IN MEMORIAM: RUTH W. FURNESS PORTER, 1896

SHE was seven, and I, about nine years old, when I first knew her—a slender little girl very fair, with a creamy colouring, and gray-blue eyes lighted by that serene, direct look which remained the same throughout her life. As a child Ruth had a bang, and her fine, light hair was turned over and curled on her shoulders. She used to say "I was very proud of my curls." These were made every night by her older sister Grace; and Ruth said that when she was away from Grace they were never so well done.

I remember the first words she said to me. We were in an American History class. Our teacher was telling us about the Indians; and Ruth whispered to me, "I have a pair of Indian moccasins for my doll." From that first moment I felt in her something fascinating and different from anyone else. She was unlike anyone else in the world; and what is said here can only be dim and inadequate in the thought of her presence.

We read Shakespeare together in Miss Rice's School. Ruth's father took us to see Booth in *Macbeth* when we were eight and ten; and it was in studying Shakespeare's sense of the infinite variety and possibilities of human faculty that I came to know her characteristic, vivid liking for many kinds of persons. She had imaginative sympathy. In *Cross Creek* one of the neighbours complains "You treated me as if I were nobody." No one born on earth was "nobody" to Ruth.

She had a genius of character and communication in human relations. This interest was expressed in her later life in her work for education, and for stimulus, breadth and forward-looking thought in education—the work she carried on in the Winnetka public schools, and for Bryn Mawr. In the last years she was greatly concerned too with forward-looking causes. She was a member of the Illinois Consumers' League Board rather before this time—a devoted member afterwards of the Board of the Civil Liberties Union of Chicago, and of the Juvenile Protective Association.

I think I never saw Ruth without hearing her express some human appreciation and affection. She would say with a little breath of satisfaction—"You know what Ab is like!" Only the other day in talking to me about her sister she said, "Margaret makes a beautiful thing of her life." Ruth's varied force of human appreciation included the power of *saeva indignatio*. Nothing roused this in her more deeply than meanness and cruelty in race discriminations in both large and little ways. Soon after her graduation from Bryn Mawr she was active in a public protest against a failure of the Women's Federated Clubs to receive an accredited delegate from a club of coloured women. For many years she contributed generously to work for needy coloured children in Chicago. No one was more eloquent or outraged than she was on the subject of the recent insanities of race persecution in Europe.

She read widely. To know her was a liberal education in radical letters. I have mentioned her interest in Shakespeare. She was especially delighted with Dover Wilson's recent, remarkable interpretation; and we saw Maurice Evans' evocation of this in *Macbeth* a few weeks ago—as we had seen all the *Macbeth* who came to Chicago, from the time of Booth in our childhood.

Ruth had, too, throughout her life the love of classic letters. She and our old

friend Florence Butler and I read Xenophon and Homer in Miss Rice's School in an intimate and endeared class. We read Plato at Bryn Mawr in a large class, led by the famous Dr. Hopkins, whose immense learning was not, however, sufficient to protect him from an overwhelming terror, shyness, and access of blushing before the combined ignorances of his scholars! I remember an occasion when we read the "Crito" dialogue aloud, not as an examination but as a species of review. We all—Dr. Hopkins, too—went in evening dress to Taylor Hall and sat about a table. Ruth wore a narrow silver fillet and a white dress of flowered challis with some green about it. She looked especially fresh and lovely; and there was always something classic in the entire line of her nature and personality. Everyone was so stirred by the clear beauty of the dialogue that even Dr. Hopkins forgot all embarrassment. It was an evening of true revelation. Ruth had a peculiar pleasure in the expression of Greek thought. Only a year or two ago she studied Homer again at Northwestern University where her translations were highly praised.

She herself had the beautiful Greek fearlessness. She never anticipated pain beforehand; and she used to say that after it was over she could not remember it. All her anxieties were for other people. Her sympathy in trouble, disappointment, and in those deep gulfs of loss and sorrow that time opens inevitably before all of us, was unfailing—and the dearer that she never sought to minimize their reality. After her husband's death life was never the same for her.

She came to see my sister Faith and me on Wednesday, two evenings before the day when she was to have the serious, major operation of which she herself had known only for three days. She told us all about it. She said she did not wish to live, disabled; and she talked through the evening just as she always had. She faced all the possibilities as she always did; and she laughed and talked about the people we knew as she always did. All her concern was for other people.

You remember that in speaking of Socrates, Phaedo says, "His mien and his speech were so noble in the hour of death that he appeared to me blessed." So Ruth appeared to us to have such beauty and greatness of character in those moments that nothing else mattered.

She was happy in seeing her daughter, Nancy, and being with her on the next day. Twice afterwards on that Thursday afternoon, she referred to "the cup of hemlock" in conversation with an old friend; and we believed when we learned this, that she had thought of the *Phaedo*. She had the comfort of knowing that her son Eliot—who is a doctor—went into the operating room with her on Friday morning. Except for a moment after that she seemed not to recover consciousness before she died early on Sunday morning.

Nothing can express the peculiar strength and beauty of her nature and her life. I have mentioned her knowledge of many things. But she had a knowledge more significant than any of these, the most important knowledge of all—she knew how to love.

Now we can feel only our sorrow. In time we shall be better able to comfort ourselves with our pride that we knew her, and that she was our friend.

EDITH F. WYATT, 1896.