exchanged and everyone is perfectly relaxed and at ease, a question such as, 'What do you hear at home?' is asked. Parents then begin talking. Questions are interjected. 'What about your evenings together?' 'What are some of your favorite family stories?' Tactfully, a scene is prepared and then the problem is presented. Parents feel their contribution is important, they talk on; words of wisdom come not only from Miss Coe, but from *them* as well."

That old Swiss master in pioneer education, Pestalozzi, had a word for such a scene—among many other words. He said: "If a child is to learn more than his father can teach him, his teacher must fit his supplementary instruction into what the father does at home, much as a weaver works an ornamenal flower into the pattern of his cloth."

There were also personal interviews, uncounted thousands of them, in which the "weaving" went on, obviously or implicitly. Here is one parent's feeling about the interviews she had.

> "I think of all Miss Coe's qualities that which was most unusual and most far-reaching was her patience. Not just patience for a specific moment or in a specific set of circumstances . . . but a forward-looking patience that projected itself not only a few weeks, or even months ahead, but which looked into years ahead and was willing to wait. This patience had a twin sister called faith . . . and with this combination Miss Coe quietly and confidently planned for the future for each child and his separate and different possibilities. Knowing that development has its own pace, and that the pace differs with each child, she was willing to wait . . . to wait while parents and teachers impatiently worried . . . to wait for the passing of time to bring the fulfillment she knew would come, for which only Miss Coe had the insight to 'wait and see.' This was a pet phrase with her—'Let's wait and see' . . . with most of us a phrase of indecision, but with Miss Coe a statement of her confidence in children and in their growth . . . a phrase which guided many parents

through rough moments of doubt and concern . . . because for so many years she *had* waited and *had* seen."

"In meeting parents, Miss Coe always maintained her objectivity and sense of perspective, while at the same time creating an atmosphere of sympathy, understanding, and considered optimism." This comment from a young parent who knew her well bears witness to the consistency with which she continued to avoid a pitfall that snares many a teacher. Mr. Eugene R. Smith said of her that even as a beginner she was "free from sentimentality." And one of her early contemporaries, Miss Katharine Rusk, now Mrs. Malcolm Stanton, herself a great educational force in the young Park School, says, "She was a very warm personality without sentimentality—a soft, loving, steady, vibrant force."

Pertinent to this thought is another comment. "To parents she did not indicate what problems and difficulties she might face. It was only once, when we told her about a mix-up in the delivery at a school in Pittsburgh of two kindergarteners named Susie, that she said what a nightmare that bus-routing was the first few days of every school year."

She met every parent "with a warmth of interest in each child to which his parent immediately responded. Parents must have gained satisfaction from these contacts; certainly they drew unceasingly upon her interest, knowledge, and time."

When analysis of the "whole child's" progress, rather than B's and C's or 78's and 87's, is the system of reports used, it manifestly does not give a fair idea of either the system or the child to pick out for scrutiny only one report of those which a parent receives during the year. One single report neither paints the whole picture nor attempts to. The following reports, selected at random from among hundreds, present neither a complete picture of these children nor any indication of their identity. They are used here to show what Margaret Coe saw in her children; what she hoped for in them; and some of her technic in weaving the strands of school and home.

"(The) comment that while T. is always willing, she is not always resourceful might be something to consider . . . In social studies T. has met requirements; the 'plus' of information and the pursuit of interests that she might encounter have not yet challenged her. While doing this goes beyond what is asked, it

is stimulating and worthwhile for the able children, and another year we think T. should find it for herself, or be led to find it . . . if we succeed with the 'extras' I mentioned, it will give us extra gratification. We do not want to inject strain, nor reduce her satisfactions, but rather to give appropriate challenge to an able little girl."

"O. is doing more about disciplining himself as time goes on; he needs steadying and encouragement, sometimes dissuasion, sometimes a definite setting of limits, sometimes compulsion, but always warmth. His imagination, his humor, his interests, his slant on things, his mixed adequacy and dependence, combine to make a distinctive personality . . . His mind still goes vagabonding. He uses it effectually when and as he will, but the routine things in themselves do not entice him. He will let himself be led into instruction and can be quite responsive, but will not yet do it for himself, and his efficiency varies from day to day. We want to help him learn disciplining here, too. In reading he has made real gains; when actual reading and discussion are going on he is 'on the beam'; when given something to do in his workbook his mind drifts, he does not use his time, and often the assignment has to be finished at recess. . . ."

". . . we are pleased with the growth he has made. As time goes on, he harnesses his initiative and resourcefulness with better judgment. It is judgment and less speed of impulse which he needs, because his energy and his readiness with ideas drive him on—sometimes headlong. Naturally generous in desire and very outgoing with people, he loses sight of their feelings sometimes when 'struck' with something he feels an urge to do; he sounds bossy and talks inconsiderately. Because we feel he has so much within him of value, we want very much to bring about this character development, in order that he live and work up to his best."

"Her energy still needs directing, and her spontaneity needs to be kept from turning to spontaneous combustion. But her combination of sparkle and common sense and warmth and vigor are assets which have become a real force in her group."

"(Miss —) notes times of being without a pencil, of having left a book at home, of being restless and of teasing; but by and large he has been on the track, and pleasantly so. From time

to time he has evidenced the quality which is so much a part of him—intensive pursuit of a purpose until satisfied. It is my observation that growing judgment makes those purposes more worthy. If this continues, and if he regards the feelings of the people with whom he is dealing, this quality will be a real asset. The appearance of his papers has been variable, and some copying has been necessary. Too, there have been times when a real feeling of pride operated. He has an ability for creative writing, and a fine feeling for pattern in verse . . . He reads with exceptional ability, and turns to very worthwhile books. In arithmetic he knows his fundamentals and can reason well enough in problems. He has 'spells' of inaccuracy, and once in awhile a 'blank spot'—but he can perfectly well take care of these. His dramatic sense is fine; exercise of it is usually quite interesting to watch. . . ."

