IT PROVES DIFFICULT to obey the editor and talk about myself. One part of the difficulty is to choose what to describe from the manifold formative influences experienced through the years.

A Mother's Guidance

The first formative personal influence was my mother, first in time and I now count first in importance. The infant’s earliest great task, and probably the most strategic in determining his development, is the building of his selfhood, that psychological construct out of which he thinks and feels and decides. The elements to form this selfhood come partly from within, from what one first sees in himself; and partly from without, in what one first sees in others. In the necessary give-and-take between this self-other compounded self, and the self-other understanding of others, one builds some sort of deciding balance between the self-regarding and the other-regarding impulses.

In the process of building a proper balance, the mother is of well-nigh supreme importance as she protects and guides the growing infant. For this she must be sensitive, on the one hand, to all the feelings naturally involved and, on the other, to the desirable relationships to be built, both ethical and cultural. Her own life and her ideals, her sensitivity and tact, are decisive factors. The personality built at this early stage is almost, if not quite, the crucial determinant of growth direction.

A Father's Wisdom

My father was the second great formative influence in my life. He helped me to believe in careful thinking as the great resource in all vicissitudes. He taught me, too, how to think and his stalwart integrity showed me what a strong personality can be. A candid friend who has know us both has said publicly that this is one further instance where the son will never equal the father. In any event I count myself most fortunate in both mother and father.

Learning How Not to Teach

My schooling opportunities I judge now to have been above the average of the time and region. But two experiences at the hands of assistant teachers so stood out at the time as to be useful in later years, useful in telling me what not to follow in my teaching. In my
first term at school, while on the playground one day, I hurt a little playmate—but quite accidentally. Someone, as was then common, "told on me."

The teacher called me in and without inquiring as to the facts scolded me roundly: "Aren't you ashamed of yourself to hurt a little girl in such a fashion!" I was not ashamed, but instead I now became indignant. I had not meant to hurt my little friend nor had I been especially careless. I accordingly felt that I did not deserve the scolding. The experience stayed with me when I came to teach. I knew better what not to do.

"You missed the word,"
the Teacher Said

The second instance seems at this present distance not quite so clear in its implications. I was 12 years old. The class was spelling. In that day the only way to teach spelling, so far as I knew, was orally and in a class where there was "head" and "foot" and "turning down." This assistant teacher brought in a new rule that seemed then to me to violate the fundamentals: the pupil must pronounce the word before he spelled it (this seemed awkward but was clearly the teacher's right); but she counted it a miss in spelling (that is, one could be "turned down" on it) if one failed to pronounce the word before he spelled it. This seemed to me wrong. I could, as I saw it, not properly lose my place in spelling except for a miss in spelling. One day while I was head, the teacher gave out a word. I spelled it, but the teacher passed it to Effie Parker, who stood next. Effie pronounced the word, spelled it as I had, and was told to "go up head." I protested: "I spelled it that same way." "But," the teacher replied, "you did not pronounce it." I said I had; she said not. I was so angry I wept.

Last year, after having several times told of the incident, I looked more closely into a little old diary which I had kept that year (1884). There I found these two successive entries in all their unpunctuated state (for courtesy I here omit the teacher's name): "Tuesday April 1 went to school missed 1 so [the teacher] said but I did not Wednesday April 2 went to school Effie missed one on purpose." I cannot of course tell what mixture of motives made Effie unwilling to stay "head" over my protest the day before; but she purposely missed her first word the next day so that I could go head.

The experience with this teacher, on top of other related ones, long rankled me as one of arbitrary injustice. Now, as I look back, I am not so sure as I then was; but it made me more sensitive in my teaching lest my pupils or students in their minds attribute a like arbitrariness to me.

A Simple, Honest Thing It Was

Two contrasting college experiences left their deep impression. During my sophomore year we had a brilliant instructor in Greek, capable but exacting in the last degree. We had been forewarned. The college annual had said of him, "He shall not receive mercy, for he showeth none." However, we found him different.

