

LUCY MAYNARD SALMON

1853 - 1927

Professor Lucy Maynard Salmon whose death occurred on February 14, 1927 had been a member of the faculty of Vassar College since 1887. Called to Vassar in order to promote the study of history she organized the department of history of which for nearly forty years she remained the head. During all these years to her colleagues and to successive generations of students she was an unfailing source of inspiration. Outside the college as well as within Miss Salmon's influence was widely felt, through her connection with the American Historical Association and through her published works. In 1912 she was honored by the degree of Doctor of Literature from Colgate and in 1926 by that of Doctor of Letters from the University of Michigan.

At this time, however, it is no mere objective enumeration of her achievements which the faculty would record. It wishes also to place on record its sense of the significance of these achievements. In the first place she contributed to the study of history in this country not only her own enlarging definitions of the subject, and her own valuable research to her field, but she also trained many workers, younger followers "made" as we say by her teaching. These, carrying on the work of research and teaching in their own vigorous measure, contribute the most lasting memorial that can be founded. Moreover the young women in her classes went out not only with a new sense of the meaning of history and with an equipment in fundamental methods of work but also with a sense of their responsibility to the communities in which they might happen to live.

To this development of scholars in her own field must be added the quickening of intellectual curiosity that came to many from contact with her living mind. The greatest impulse to thinking independently comes from another mind in action. By reason of her influence the ordinary world of streets and alleys, signs and show-windows, changing work of every kind has been made a richer document. To this unwritten history, which she taught many to use, must be added the store of historical documents, formal and informal, that have extended the Vassar Library shelves year after year, and which in any comment however brief, must be noted. Vassar owes in great measure its growing

LUCY MAYNARD SALMON (Continued)

library and the library habits of its students to Miss Salmon's continuous interest in the amassing of material, however difficult to obtain, and to the thorough ability to use such material that she insisted upon.

The loss to her colleagues of Miss Salmon's cooperation extends beyond this recognized withdrawal of her direct contribution to her students. Her fellow-workers on the faculty were always aware of the fact that her interest in education was never limited to her own field of research or to her own teaching activities or those of her department. She was never in doubt as to what a liberal college is or how it should serve the world. She steadily questioned its relation to its immediate community in social and educational ways, its stand on all matters of national educational interest. Her scrutiny of its internal organization and effectiveness never flagged.

This persistent examination of every attitude, relationship, custom or educational policy has been provocative and fruitful. Again and again ideas and plans which she suggested and which appeared to be remote or impractical ideals have come to be generally accepted and completely realized. The faculty owes to Miss Salmon's initiative many of the measures it has sought to make effective since nineteen hundred and thirteen, when she made her significant address to the faculty in which she urged it to look to its life, and know what it was doing and why it was doing it. She stood for faculty participation in college government, in administrative as well as educational aspects, and for closer and more intelligent relations with the trustees and alumnae than she thought had yet been worked out.

It is our sense of this significance of the work of Miss Salmon which the faculty wishes to place on record - of a colleague who was a pioneer in education and whose ideals have left a deep impress on the life of Vassar College.

Fanny Borden
Rose Jeffries Peebles
Eloise Ellery