A mimeographed "occasional" for the parents of Park School pupils, designed to keep them in touch with their children's school environment and activities is called "sPARKs." In the December 1952 issue Miss Coe wrote a brief message to parents for its cover on the significance which a fortieth anniversary of a school must have in that year.

We Look Ahead

". . . Dr. Harold Taylor, in his spirited and thoughtful address on Saturday morning, spoke of the solemn certainty of change. He spoke, too, of the equally solemn certainty that today's children will not only face that change, but will have the responsibility of deciding what shape it shall take.

"Skills these children will need: technical skills; skills in doing well the commonplace things of life; the skills of efficient carrying-on and of using their energy well.

"Stature they will need: to rise as far as possible above one's own mediocrities of thinking; to raise the level of one's purpose; to handle one's self with steadfastness; to look ahead with clarity.

"Whence? From example and teaching.

"By whom? By parents and teachers who, themselves looking ahead, lead and lift our children in skill and in spirit toward tomorrow's certain uncertainties."

PHOTO BY PETER RYAN, CLASS OF 1956

Chapter V

ANSWERS

If Miss Coe didn't have the answer . . .

There were several times in the mutually coöperating association of Margaret Coe and the headmasters of The Park School when the latter wished to express in writing their estimates of her value to the School. Typical of such estimates are these, in parts of four letters to her which follow, and were found in the School files.

"I could not express my appreciation of having you connected with The Park School as Head of the Lower School without writing in a way that would seem to be sheer flattery. I shall therefore refrain from any endeavor to tell you what I think you mean to the School. I hope that you will have the same position that you now hold as long as I am connected with the School, and longer, too, if anything should cause my fading out of the picture within the next fifteen or twenty years.—*Emmit M. Sipple, 1929*

This letter takes on poignancy in view of the sudden, unexpected death of Mr. Sipple in 1932.

"May I add to this letter to make it part of the record my appreciation for your continued distinguished service, and for the uncounted ways in which you make me and your colleagues and the children beneficiaries of your learning, and of your way of life."—*Hans Froelicher, Jr., 1935.*

"The School would be a different place if you were not here, so much are you integral with it. We can be 'fluid and flexible' because of certainties in you, and in us because of you. . ."—*Hans Froelicher, Jr., 1941.*

". . . young parents who want and need this school. Literally, they say to themselves that they can bring their children into the world and think with equanimity of their education because Margaret Coe is at the Park School to receive them. To them, as to the children and the parents who have preceded them, you

are a warranty of humaneness in the world."—*Hans Froelicher, Jr., 1954.*

How Miss Coe received them comes to us from a parent and former pupil, and also in her own words in a short paper, unidentified as to time or occasion of presentation.

First the parent. "I recall the fear and trembling which overcame me when I first encountered her as a little lad. And then, some years ago, I delivered my son to her care, and saw her place his small hand in hers. I felt very much like Hannah turning over the consecrated young Samuel to Eli, the High Priest, and I had a similarly deep and trusting faith and confidence."

In her own words:

"It may be the four-year-old finding his way into a Park School group by the sand box some sunshiny morning in mid-September, or it may be the five-year-old already at home in kindergarten because he has attended nursery school. Just as easily, too, it might be a first, or second, or fifth, or ninth-grade child seeking 'learning' and friends among Park School teachers and children. A sparkling eye, an eager mind, and ready hands mean days and years ahead fraught with rare potential.

"Whence the promise of this first day? At some earlier time, parent, child and school have become acquainted, and the beginnings of some bonds have already been formed.

"The parent, believing that the Park School has something of value to offer his boy or girl, has come to the school to go into the matter fully: interpreting his child to someone within the school, and having that person or those persons in turn interpret the school to him. Questions are asked and answered, and an understanding established. If classes are in progress, the parent sees the one or several in which he is intimately interested. Such a visit acquaints him with physical conditions of light, space, seating, playground, and the like, affords some idea of the nature of the group, and their materials of study, and suggests the spirit and the relationships which throb through and about.

"And shortly thereafter must come the child himself. He must see the grounds and 'his' room; if he is small, a walk over the lawn to hunt the baby rabbits or to see the horse or the play-

ground have meaning; if he is older, in addition to a tour of buildings and grounds, a discussion of what he has done, his preferences, his successes, his particular difficulties if there are any, his interests, his acquaintance with books, the arts and sports will help establish an understanding. Further still, it will help him build the school into his thinking and feeling, and help the school in its reaching out to him.

"An occasional test is necessary upon entrance, where there is some question as to the child's rounded development, or where there is doubt as to placement. No test given thus can be final; it does, frequently, however, prove of considerable value in helping to discover specific abilities or giving some index which might otherwise not be promptly obtainable. No preliminary battery of tests has a fixed place in our admission arrangements; no routine procedure has been set up. Information from a school previously attended is, of course, obviously of importance.

"Thus may be recognized our fixed purpose to receive into our school family in a sincere and friendly way those children whose parents believe in the work and the play, the creative opportunities and the relationships which the Park School has to offer, and who themselves seem qualified and eager to enter into our life, to share its responsibilities and privileges, and to give to it while they are thriving upon it."

Miss Coe's way with "disciplinary problems" has already been sketched in these pages. Yet for purposes of comparison, while considering her professional competence, we add a lively account by their teacher of what befell three small boys.

