

(Belfast Royal Academy 1943-1976)

When Miss Savage joined the staff of the Academy in 1943 at the age of 32 she had already enjoyed success in copious measure: she had been Head Girl of the Methodist College; the top student in Northern Ireland on the Maths-Science side in the Senior Certificate examinations, with first place in the Province in six subjects, Chemistry, Physics, Elementary Mathematics, Applied Mathematics, Calculus and Trigonometry, and second place in Algebra and Geometry; the Sir Hercules Pakenham Entrance Scholar at Queen's University; an honours B.Sc. graduate; and a highly effective teacher, first at Victoria College and then at the Rainey Endowed School, Magherafelt. Within two years she was appointed our Senior Mistress (at first jointly with Miss Elliot, whose principal sphere was the preparatory school) and so she embarked on the role which she was to fill for 31 years as the leading woman on the Academy staff, a major influence in the modern development of the School, and one of the most important educationalists in Ulster.

A very able mathematician with a rare gift for keeping abreast of her subject, she was for long regarded as our best Mathematics teacher, whether of clever pupils to Advanced Level standard or those who found difficulty with elementary work. As a teacher she had all the gifts - scholarship, enthusiasm for her subject, effortless discipline, liveliness and zest in the classroom, clarity of exposition, dedication to the interests of her pupils, inexhaustible sympathy and measureless patience. This faculty of teaching was the basis of all her other achievements, earning for her the admiration, respect and gratitude of thousands of pupils and their parents, and establishing for her an unassailable position in school and throughout her profession. It was perhaps inevitable that so valuable a quality should be too heavily exploited and it may be acknowledged that Miss Savage was overworked for some thirty years.

Her other involvements as Senior Mistress (or Lady Vice-Principal, as she became when that post was instituted) touched innumerable facets of school activity, organisation and responsibility. She had a rare facility for bringing to mind what had to be done or what ought to be done, a boundless sense of duty and an unfailing capacity for service; it is impossible to imagine Miss Savage saying that something was too much trouble or not worth the effort, and to an unexampled degree she ignored personal considerations in her identification of herself with the needs of the School, its pupils and its staff. She sought unflaggingly to maintain and enforce her standards of discipline and behaviour, and had no lack of courage to speak her mind or to uphold the School's stand-point in dealing not just with pupils but with parents, teachers and other adults. Implicit in all this was her involvement with the needs of children and young people; her work in guiding, counselling, advising, disciplining, admonishing,

stimulating, encouraging and sustaining has been immeasurable and beyond praise. Though completely matter-of-fact and unsentimental, with her emotions entirely under control (and with recurrent personal griefs thrust out of sight even of her close friends), she brought comfort, support and practical sympathy to uncounted pupils and to many members of staff in time of difficulty, anxiety or distress. I do not think I have known any member of our profession, man or woman, who possessed such mental, physical and emotional stamina, or such capacity for service. Her role in the life of the Academy in the post-war era has been unique, incomparable.

Miss Savage pioneered the work of Careers Mistress in the School and also the neglected responsibility of instituting a register of its former pupils; it is appropriate that gradually she has, to an extent that must be unprecedented in the Academy's history, built up a range of contacts and relationships with Old Pupils throughout the world. It is appropriate also that, as the present phase of her professional career draws to a close, she should be conscious of a strong wave of loyalty and indeed of affection from former pupils and friends of the Academy from far and near.

Outside school also, Miss Savage gave notable services to her profession and to education, including her Presidency of the Assistant Mistresses' Association (Northern Ireland), membership of that Association's Executive in London, membership of the Northern Ireland G.C.E. Committee, founder membership of the Schools' Careers Association and membership of the Belfast Education & Library Board.

The award to Miss Savage of the M.B.E. and her appointment last year as Deputy Principal of the Academy gave token recognition to an achievement that has earned for her a secure place in the annals of the School.