

GEORGE COLEMAN GOW

1860 - 1938

Vassar College sorrowfully records the passing on January 12 of George Coleman Gow, for thirty-seven years Head of the Music Department, lately Professor Emeritus, distinguished musician and teacher, pioneer in American college music.

Called to Vassar in 1895, he had already made a brilliant beginning in the publication of "The Structure of Music", a vital and original embodiment of his ideals of music study. As Head of a college department in-the-making, his culture and musicianship, his versatility and adaptability, were of the utmost importance. He began as teacher of theory, history, organ, and as organist and choir director. Finding the supply of music available for the choir inadequate, he was stimulated to enter upon the most productive period of his life as a composer. His carols and anthems are distinguished by characteristic melodic charm and loftiness of sentiment. One of his arrangements, "Peace, I leave with thee", has become a Vassar tradition as the closing response in the chapel service. During these years he found time to write a treatise entitled "Harmony", published in the American Encyclopedia of Music, which reaffirms his ideals, - ideals from which he never deflected, though repeatedly thwarted in their realization. He believed that music should be studied as a whole, including theory, history and practise, and deplored the prevalent policy of accrediting music only in part. After twenty-two years of patient insistence, his judgment finally prevailed, and music was raised to the place of dignity that it now holds in the curriculum.

As the department grew and new teachers were added, he selected them with keen appreciation of their abilities and capacities. He was a wise and kindly administrator. Modestly he sacrificed his personal preferences in order to offer to each colleague the fullest opportunity for individual development, evidently realizing the department's ultimate need of a more specially trained staff. He was always mindful of the place music should hold in the life of the community. He brought concerts and recitals to the college, directed the Glee Club, sponsored the Founder's Day Song Contest. Beyond the college itself his influence extended to the Dutchess County Musical Association, of which he was more than once president, to the Music Teachers National Association, of which he was one time president, and also to the Internationale Musik-Gesellschaft.

GEORGE COLEMAN GOW (Continued)

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At length the long cherished hope was realized in a new Music Building in which he had the satisfaction of presiding for a year before his retirement. There, built in a wall is a bronze bas-relief in profile which was presented to the college by devoted students and choir mebers as a constant reminder of the warmth and friendship which he radiated. Not only as a memory'but also as a continuous influence, his life work remains with us.

Marta Milinowski
James F. Baldwin
Edith S. Woodruff
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