One day in class a student translated a passage a certain way; Professor Manly approved it and was about to go on with the recitation when another student said, "Professor, I translated that differently," and he gave his way. "Old
Bill,” in the best of spirit, said, “Let’s see,” and he paused to compare the two translations with the original. “You’re right,” he said, “that’s better; that’s the way to read it.” A simple and honest thing it was for the instructor to do, but it was done in such a forthright way that it won “Old Bill” for us—and that way for me. I have never forgot it.

The contrasting experience came next year, with “Old Bill’s” successor, a weaker man in every way. This time a student referred a certain infinitive in Aeschylus to a certain verb; and the instructor approved. But another boy, my best friend, said, “Professor, if I mistake not, Liddell and Scott [the final authority then as now] gives this passage under another verb.” “You are mistaken,” was the instructor’s curt reply, and he passed inflexibly on to something else. The class over, my friend and I got Liddell and Scott, found the passage just as my friend had stated, took the book to the instructor’s office, and knocked at his door. He appeared; we said we had the passage. “I don’t care to see it,” he replied and closed the door.

I now understand as I did not then how very insecure the man felt in succeeding Professor Manly and how this made him do many stupid things. Now I can feel sorrow for him rather than the contempt I then felt. But the two contrasting experiences went far toward building in me an ideal to follow when I should unfortunately make a mistake before my students.

Honor-Roll Incentives

An early indication of my later thinking came during my senior year at college. The custom then prevailed for the college to give graduating honors, first honor, second honor, honor rolls, speakers’ places, etc., as a stimulus to study. I watched the results and concluded against the plan. No great time was needed to show who would win honors and who would not. That being clear, the lesser ones ceased to seek what they could not get. This in its turn becoming evident to the class, the greater ones did not have to work to keep ahead. So all eased up on work, while maintaining the relative status.

In one word, artificial incentives fail in the long run. As a theme in English composition I wrote out my thinking on the subject and handed it in. I still have the paper and cherish the professor’s favorable comments: “I am glad to know there is one student at least who takes a sensible view of the matter. . . . I wish everybody concerned could be brought to adopt [illegible].” This was very unusual praise for me to get on composition, and I doubt not that it helped to strengthen my opposition to all learning incentives of this sort, a feeling which has grown during the years.

After graduation in 1891, I went to study mathematics at Johns Hopkins, then the foremost university in the country. The experience was most stimulating, though at first painfully discouraging. I had stood first in my college class in mathematics and hoped for something analogous at Johns Hopkins; but, alas, I was not adequately prepared. My college professor was old and had not kept abreast of the times. So in parts of the work I floundered miserably. To fail was a novel and bitter experience for me and I was greatly discouraged. Professor Chapman sensed my trouble, sent for me, asked the situation, gave
helpful advice; and with it all showed so kindly and sympathetic a spirit that I have never forgot him or his kindness, and I have tried myself to help my students in like manner.

**Testing Gives Way to Guiding**

During the same year I got from Professor Craig an insight into teaching strangely new to me. Up to that time instructor and student had stood largely in opposition; the class periods (aside from lecturing) were times of testing, and the student expected to hide his ignorance and exhibit his knowledge or skill. This class was different. The first day Professor Craig sent us all “to the board.” It was a class in differential equations, and we stood awaiting our assignments. Instead, he said, “Just work any, any you have not already worked, any you had trouble with.” My head went round; he expected us not to hide our ignorance, but to exhibit it publicly. Instructor and students were on the same side: we were trying to learn and he was trying to help us. And there were no marks; my college theme was being applied. The next year I tried the plan with my high school students and it worked. Teaching for me was changing; testing was giving way to guiding; I was getting over on the side of the students and they were coming—slowly—to my side.

