

ALICE DOROTHEA SNYDER

1887 - 1943

The Faculty of Vassar College wish today to express their profound sorrow and sense of irreparable loss in the untimely death on February 17 of Alice Dorothea Snyder, their friend and colleague for thirty years. The facts of her distinguished career as student, teacher, critic, and widely recognized authority in the difficult field of Coleridge scholarship have been published and will be preserved in the Faculty records. Vassar College is proud of her achievement. But our words today are in commemoration of her place in our hearts.

Most of all we shall remember her as a person of complete integrity, who said what she meant and meant what she said. Her intense mental life never separated her from other people, for her thought and her feeling had united in a sincere conviction that the duty of the American scholar was, in the words of Emerson, to "put forth his total strength in fit actions", although her path to that conviction was not Emersonian or mystic, for her personal philosophy was founded on that of John Dewey. In action, she was not rash or extreme, but always prompt, steady, undiscouraged and unwearied. A great part of her time outside the classroom went into arduous committee work in the interests of better education, social justice, and good government. For a person of such swift and brilliant intellect, she had unusual patience with the slow and often wasteful procedures of democracy. Since she had a gift for clarifying confused issues and could be trusted to give fair-minded consideration to views opposed to her own, both students and colleagues came to value highly her opinion on controversial subjects.

Her students, who sometimes began by being in awe of her, learned very soon that her interest in them was genuine and always kind. In every class there were always some who gave her their affection and lasting friendship.

Those friends who had been with her in the place she loved best, her summer home in Greensboro, Vermont, who had driven with her over the Vermont roads, had ALICE DOROTHEA SNYDER (Continued)

helped her sail a boat or paddle a canoe, saw her perhaps at her most characteristic. Relaxed and happy in the beauty of mountains, valleys and streams, familiar with farm and village life, full of pungent talk, shrewd observation and humorous anecdote, she was a delightful companion.

One of her students wrote in the Miscellany News of February 20, "To have had a class with Miss Snyder was one of the greatest privileges." And the feeling of teachers of English in other colleges is perhaps best expressed in a letter from Mt. Holyoke: "To lose Alice Snyder out of our world now, seems so disastrous that words can only suggest the distress of the members of our department here. She has done much, in all the professional groups in which we have known her, to make our common effort energetic, discriminating and humane. Her wisdom will be deeply missed.

In recognition of the rare value of her unique personality, we move that this appreciation be included in the Minutes of our Faculty, and a copy sent to the members of her family.

Mary L. Sague  
Constance Ellis  
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