"Four wide-eyed six-year-olds came running in from the playground. Three of them were saying a fourth had broken a window . . . I happened to know the window had been broken by accident the day before. How could I help the three boys who were falsely accusing a peer? I talked with them but . . . still felt they were not sufficiently impressed . . . We arranged a visit with Miss Coe on our way to lunch. Miss Coe invited the boys to sit on the floor; 'so you will be comfortable.' They had their lunch boxes; she . . . placed them where the boys could have the reassurance of seeing them. 'Now, let's talk. Who would like to tell about it first?' Previously, all three had wanted to talk simultaneously; now there was a hushed silence.

" 'We must know what everyone thinks,' said Miss Coe. Gradually the boys started talking; gradually Miss Coe contributed a statement here and there about 'trying not to make a mistake.' 'It is a mistake . . . to say someone did this when you aren't real sure.' . . . The conversation went on . . . three little heads began nodding assent rather than dissent. There had been no accusation, no questions to put the little offenders on the defensive . . . (only affirmative statements) 'You know the right way; you are always helpful.' Gradually three little boys began feeling 'good' instead of 'bad.' Their teacher began to feel the three little rascals who had entered the office had completely disappeared . . . In the teacher's heart, too, was a new insight and a joy . . . Margaret Coe was indeed a wise administrator!"

While she was Acting Head of the Gordon School in Providence, Rhode Island, THE EVENING BULLETIN of that city asked Miss Coe to contribute her views on "Spanking" to a symposium on the topic, which it proposed to incorporate in an article. After reading the story of the three small boys, perhaps one should not be surprised to discover an unwonted dryness of tone in her bit for the symposium.

SPANKING?

"Within the school certain automatic deterrents or deflectors exist which put spanking entirely without the pale of both relevancy and necessity: (1) School is set up around the child's needs and interests; irregularities and confusions have no place. (2) If conditions even approximate what is sound, undue tensions and strains will be lacking. Proper grading, freedom from competition, expectation based on the child's capacities rather than on inflexible standards are a few of the conditions designed to eliminate these tensions and strains. (3) A degree of qualification on the part of the teacher for understanding the behavior of children should insure right teacher-child relationships. This qualification is partly a matter of personality and partly a matter of training.

"Difficulties will occur which will require change—major or minor—within the child, or within the environment. Spanking is scarcely designed to bring about this change constructively. It follows then, why spank? If relationships and general envi-

ronment obtaining in the home are consistent to a reasonable degree, the same question arises; if they are not consistent, then, more emphatically still, why spank?

" 'To relieve my own feelings' or 'because I did not know what else to do' establishes an admission rather than a justification."

"She had a real flair," says Mr. Walter Hollander, long a Board member, "for working harmoniously with others—with every member of the Faculty and of the Board of Directors—which carried her influence and inspiration into every nook and corner of the School's activities." This, in part, is how she did it, according to Katharine Rusk Stanton: "She was an integrated personality, so 'at one' with her work that she never appeared hurried or worried or too weary to face every new task or situation."

Madame Lash remembers the tower of strength that was Margaret Coe after the sudden death of the School's Headmaster. "In 1932, after Mr. Sipple's death, she faced the job of running the entire school. She embraced the problems of the Upper School as she had done with the Lower School, with conscience, integrity, unselfishness, sense of duty cheerfully done." Mr. Froelicher adds that she took over without hesitation, and without question from anyone as to her rightness for the task or her right to take over.

Miss Coe had "a peculiar talent for bringing a child's schemes to fruition. She could smell out the germ of his thought, and skillfully bring out what he might have struggled over in vain. Before he knew it, he was creating something out of his swirling ideas, because Miss Coe thought he could."

And here is this talent at work in groups. "I can remember her conducting meetings of the whole Lower School, drawing out ideas from kindergarteners to sixth-graders for May Day. She never let a child down when he made a suggestion, but tactfully accepted what he had to offer, and guided the thinking until no one was disappointed at the final decision. I can remember this same procedure in the classroom and in her office, when perhaps some one was sent in for discipline."

But it was not always a matter of drawing out. Although Miss Coe's skill in the counseling of parents has been mentioned, these comments on the subject belong here. "All of us consulted her regularly on any problem regarding our children . . . not only in

respect to problems of education, because her wisdom regarding children was all inclusive." "I know that Miss Coe was often consulted by parents of children in other schools, both for individual problems and for group program problems, such as finding the appropriate speaker for a specified topic."

And one more parent may have an analytical last word. "I knew when that interview was over that there was a woman who knew the answers. We all knew that if we had a problem that no one else could solve, we could take it to her and find a solution. The day she died, a Lower School boy said, 'If Miss Coe didn't have the answer, there wasn't any answer.' *This might almost be the summation of her genius."*

CHAPTER VI

PIONEERING

"In this sense, she does not belong to
The Park School alone. . . ."

FROM THE FOREWORD

Margaret Coe came into a school in 1917 which was then among the few schools joyfully and devotedly pioneering in the field of the newer educational ideas. The Park School, in its sixth year of existence, was already a focus of wide interest and attracted many visitors. Miss Coe, teaching herself while she taught others, hesitantly at first, but soon more and more surely and inevitably, began to find herself in a position of leadership in this school and in its work of pioneering.

Such work and such leadership could not go unnoticed, either in her own community or abroad. She was called out of the community in 1935 to be Acting Head of the Gordon School in Providence, Rhode Island. The Board of that school made every possible effort to retain her as its permanent headmistress, but she found that she could not cut the Baltimore ties. In Maryland and Baltimore her influence was strongly felt in five educational groups.

The Baltimore branch of the nationwide Child Study Association claimed her in 1924 for Mrs. Leon Ginsberg's Leadership Group. Working with Mrs. Ginsberg, she was the first in the city to interpret for teachers in the city schools the newer methods of education of young children. She spoke on these methods to many school faculties whose members had not yet felt any interest in the new trends, through lack of understanding or contact with them. It was thus that Miss Coe, with tact and sympathetic approach, was instrumental in helping to bring elementary education in the public schools of Baltimore into line with reasoned and reasonable modern thought and practice, which avoided the excesses of the "lunatic fringe."

