

In Memoriam

ANNE BARBARA PAGE.

It is just a month since Anne Barbara Page, an old student and graduate of the School, died at Geneva. She was known to but few of present-day students, but to those of her own time and to her other friends the tragedy of her early death raises the everlasting question why so often those should be taken first who by reason of their gifts of mind and character can most ill be spared.

Anne Page was born on 15th April, 1889, and was the youngest but one of seven children. Her mother died when she was two years old, and at the age of six her father took her, with his other two youngest children, to live first at Cockermouth, and then, a few years later, at Whitehaven. At Whitehaven she had the good fortune to come under the teaching of Miss Blackmore. To her teacher's keen literary tastes and strength of character she owed much. But she also gained a friend whose affection lasted till the end, and with whom she stayed for her last Christmas-tide, and up to the day she started for Geneva.

In 1907 Anne Page became a student at the School. Those who then knew her will well remember her appearance—not tall, but so beautifully built that one artist was heard to exclaim how he wished he could have her for a model: with steady brown eyes in a round young face, naturally rather grave, and yet always ready to light up at any touch of humour. She entered for the usual B.Sc. course in Economics, her subjects in the Final being Economics, History and Public Administration. It was not long before her talents were recognised, and she was regarded as the "show" student, with a great future in front of her. But, like many others, before and after, the burden of work fell the heavier as she had at the same time to get employment to earn a livelihood. To begin with, she acted as assistant in the Library under Mr. McKillop. A little later, in 1910, she started work with the writer as private secretary, work that continued till her illness nearly eight years later.

It was under such conditions that she took her Final in 1912, and, as was inevitable, gained first-class Honours. Even so, it is doubtful if many at that time realised the full extent of her gifts. Indeed, they appeared to grow and expand for some years afterwards, and it was only during the war—not much before her last long illness—that they reached their full development. She was without question the ablest woman the writer has ever known, and many of her other friends shared the same opinion. She was an omnivorous reader of history, of philosophy and also of other subjects.

But she possessed in addition the rare combination of an administrative capacity as great as her academic gifts. So much will be admitted by all who knew her work in Birmingham during the war. On the artistic side she was critical rather than creative, but her taste was as fine as her appreciation was keen. It was indeed delightful to see the smile—weaving all her face into wrinkles—that greeted a sudden proposal to end a long day's tiring work by going off to hear the "Meister-singer."

Of all her gifts, however, the most striking was her character. She was so tenacious of her opinions that one of her friends said she was "as stubborn as a little mule." It was quite true. You might coax her, but it was very hard to pull her where she did not wish to go. The tenacity, however, was only one facet of a character of which others were a straightforwardness that could not tolerate crookedness or concealment, and a great loveableness. To say more—or even so much—may perhaps sound like some overdone panegyric. But in truth the same qualities arrested the notice of most varied observers—her fellow-students, a *Regius* professor, a hospital nurse, a distinguished civil servant. One of the most striking instances occurred after a conversation at which she was present, which the writer had during the war with so acute an observer of human nature as Sir Basil Zaharoff. In walking with him from the room the writer remarked, "I believe that young person is the ablest woman you have ever met." To which came the answer, with a shake of the finger, "Yes, but the *character*, the *character*!"

The different phases of Anne Page's working life after leaving the School may be briefly told. For the first year or two it largely consisted in delving with the writer into certain social problems. The work and scope of Trade Boards—then a new institution—was one of these. Another was an investigation into systems of wage-fixing, Australian and other, with a view to ascertaining what methods might best combine the maximum efficiency of production with the best results to the workmen engaged.

With the outbreak of war her field of activity was changed and enlarged. Birmingham was a city on which the difficulties and distresses of the sudden outbreak bore with peculiar severity. Its industries were peculiarly liable to dislocation. Its population contained a disproportionately large number of reservists for whose wives and children sudden provision was necessary. As part author and honorary secretary of the organisation extemporised to deal with this situation, a large measure of responsibility fell on her shoulders. To organise, correlate and guide six central and forty district com-

mittees was no easy task. But her Birmingham acquaintances will testify that while she found many devoted friends and admirers of all shades of opinion, there was no one who would impugn or could disparage her work. Sympathy and reason were both applied to the task. Like the great twin horses of Zeus in the Phaedras of Plato, heart and head were yoked together to draw the chariot.

