

HENRY SEELY WHITE

1861 – 1943

When he was appointed to Vassar, in 1905, after President Taylor had searched the country for a mathematician of high distinction, Henry Seely White was recognized as a leader in his field, internationally known for his research in the new geometry.

He had graduated from Wesleyan University with honors, studied in Germany and Italy, and taken his doctorate at Gottingen under the inspiration of such mathematicians as Klein and Schwarz. It was after teaching at Wesleyan, Clark and Northwestern Universities that he accepted the call to Vassar. To our advantage he repeatedly declined calls to other universities, feeling that the great happiness, both for him and for Mrs. White, was to be found at Vassar. In his thirty-one years here he was one of the outstanding figures in the life of the college and the community.

From the class of 1906 down to the graduates of the present year Vassar students and his colleagues have felt the charm of his personality and the quality of his great intellect. He had a courtly dignity combined with a dry, penetrating wit. A conflict of logic with common sense in faculty discussion brought forth his choicest humor, always out of a tolerant, sane point of view. His insight into fields others than his own grew out of an easy familiarity with the currents in education, contemporary and past. In some subtle way he developed in his students a power which neither they nor others knew they possessed. Sad as we are at the loss of Professor White we feel that what he gave to the college will always be a part of Vassar's contribution.

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