After 1929, the nursery school movement mushroomed. There was a great expansion under the WPA, which provided jobs for teachers who needed them during the depression. Many private nursery schools opened up. It became evident that the teachers in this field needed training, or at least more training, and better morale. The Baltimore Pre-School Association of such teachers was started by Mrs. Edwards A. Park and Mrs. Leon Ginsberg. Miss Coe soon joined them as a member of the original Board. The Federal Government later withdrew funds from the wartime day centers for the children of working mothers, which had grown out of the original WPA schools. The answer to this was the formation of a Maryland Committee for Group Day-Care of Children. Miss Coe worked for state support for these groups, and for legislation to assure better education for the children—a goal not yet reached, and a work which still continues.

Margaret Coe became associated in the late nineteen-thirties with the Baltimore branch of the Association for Childhood Education, a large national group of teachers of young children. Over a period of fifteen years she made professional contributions to this group, working with Mrs. Guy Hudson Parr and Miss Martha Buschman, among others. She served as an active member of many committees, as Parliamentarian in 1941, as Corresponding Secretary, as President for two terms from 1944 to 1948. Her professional stature in the city was such as to draw into the Association teachers from both public and private schools, making a somewhat heterogeneous group of great importance to the schools of Baltimore, and yet one calling for skilled handling, in order to assure growth for all. Her leadership stimulated cooperation with other groups interested in the welfare of children and the communities in which they live.

Miss Coe was appointed a member of the National Committee on Equipment and Supplies for the Association for Childhood Education, of which Miss Frances Berry was chairman. The Park School was used as a "test center" for materials and equipment which the Association was evaluating. Miss Coe's understanding of the needs of children and their response to the materials under observation made this phase of the work of the Committee on Equipment and Supplies a valuable contribution to all teachers.

In 1949 and 1950 she extended her influence to students in

McCoy College of The Johns Hopkins University. There she undertook the work in educational theory of Mrs. Leon Ginsberg's course in Curriculum for Early Childhood Education. The students attending this course were teachers of elementary education in both public and private schools.

Dr. Esther Crane has written of Margaret Coe's work in connection with Goucher courses in education, in general from about 1935 to 1955.

"I believe that Miss Coe helped many Goucher students to become better teachers. When I took classes to observe in the Park School, I always explained to her just what they had been studying and what they wanted most to see. She was unbelievably resourceful in finding classes that would illustrate the points that particular class wished to see; and in the few cases where that was impossible she was able to explain to my students the stage of development of the class they were seeing and the purposes of the teacher, so that they gained as much benefit from the class they actually saw as they might have gained from the one they had asked for.

"A number of our students went to Park School for observation and participation, and it seemed to me that Miss Coe always chose for each student the supervising teacher and the class that best suited her needs. She must have been able to size up an undergraduate very swiftly and very accurately, and there is no doubt that she knew incredibly well the strengths and weaknesses and personal characteristics of her teachers.

"Miss Coe employed a few of our graduates as teachers. I fell into the habit of telling her in some detail about each student who applied for a position, telling her of their weaknesses as well as their good points. That was possible because she never sought for perfection in a beginning teacher, and seemed to realize that it was as much her place to seek for this beginner a teaching situation where she would not be frustrated but could develop the best that was in her, as it was to seek good learning situations for her pupils. I watched with great joy the speed with which one of the best graduates we ever had developed easily and happily into an artistic teacher under Miss Coe's gentle guidance; but I watched with equal enthusiasm the under-

standing and wisdom with which she managed the slower development of one of our far less gifted graduates, until she became an above average teacher.

"It would be impossible to measure the influence Miss Coe had on students who are teaching in many different states and are bringing up their own children with greater insight and compassion because of understandings they first glimpsed through her example."

One of her "boys," former pupil and father of sons, makes his summary of her work thus: "Her approach was psychoanalytic when the term was deemed a vague and unorthodox concept of dubious merit. She was in many ways a courageous and iconoclastic pioneer, threading her way through the terra incognita of that segment of humanity she so aptly termed 'little people.' "

Chapter VII

WRITTEN TO AFTER-TIMES

John Milton once hoped that ". . . . I might perhaps leave something so written to after-times, as they should not willingly let it die." As to "after-times," Margaret Coe was deeply engrossed in planning for those of all her boys and girls, and especially in what could be done for them in the here-and-now to assure better after-times for them and for the world. The smallest toddler was always to her inward eye the future citizen of a complex civilization. She could not have been less interested in her own literary immortality. Yet some among her writings should find a place in this memorial in order to round out the general picture and, indeed, just that they may continue to be available for reading.

Her editing of *The Curriculum of the Lower School* has been considered her most important written work. Since it has been widely circulated in schools and libraries, and is moreover too long for our purposes, it is only mentioned here.

The first of the selections to be used in this chapter is not strictly a writing, being a copy of the address Miss Coe gave as Commencement speaker. The address was probably unique in the School's history, since as far as is known, the choice by a senior class of a member of the school staff to be their Commencement speaker was unprecedented.

COMMENCEMENT — JUNE, 1954

I was much touched by being asked to speak to the Class of 1954 this evening, and greatly impressed by both the privilege and the responsibility of so doing.

It was my pleasant privilege to help twelve of you make your way into the Lower School fourteen or thirteen or ten or eight years ago. Mr. Froelicher or some member of the Upper School Faculty gave a welcome to those of you who entered the Upper School. It was mentioned in The Brownie that I met one of your members at the door, bringing her blanket, and that I took her by the hand. Well, we wanted to take you by the hand and by the heart, with interest in each one, and with the hope

that Park School would help you find a school home, — where you would have understanding, support, guidance, direction, yes and correction, opportunities to face reality and to develop character. We have wanted, too, to help you acquire a sound education in the tools of learning, and in those cultural matters which represent the best of human development. We have wanted you to enjoy real scholarship. And finally, we have wanted you to find aspirations at each level, broadening as you grew, carrying you upward and onward. And that brings us to tonight.

