

## AUSTIN FOX RIGGS

1876 - 1940

In the death of Dr. Austen Fox Riggs of Stockbridge, Massachusetts, March 5, 1940, the Faculty of Vassar College lost a distinguished and helpful colleague. He was appointed Lecturer and Consultant in Mental Hygiene at Vassar in the spring of 1924, and with the cooperation of members of his staff of the Riggs Foundation at Stockbridge he continued to serve in this capacity until his death.

Under the direction of Dr. Riggs, Vassar became a pioneer in recognizing the importance and even the necessity of psychiatric services in the diagnosis and treatment of problems of young people. Through his skillful aid many of our students who suffered from difficulties of maladjustment, from emotional instability or other disorders of a psychiatric nature received from him diagnosis and constructive rehabilitation. During these years, 1924 to 1940, many members of our college community came under the healing and stimulating guidance of Dr. Riggs, and those of us who were not his patients but his fellow-workers have had continuing benefit from his sane and invigorating attitude towards life and its problems.

Dr. Riggs, the son of a physician, was born in Germany while his parents were residing abroad. He was graduated from Harvard College and from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University, and took post-graduate study at Johns Hopkins Medical School in Baltimore. He founded and remained until his death the head of the Riggs Foundation in Stockbridge, established for the free treatment of patients who needed psychiatric care and who were unable to bear the expense. Many members of Vassar College have been privileged to benefit by the treatment and care thus afforded by the Riggs Foundation. This is but one tangible expression of the generosity in giving of himself without stint which was the dominating characteristic of Dr. Riggs.

His method of therapy was one which was based primarily on regard for the person as a whole, on a philosophy of life which was strongly social, not

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individualistic, and which combined a strictly scientific training with a rarely humane and sympathetic understanding of people. His books written for the general public, "Intelligent Living", "Just Nerves" and "Play", are the embodiment of his own rich living and boundless generosity of spirit. We

are grateful for what he was and for what he did,  
and feel a just pride in the distinction he conferred  
upon Vassar College in associating himself with us.  
His friends and colleagues at Vassar will long hold  
him in grateful remembrance.

Jane North Baldwin

Helen P. Langner

C. Mildred Thompson

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