**When People Work for Ends They Count Their Own**

In keeping with this change from Professor Craig’s class, there developed a different attitude toward class attendance. At college, attendance had been compulsory; at Johns Hopkins it was voluntary. At college, if an instructor were late, we students gave him the minimum time prescribed by law and then, if he hadn’t arrived, we went on our way rejoicing; we had gained that much. Here at Hopkins it was different; if an instructor was late, we waited impatiently; we were missing something. If he failed to come, we felt cheated. To be sure, the change was complex. Primarily, I was growing up; I was now on my own, spending my own (borrowed) money; also I had my profession definitely in mind, and I was getting something I could use. Still again Johns Hopkins had a spirit, a spirit of work, hard work, and definite achievement; this spirit did things for us. And still further I was beginning to see—again in keeping with my senior English theme—that when people work for ends they count their own it does things to them; they work harder and if they succeed they are justly proud. This lesson, too, I put to work the next year—at least a little way, not yet very far. In teaching I still had much to learn and far to grow.

“Method” Is Outlook

The next year I had to drop out and earn more money before I could resume university work. I got a teaching principal’s place and went to a summer normal to get better prepared. At that time the serious study of education had hardly begun in this country. Page’s *Theory and Practice of Teaching* (first published in 1847) strengthened my wholesome distrust of set rules of behavior. Herbert Spencer’s theory of “natural punishment” helped to the same end and besides suggested—but faintly at the time—the guidance inherent in goal-directed efforts. The
"word" and "sentence" methods of teaching reading brought me still closer to inherent learning situations, as did the Grube method of arithmetic and "the topical method" of geography. But these were all "methods" of teaching agreed-upon subject matter. Not yet did I see "method" as one all-pervasive, character-building outlook.

As I look back, possibly the greatest stimulation during the summer came partly from an illuminating lecture on Pestalozzi and his humane treatment of children and partly from Otis Ashmore's account of how his Savannah high school boys would work in the physics laboratory "just as well," whether he were present or not. Both of these ideas stirred something in me; the teaching night was still dark, but the dawn was beginning to break. That fall at a teachers' institute I heard Colonel Parker and was led to study him and his work at Quincy. Here indeed was a vision but its light was as yet blinding. I could sense the direction, but saw only dimly.

As principal of my village school for three years, I abolished all arbitrary rules—well, nearly all. I abolished report cards. I built in my self a deep interest in the study of teaching—so deep that it would not die when I finally got to the college teaching of mathematics. I remade my school, but still on a straight subject-matter basis. However, I did cultivate relationships with my pupils to a degree not then common.

Math, Greek, and Philosophy

When I returned to Johns Hopkins to take up a second time my mathematics, an accident opened up also a road into philosophy. At Hopkins then, each candidate for the Ph.D. took besides his "major" a "first minor," which was closely related, and a "second minor," which was meant to be related but broadening: I had a friend majoring in Greek. He proposed that we take the same "second minor" so as to be associated in study. I demurred, saying that there was no "second minor" allowed in common with mathematics and Greek. He replied that philosophy would be accepted by both. Inquiry won approval and we signed up together. Thus by the accident of this friendship I took up the study of philosophy, and have maintained the interest ever since. That this Hopkins step led me later into the philosophy of education, I do not doubt.

Marks or Attitudes?

After this second year at Johns Hopkins I again dropped out to make money for still further study. This time I became teaching principal of an elementary school in Savannah under my friend Otis Ashmore. Here I put to work what I had been accumulating in the study of education. I abolished daily marks (in my own room). I used no punishments with my own pupils. I worked specifically on better attitudes, on truth telling, better study, better personal relationships. I used Patridge's Quincy methods with the primary teachers who had been put under my informal supervision. My then second grade teacher has just ended a notable career as elementary principal working along better lines in education. One of my own pupils of that year is now head of the Savannah School Board and very friendly to all good causes.