Tonight the doors are swinging outward, opening on to the "world." That world I shall not attempt to explain or interpret, nor could I. We want you to meet it with forthrightness, with courage, with your native intelligence combined with the command of certain knowledge, — that knowledge being a resource representing the development up to this point of your native intelligence plus your personality traits and experiences you have had. In your exploring of this world and your further preparing to become participants in it, you will find guides; they will be in the places to which you will go for further learning, and all along the way; seek them out.

But we are here tonight to talk about yourselves; this is your night. The age of which you are a part has been variously decribed as mechanical, technological, scientific, atomic, functional. You have read or heard it said that an ancient Greek coming to Mt. Vernon would not be bewildered. He would be interested in more than a mild way, but would be able to understand the activities, the raw materials, the processes, the equipment which he would find. Crossing the hills to Monticello, this ancient Greek would see gadgets and the employment of mechanical devices beyond anything in use at Mt. Vernon, which would be intriguing but not beyond his understanding.

But Washington or Jefferson suddenly stepping into today would be greatly bewildered at our processes and production and use of power, and because of power, materials. A trip to Europe is a matter now of hours, not weeks or even days; you can talk to a person anywhere in the world; we can wipe out whole areas in a few minutes instead of hammering away with a battering ram

or even a cannon; we can make millions of tons of steel with power generated miles away. Yes, and we can conquer whole areas of disease. This, and much more.

All of this has become possible because science has been proceeding unthinkably fast. First, an idea; then experiments in the laboratory; then a discovery; then the harnessing of that discovery to control and use. This statement was recently made: "The substitution of the combustion engine for the horse marked a very gloomy milestone in the progress of mankind." That was said in Parliament, and was said by Winston Churchill. He added: "Science buries its insulated head in the filth of slaughterous inventions." Now this eminent person might not have spoken his thoughts in just these same words the next day, or he might not have uttered them at all. We may not be in agreement with them. That we shall not labor, but in them there is challenge, and challenge for us.

Without question we have respect for the penetrating intellect, the intensive research, the great patience and precision and persistence which brought these great transformations about. And what are they? The power to send a car faster than society says is good for us, or right; the speed limit is fifty-five; the power limit is what? We can make forecasts of the weather and thereby save crops and animals and human lives. We have atomic storehouses which may be limitless. Penicillin has become precious to human welfare. We can effect rescues of mountain climbers and men stranded in remote places.

Probably the word most commonly applied to all of this today is the word "functional." Let us think briefly about this in relation to ourselves. "Functional" means that something works; a result that is evident is brought about; a relationship exists between things. Now, "functional" may be taken to mean being stripped of all extra parts, and if purely functional, this is true. I saw this meaning illustrated recently by the pictures of two beds. One bed consisted of just enough well-fashioned pieces for use horizontally and as uprights to give one resting upon it support and comfort; it was "functional." The other had an extra bar added across the head, which actually did not contribute to either support or comfort; as a piece of furniture that bed was not strictly functional.

Now, we may go further. Something may be so constructed or made to function for utility that no thought is given to social or esthetic values. Certain fruits need to be sprayed to protect them from insect depredations, but those chemicals may be harmful to human beings. Are we going to stop with the spraying? To do so would be strictly functional. A garage built on a front lawn could be functional if access were easy, but we do not place them there. We do make them an integral part of houses, at the side front. Some day, this idea of "functional" may not be sanctioned; we do not know.

The functional idea has permeated many facets of our lives. You grew up hearing and reading about "Bill the Steamshovel," or the "chug, chug," of the ferry boat, or the dramatic efforts of "The Little Engine that Could," — not so much about Cinderella or "The Princess and the Pea." Why? The emphasis on the "here and now." Into verse has come the same note. We have had an era of "problem" novels, — realism so accented as to labor and exaggerate, even distort, the truth. There is a recent new version of the Bible, done in our modern, everyday speech, without trace of the loftiness and rhythm and beauty of the King James version. This is said by way of characterizing rather than appraising, and because the essential difference is intended and evident. Into both form and content of literature has come this "starkness," if that is the word.

Comparable to the King James version is the Gothic arch of the cathedral and even lesser sanctuaries. Witness the new temples and churches: non-traditional surfaces and lines and materials intended to serve an age-old purpose in what we may call a functional way.

Have you thought about the recent trend in illustration, whether it be of books or mere advertisements? How many times do we see something of this sort which is not caricature or bordering on it? Are we saturating ourselves with this as we did with Kate Greenaway at the turn of the century?

Our pace by the clock and by the mile may create demand for the removal of the trees so there be no impeding of our acceleration. Sometimes the removal itself is so accelerated as to preclude protest; sometimes there has been earnest and convincing protest. We build whole acres of homes, and leave not a tree.

We plant, oh yes, a sapling scarcely more than a switch, where had been an oak, perhaps a half-century, a century old. We pollute our streams with waste, disregarding all but so-called "efficiency" in some industrial or other process. Precious soil — one of our basic life-needs — has been frightfully disregarded and wasted in our mistaken efforts to produce quickly and bountifully.

Must we thus limit efficiency and functionalism? Isn't this spinning a cocoon around both scientific and human potential? What have we as human beings to add at this point in order that the situation be not only a mechanical operation, efficient though that may be? What resources has each of us to apply? Of what are we made in addition to "pure reason," or what higher level of ability do we possess over and above the potential for being "designing"? What have we that will allow or impel us to do more than set up a cause and induce an effect in this functional fashion? And this question is asked without intending to deny or belittle the importance of "making something work." Can we go a step further and warm and enrich "functionalism"? What have we within ourselves?

