

MARGARET FLOY WASHBURN

1871 – 1939

Margaret Floy Washburn was as completely a New York State product as Florence Cushing was a child of the Back Bay. A great uncle of hers, Michael Floy, a graduate of Columbia in the 1820's left behind him a charming manuscript diary which should some day see the light; it is tender, introspective, and withdrawn; the manuscript ends happily in a honeymoon on the Morris and Essex Canal. Many of the characteristics of Michael Floy I could see in Margaret Floy Washburn, and often I thought of them as I watched her striding meditatively along the paths of the Vassar campus, stopping to play with my dog's ear, to chat with one of the children, or to tell the latest anecdote of her animal laboratory. Equipped with superb mental powers, excellently trained in philosophy, and knowing exactly where she stood as to her own philosophical basis of life, Margaret Washburn was always a positive force. Her concentration was prodigious. As I think over her many activities as researcher, writer, editor of psychological journals, correspondent with most of the great psychologists of her day, encourager of her students, closely attentive to every need of the psychological laboratory, I wonder how she could have done so much.

But Margaret Washburn was no narrow specialist. She loved music, and played the piano for her own pleasure. She learned to paint, and completed a number of creditable landscapes. She loved to act, and took leading roles in play after play of the faculty or the Experimental Theatre. Her work in the part of the nurse in Hippolytus was a notable achievement, as was her comic rendition of the wife's role in Douglass. The role in Hippolytus was performed at a temperature of 102 degrees because Miss Washburn would not disappoint the cast and audience by obeying doctor's orders. She organized and led faculty dances, and was excellent in waltz and two-step.

Margaret Washburn was a great favorite among the men of her profession. They loved the give and take of her ready wit, and her vigorous and incisive logic, even

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Tribute of a Friend (Continued)

when it demolished their pretenses. Margaret Washburn knew what she knew and knew what she believed; she had no patience with the mind that tolerates because it is too lazy or too timid to affirm its creed. "We all know what the open mind is," she once said. "It is a mind with nothing in

it." At a faculty party I was once analyzed by Miss Washburn. It was all in fun, but the analysis was so keen and so true as to leave me tingling. We differed on many subjects, but were always the closest of friends.

with all her loyalty to psychology, her first thought was of people. She was given by her pupils an endowment fund, the income of which she was to use as she pleased; she always used it to aid aspiring students. Once when she thought she had made an error in such an award she refunded the money from her own pocket, though under no obligation to do so. The soul of loyalty and gallantry, Margaret Washburn will be remembered as among the first women to attain the highest honors in her chosen field of science. She will long be honored at Vassar College as one of our great teachers.

Henry Noble MacCracken
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