After one year in Savannah, I ob-
tained a post in my Alma Mater as professor of mathematics. Here a first effort was to help abolish the more formal reports, “passed” being the only mark given to successful students. Also this year I took on a series of informal lectures on education for prospective teachers.

The next summer (1898) I spent some eight weeks at the University of Chicago, my program including my first work with John Dewey. I am both ashamed and puzzled to have to report that from him I got but little; just why I cannot say. The next year James’ *Talks to Teachers* appeared and I used it with my lectures on education. This greatly interested me, as my copy—bought September 30, 1899—shows by the pencil markings. One heavily marked passage says that “the casting vote” of “the total mental efficiency of a man” lies in “the strength of his desire and passion, the strength of the interest he takes.” Another marked passage says, “To think, in short, is the secret of will, just as it is the secret of memory.”

*A New Calling Beckoned*

The next summer (1900) I went to Cornell with part of my work under Charles De Garmo in education. His main text was Dewey’s *Interest as Related to Will*. If there is such a thing as a spiritual rebirth in the realm of thought I then experienced it. Here all my gropings were brought together and enlightened. Every teaching ideal, every moral stirring in the field of teaching, every conception of method—all these and more were brought together in focus and given a burning zeal. That same summer—partly as a result of the most repellant teaching I had ever experienced—I turned my back on any idea of further study in mathematics. I now had henceforth a different orientation. A new calling beckoned me.

From then on I took up more active work in the study and teaching of education. I began to collect a library of John Dewey’s educational writings. I renewed my study of philosophy. I took over a students’ magazine club and gave it a philosophical turn. Soon the students were bringing me their personal problems of life and thought. In 1902 I studied at the new Summer School of the South at Knoxville, principally under Wickliffe Rose, a master teacher in the philosophy of education (who later helped bring the new George Peabody College into existence and thenceforth worked with the General Education Board). This gave me a great boost forward, helping me especially to organize my thinking along constructive educational lines. The next year (1903) I was given a General Education Board Scholarship to Teachers College and made all arrangements for a year off to study education and then to come back to my college and organize a department of education. Unfortunately, the college president was taken ill, and I, as second in command, had to take his place. I began to give up my mathematics and took over courses in psychology and ethics.

In 1907 I was free to study and I entered Teachers College, Columbia University, to major in the philosophy of education. I studied mainly under Dewey and came to see and understand and accept his underlying philosophy. At first no teaching position in philosophy of education was open at Teachers College; so from 1909 to 1913 I
JANE McDERMOTT and EILEEN FERGUSON

THE FIRST-YEAR TEACHER coming straight from four years of college generally assumes she has plenty to teach but not much to learn. After all, she has had practice teaching all year, all those method courses, and psychology; so why shouldn't she know most all there is to know? We suppose we had somewhat the same idea when we started our teaching, but how we have learned!

So many times we have heard the expression “the impatience of youth.” Beginning teachers, being young, generally have that impatience when they start. We have found that patience is one of the first qualities we had to learn. As first grade teachers, we found patience needed especially in beginning reading. We discovered that sentences, words, or letters appear to a first-grader like Chinese to an adult. Naturally such complexities can’t be taught in a week or two, even to a child who learns quickly. The slower child needs extra help and much repetition. After many days, one feels a faint glimmer of satisfaction, for he has recognized his name.

Patience must be present when, in spite of precautions and warnings, many of the little annoying things happen, such as spilling milk or paint. We wonder how we could handle without patience the child who insists on exclaiming, “I don’t know how, Teacher. I don’t know how. Is this how?” to everything that goes on whether it has been done before or not. Patience is nec-

Last September Jane McDermott and Eileen Ferguson were beginning teachers. Before they started their first year, they wrote an article called “We Will Enjoy Teaching,” which our readers will remember from the October issue of Educational Leadership. Because we liked their enthusiastic approach to their profession, we have called upon these two young teachers again, this time asking them to tell us what they have learned during those first adventurous months. Here is their report.