Recently you had a clue in something which was very much your own. I refer to your very convincing performance of "Dear Brutus." One of you spoke the lines: "The fault lies not within the stars, dear Brutus, but within ourselves, that we are underlings." The human mind and spirit have great capacity. Can't we stretch this capacity? Each one of you has felt these stretches within yourself; you have had your exalted moments.

To create an atomic storehouse is not enough. To organize with efficiency as our sole motive is not enough. To limit ourselves to one type of content or one style of writing in literature is not enough. To build a functional house is not enough; it must have incorporated into it enough of our own spirit of living to become a home. A rose window, a glass wall, a solid unbroken surface, — can we transform it to a level beyond mere use?

Now, this is not to be confused with embellishment or surface decoration. Where is there an example of such utter simplicity as the Gettysburg Address? But, depth and overtones are there, and classic proportions.

small totaling a hundred or more. They stream into the building, bringing bookbags, lunchboxes, dolls, extra clothing, special books, maps, half-finished models, and even a pet gadget or two.

"Wagons, sandbox, sliding board, and swings are soon put busily to use by the younger children. The playground is filled with life and color. The five-year-olds feed Molly Rabbit, and then engage themselves with blocks, paints, housekeeping equipment, tools or clay.

"The three R's claim the early part of the morning for the older children. It may be with three or four other children, or it may be with the entire class, but for each on his own level is the chance to learn, and to practice what he learns.

"The world is full of many things to be investigated or experienced. Ideas, people, and past and present events are challenging. How did the long-ago people tell time? What kind of animal is the camel? How about the Panama Canal? What of Baltimore's past and present? By what means can peas and potatoes become muscle and blood and energy? What makes a city? From medieval guilds, whither?

"The Three Pigs and Siegfried have lent themselves equally well to dramatization, the only question being one of age-level. Dramatization, dancing, and music have been inseparable; the three combined to bring alive The Knee-High Man, Davy Crockett, The Swordfish, Ichabod Paddock and the Whale, Philetus Bumpus on the Canal Boat, and Old Dan Tucker, as presented at Thanksgiving time.

"Paint brushes have been busily wielded. Color work has shown polar bears on chunks of ice, primitive man protected by his fires, a picture map of Baltimore, illuminated letters, and much else. Really lovely blockprint cards were turned out at Christmas. Clay has been persuaded to take on various interesting and pleasing forms. Shopwork and sewing and cooking periods have been productive, not only of good tangible results, but of knowledge and skills.

"Boys and girls have planned and participated in a number of assemblies dealing with art, the story of Maryland, maps and map-making, and the seasons. For other assemblies there have been slides, piano numbers played by music pupils, poetry, an

informal talk by Technical Corporal Edward Sipple on his experiences in the Pacific, and a talk by Mrs. Gardiner, the school librarian.

"Of the remaining months of the school year 1943-44 we can only say that we know they will be busy and interesting. Children and teachers together look forward to them happily and confidently."

The year 1952 brought the fortieth anniversary of the founding of The Park School, and it was fitting and fortunate that Miss Coe chose to write for the BROWNIE of that year, as only she could have done, a thumbnail history of life in the School's first forty years, an account spiced with her own humor and with one bit of teasing mystery. Perhaps the Class of 1952 could explain that.

"Why, those bug-like small creatures with only head and feet protruding are children! What are they wearing? Oh, those were the special P.S. sweaters, almost ankle-length, made to keep the wearers snugly warm in the cool rooms of the early days of the school. Thirty, forty years have passed, and with them the enveloping gray sweaters. You see, the sweater generation, now grown, sends its small children today in corduroy over-alls.

"And those adults in white shirt waists (not blouses) and skirts, and white hose and white shoes? Oh, they were the well-dressed Kindergarten teachers up to and after 1920. Behold the 1952 staff, in smocks, loafers, and stadium boots.

"The P.S. at its founding was radical enough to take in five-year-olds freely, and by 1920 or thereabouts accepted a few four-year-olds. In those earliest years, all younger children stayed for a half-day only. One small, primitive, faithful brown bus carried back and forth those children who did not walk to school, or use trolley or private cars. Now, forty years later, one hundred or more children depend upon bus transportation, necessitating thirteen trips daily, and involving four different vehicles.

"Until 1917 there was Druid Hill Park for recreation, for dramatics, and often for class work. Following the move to Liberty Heights Avenue in 1917 came acres of mud, gradually replaced by welcome grass and a roadway. Mud was thickly stone-

studded; the removal of those stones provided therapy related to disciplinary needs. Participants survive to this day who can testify as to the adventures and benefits of this stone-picking program.

"Then, a lovely school garden was created, the chief glory of which was the collection of beautiful irises. Mr. Smith, the Headmaster, worked long and lovingly in this flower-border. By the time the building of 1949 came into being, most of the garden had had to give way to other necessities. Beyond these irises and peonies lay the Lower School gardens, where unnumbered traditional radishes and bunches of lettuce and scant marigolds and blooming alyssum hopefully appeared by early June. The saga of these radishes involved ethics not to be revealed here.

"Much use was made of the woods for classes, for assemblies, for dramatics, and for May Day. For a number of years, May Day was participated in by the entire student body; in the 20's it became a Lower School festival.

"NOW? Well, in our Lower School we have children of forty-two of our graduates and thirteen other parents who once were pupils at the school. Many of the things that were believed by The Park School to be good for children in 1912 and 1922 and 1932 are still considered sound. Few schools knew about them. in those early years; today, schools in general practice them. But, because the world of which we are a part is changing, we are changing with it, and some new practices are being introduced all the while. There are new topics for discussion, new interests and new stories, broadened fields in science, and fresh areas of discovery — all to be incorporated into our daily living.

