

DURANT DRAKE

1878 - 1933

After eighteen years of devoted service to Vassar College Durant Drake, Professor of Philosophy, died at the age of fifty-five in the early morning of November twenty-fifth. Always frail in body he at first attached no great significance to the illness that laid him low in the month of October, and even when told that the end was near continued a gallant struggle for recovery. Recognizing at last that death had come to claim him he accepted the inevitable with courage and perfect serenity.

Durant Drake was of New England puritan stock. It was in accordance with the traditions of his race that he went first to Boston Latin school and then to Harvard University, winning prizes all along the way and graduating summa ggg laude. A kind fate gave him close touch with eminent scholars in his chosen field and fruitful intercourse with them helped to shape his own ideas into what he himself called the philosophy of a meliorist. "If," he wrote, "there is any keynote that has given a kind of unity to my thinking in diverse fields it is a sense of the needless unhappiness from which men suffer and a passionate longing to do my bit in formulating and diffusing a clearer intelligence concerning the art of living." Thus in his teaching he emphasized primarily problems of human conduct, drawing his illustrations from an extraordinarily wide range of reading. Stimulating class discussions were often continued on Sunday afternoons when throughout the year he was at home to his students. Many of those who have gone forth from Vassar will always remember gratefully that beautiful and hospitable home.

But it was as a writer that Durant Drake was most widely known. Eminently in his books he realized his "passionate desire" to formulate and diffuse "a clearer intelligence concerning the art of living." Their titles indicate how practical, in the broad sense of the term, was the aim of much of his thinking: Problems of Conduct (1914), Problems of Religion (1916), Shall We Stand By The Church? (1920), America Faces the Future (1922), The New Morality (1928). The reviewers of these books all praise their lucidity, vigor, forceful and winning style, and persuasive sanity. The same qualities of style appear in his recent Invitation to Philosophy. His most abstract thinking was expressed in Mind and Its Place in Nature (1925), where he presents his metaphysical system,

DURANT DRAKE (Continued)

related to though not derived from the thought of
Santayana and Charles Strong.

It may truly be said of Durant Drake that his life
and work, despite his physical limitations, fulfilled
to an extraordinary degree its own high aims.

Lucy E. Textor

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