In 1915 she returned to London and became an official private secretary, first at the Colonial Office and, at the end of 1916, at the newly formed Department of Overseas Trade. She was as efficient in a Government Department as elsewhere. Captain Killby will witness the zeal with which she absorbed "potted" lectures in chemistry in order to deal with a current problem. Nothing came amiss, whether detailed questions about oils and fats (a small but crucial item among war supplies), or larger questions of finance and trade. It was only as the spring of 1917 wore on to summer that she began to show noticeable signs of tiredness at the end of a long day's work. For a while she refused to be thoroughly examined. At last she was persuaded to consent, and she was found to be suffering from tuberculosis.

From that day till the end for nearly seven long years, she fought a losing fight with quite undaunted courage, first at Banchory, then at Okehampton with Miss Blackmore, at Teneriffe, and, for the last years, at St. Leonards. If a criticism could be made, it is that she could not believe that she should take unremitting care against an enemy so insidious and so deadly. Her whole nature was active and enterprising, and carefulness and inactivity were therefore doubly difficult. At the same time, but for her serene courage the fight would not have lasted nearly so long. It is some consolation, perhaps, to her friends that she had the best advice the country possessed. It is a greater consolation that her very illness gave proof of what such a nature was capable, and thus itself afforded some answer to the question why she could be allowed to die so young. It would be hard to express the truth better than in a letter written by an intimate friend a fortnight ago: "What is coming out clear to me now, as it never did, is what a tremendous help she has been to her friends all these eight years. For myself, I know I received far more than I gave her. Her very reticence about the fight for life gave most of us very little chance of helping her, and she never ceased interest in all our doings or lost her wide serene outlook. In fact, what can one say more than that she has not lived the invalid's life, mentally or spiritually, at all: and she has been doing good service all the last eight

years, as much as the very healthiest woman could. Of course, that is why the blank comes so hard. . . ."

Careful contact was kept with the various new curative treatments for tuberculosis, such as that of Mr. Spahlinger, in the hope that some one might be sufficiently established for her to try it. But last autumn she began to fail and by winter the failure became rapid. With some difficulty she got to Hythe to stay with Miss Blackmore for Christmas. Efforts were made, as she became worse, to get some serum from Mr. Spahlinger for application in England, and when this proved impossible it was decided to try and get to Geneva, where Mr. Spahlinger, with great kindness, promised to take her under treatment and do his best to help. No one knew better than Anne Page herself that it was a forlorn hope, and she spent her last day at Hythe writing farewell letters to her friends. The journey she faced, weak as she was, with characteristic courage. Friday, January 2nd, was the day for starting, and the great gale nearly prevented the channel boats from crossing, and half the passengers remained behind. But Anne Page was ready and anxious to venture it, and was only persuaded by the writer to wait a day. On Saturday she crossed. Her sister, Mrs. Jackson, and a nurse went with her, and she bore the long journey to Geneva well. The Spahlinger treatment was applied, and for a few days it looked as if there yet might be a chance. But the strain was too great, and after two most trying days of constant nursing by her sister—night and day—she died towards midnight on 13th January, brave to the end and almost with a smile on her lips.

Years before, on the fly-leaf of a copy of Meredith's poems (one of her favourite books), which she gave to a friend, she wrote the lines:—

"Death is the word of a bovine day,

Know you the breast of the springing To-be."

Who shall say that these lines are not her best epitaph?

13th February, 1925.

A. S.-M.

The Folk Schools of Denmark

I VISITED two Folk Schools in Denmark, and heard much about the remaining fifty-eight. The one I like best to remember is a beautiful mansion of red brick, surrounded by wide spreading flower gardens and lawns and orchards which slope gently down to the sea-shore.

Money was subscribed privately to build this School, and after it had been running successfully for two years it received an annual grant from the State. The first