"Our Lower School library is efficiently set up. Class mothers are actively interested and lend a ready hand at every turn. Upper School boys and girls are helping to make possible a better recreation program than we have had before.

"This, our fortieth year, seems a rich one when we look back over decades of beginnings, promise, effort, and realization. But we look ahead, too, knowing that 'our motto still is *strive on* as we're marching on to victory 'neath the brown and white.' "

CHAPTER VIII

TO WHOM THE WORLD TURNS

"She is one of the rare human beings
to whom the world turns in trust."

HANS FROELICHER, JR., *in a personal letter.*

This is a chapter for Margaret. Let us have done for a time with the formal "Miss Coe." More than most others, Miss Coe was the educator, the dedicated professional woman. Yet there was also Margaret, who merits her own chapter.

The incident which follows was in the line of professional duty, but it was very much Margaret, as well.

"While the present lunch room was being built, it was necessary for the classes to eat in shifts. The sixth grade ate last of all, and they were hungry long before their turn in the dining room. So it came about that they sent a delegation to her to see if something couldn't be done. They sent four of the most voluble, most imaginative, and most robust girls in the class on this mission to seek mercy. They surrounded her in the front hall and she listened to their story of deprivation and misery with a sad, understanding expression. She commiserated them on the gnawing pangs of hunger and, expressing her hope that their health hadn't truly been seriously injured, she let her glance run slowly up and down each delegate. Their eyes followed hers. Though classes were in session nearby, their burst of laughter was not reproved."

Few speak of her without mentioning her humor, and the twinkle in her eye. Margaret was, they say, "good company." And come anxiety, pain and all else, she retained her sense of humor, to lighten the days of others, if not of herself.

Margaret was humble — amazingly so. She could give of her own time and strength unceasingly and beyond measure, yet apologize for asking five minutes of someone else's time. "She knew so much, she *was* so much, yet was so unassuming about

herself and so considerate of others." She never really wanted to *accept*—anything; she wanted to *give.*

When she was coming out of the anesthetic after a tonsillectomy, before she was really conscious, she kept saying over and over, "I don't want to be so much trouble to you," and asking repeatedly, "What time is it?"

The question was also revealing. The passing of time was important to her. So much to be done; so much that she longed to do, and so little time for it all. She kept among her papers the familiar little verse:

"I have only just a minute,
. . . . . .
Didn't seek it, didn't choose it,
But it's up to me to use it.
I must. . . . . .
Give account if I abuse it. . . . . ."

On the occasions when she wrote to accept reappointment to the position then held in the School, she always expressed appreciation of the privilege she felt in serving the School in that capacity, and pledged again her best efforts for the future. At times she further expressed her devotion by returning to the School as a gift some part of her never abundant salary.

Says one of the library staff: "I do want to comment on her true humility. Last year the faculty and student body received instructions to park off the campus on Book Day, in order to allow parking space for guests. As I parked my car a couple of blocks away from the School, who but Miss Coe was walking, painfully but steadily, from where she had just parked her own car. She would not hear of my taking her on in to school — 'I know how much you have to do!' Fortunately, the shuttle which had been provided picked her up almost immediately, but her intention was clear — she would never presume on either her rank or her illness."

Something she would do, despite all remonstrances of her staff, was to stand with her tray in the long cafeteria line, waiting her turn among the hungry pupils.

Spartan as she herself was, although deeply understanding of all need and weakness and sympathetic with them, it was the spartan in others that called clearly to her own spirit. Her praise was instant and hearty for all who bear the burden of the day uncomplainingly. She loved to discover courage in others and hold it up for appreciation. She loved, for example, the story of the old gentleman for whom an ambulance had been ordered. Although in his terminal illness, he showed his scorn of the ambulance by walking down stairs and riding to the hospital on the front seat by the driver. Such stories brought a glow to her eyes.

Nevertheless, Margaret's sympathy and understanding were what others felt most, and by no means were these reserved for children only.

"To me, her outstanding quality consisted of her great sympathy, which gave her relationship to each individual a special meaning. How many drew on her sympathy and received understanding consideration will never be reckoned; but each person who knew her, for a long or short time, felt it." Mrs. Charles Austrian, who knew her as a parent and long-time friend, pays this tribute: "She was one of the most sensitive, understanding people that I have ever known, sympathetic and receptive. She was able to project herself into the other person's problem, and it was always easy to go to her for advice."

There was a characteristic phrase which many will recognize. Few have talked over any matter of importance with her without hearing, "I know what you mean." And she did.

One of her staff says: "It was all the little things that made her the person she was. And there were so many little things!" Here was one of these. A retired teacher not of her department found that Margaret made a point of welcoming her back personally, whenever she visited the School. There was always time for that, whatever else might be on hand, if it were only a smile and, "We're glad to see you." When the same person once brought a friend to look over her former environment, Margaret made it convenient to take the long walk from the kindergarten to the cafeteria and to invite them both to lunch with her. She said in an aside, "Always bring your friends to see us."

From whence she summoned the strength, as well as the will,

to be so much to so many was an ever recurring marvel to her associates and other friends.

"This constant, tireless giving of herself to each one who met her was *her unique contribution to her world.*" "She was a charming, interesting, stimulating companion, whose only fault, as far as I could see, was that she worked herself too hard. She was so eager to spare others that she never spared herself." Mrs. Edwards A. Park says: "I saw her as dedicated to The Park School. (Sometimes I felt too much so for her own good.) She was a selfless person. I doubt if she ever thought of herself."

"Just before Christmas something went wrong with the school heating system, and the children were told that the Christmas vacation would begin early. She overheard A. say, 'That puts me in a fix. My mother works.' By the time I got to school, all plans were made for A. to go home with her. Such a happy week getting ready for Christmas! He came home with cookies he had helped to make, as well as Christmas tree decorations and home-made gifts for us and his friends. He had gone everywhere with her, grocery shopping, banking, gift buying. Her father was living then and A. loved him."

Margaret's devoted care of both her parents in their last years was a joy to her. Yet when combined with all else that she did, it exacted its undeniable toll from a strong constitution.

The father of one of her friends in his declining years lived alone in his house in a distant state. Margaret, on a trip for the School which carried her near him, made a special detour to pay him a visit and to give him cheering news of his daughter. He must have voiced some apprehension about sometime leaving his daughter alone in the world. After his death a letter was found, sent in his last illness, in which she promised that she would always stand by his daughter in the years to come.

A member of her staff whose home was in the midwest was to be married in Baltimore. Her invalid mother could not come east for the ceremony, and Margaret was asked to play her role in it. The following day the mother received a long letter from her describing the occasion in every detail: clothing, people's expressions, the happiness radiated by the bride and groom and the latter's small son.

"Her kindly personal acts, helping Mrs. — with her marketing, visiting the sick and being concerned about their expenses, rejoicing with the fortunate and mourning with the afflicted — all will be tenderly and individually remembered."

"When my father died and I was with Mother at her home, a small charming flower arrangement came to her. Later that evening when I got home there was a duplicate vase for me. This was about twenty years after I graduated from the Park School."

"She was a great Christian, a rare channel for God's love." Margaret never talked religion, in relation to any given matter, nor used the vocabulary of a religionist, any more than she used educational clichés. Yet, "She lived the Sermon on the Mount more fully than I have ever known it done by any one else." And at this point belongs, if you will, this comment: "She never seemed troubled by all of the petty things that so enervate most of us." In her earlier years she gave valued service to the Sunday School of her church.

Two graduates of the School who were never in her department bear their witness.

"No one else whom I have known so casually has made so deep an impression . . . . she made me, as she made everyone else, feel important to her and, by extension, if to her then to the others with whom my contact was just as slight." "I had almost no direct relationship with her. Rather, I was aware of her presence and her influence at second-hand, as revealed in the pervasive spirit which she cast upon those who were around her. I knew she was a rare person because so many felt her presence so keenly, as they will now feel her absence."

Mrs. Sidney Hollander knew her for many years and remembers: "I think of her serenity that was never merely placid; of her unfailing response to all demands . . . . Most of all we were impressed by the vitality and the renewed freshness of her approach to each individual."

Mrs. Kenneth Blanchard, formerly a most effective Upper School teacher, tells of arriving one day at the School in a taxi. The driver said, "Say, is Miss Coe still at this school? I used to work here and I never forgot her." Such testimony from out of the community could be often duplicated.

For lack of space, not of supply, the many tributes to Margaret, the person, draw to a close in this, her chapter. Three short ones clamor for inclusion. "I *felt* her, rather than thought about her." "I loved her. Whenever I do anything with a child, I will feel her supporting and sustaining me." "She had exquisite taste in discerning the values in life and people."

Her friend and former colleague, Julia Morse, together with a parent who brought her children to Margaret, must say concluding words.

"She was truly good. She attained a perfection in all types of relationships which I never saw equalled. As a member of a family, a community, and a profession, she thought of herself less than any one I have known."

"I could talk to her as if I had known her all my life; she reached out and took us in. It isn't often that you meet a person in whom you immediately feel complete and utter confidence. I have never known any other person who roused that feeling in me."

Chapter IX

HER SPIRIT

Our Friend Miss Coe

"Miss Coe was very nice to us.
She came to visit us often.
We loved Miss Coe.
We all miss her very much.
We are very sorry she is not here any more.
We are glad her spirit is here.
We are glad we knew her."

THE LOWER SCHOOL TIMES

Because Margaret Coe herself daily put aside her illness, refusing to yield to its crippling effects or to any inroads upon her strength to continue the work that was her life, we shall here pay her the tribute she would have asked. These words about illness and death shall be few, though some there must be.

In the late nineteen-forties an arthritic condition developed in one wrist after an injury in closing a garage door. This condition progressed inexorably to other joints. One concession only she made to the existence of physical ills. She sought every opportunity for diagnosis and treatment of which she knew or could learn, and was hospitalized four times, as well as undergoing continuous treatment when not in hospital. She must conquer the thing, so as to have back the strength with which she had always carried on.

In November of 1956 she entered George Washington University Hospital in Washington for a second round of checking up and treatment there. The day was Sunday; and that morning, when fathers would be free, the annual Father's Day in the kindergarten had proceeded as usual with gaiety and merriment, as fathers and offspring played together at the same "tasks," and Miss Coe as hostess gave no sign of distress.

On the way to the hospital in the afternoon she was very tired,

and spoke to her sister of chest pains. Her heart was repeatedly examined in the following days, with no diagnosis at first of heart disease. Finally, it was recognized. On the morning of November twentieth, as a doctor was attending her, she quietly went away. . . .

POSTCRIPT

The following quotation is one that Miss Coe had at some time copied, and kept.

"He loved truth and honor and fairness; but mostly he loved friendship and little children. He cared nothing for riches, and only a little for fame. Some measure of the last he gained, and he knew what to do with it. He forgot it. If we hold with Bronson Alcott that Heaven is a place in which we shall be able to get a little conversation, it is certain where we shall find my father. You will find him, directly he has gotten the 'lay of the land,' where the wit is the keenest, the humor most humane, the laughter the heartiest, and the hope for mankind the most sure."

A PROFESSOR OF LIFE: *Carroll Perry*

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