

JEAN BIRDSALL

1895 - 1935

In the untimely death of Jean Birdsall the college suffers the loss of one of its most beloved and talented teachers. Coming into the faculty in 1927, by reason of manifest ability she was rapidly advanced to the rank of Assistant Professor and later to that of Associate Professor. Whether in the field of ancient or of medieval history, her interest in the reconstruction and interpretation of social life, as her pupils testify, was spontaneously imparted to others. As a productive scholar her contributions were finding a place in noted publications; a study of the English Manors at Caen being contained in the Anniversary Essays in honor of Charles Haskins, while a translation of the fourteenth century chronicle which was left unfinished is still expected to be printed in the Columbia Records of Civilization. To the intellectual activities of our academic societies she gave unstinted support, having been a devoted member of the Classical Club, at one time President of Phi Beta Kappa, and continuously Vice-President of the Faculty Club. At the same time membership in such onerous committees as that on Admissions, on Students' Records, and the Board of Elections gave evidence of uncommon efficiency in the administration of affairs touching the student body. For the same reason, especially in maintaining a good rapport between the older and the younger members of the community, her recent services as Head Resident of Josselyn Hall are acknowledged to have been most valuable.

Without seeking popularity, or apparently being conscious of any such attribute, Miss Birdsall nevertheless commanded it in an unusual degree. So expressive a nature was likely to enliven any company wherein she might be found. In ordinary conversation her disposition was optimistic, dwelling with discrimination upon that which was enjoyable and commendable, delighting in the frank interchange of opinions, while the less amiable trends of discussion found her silent and indifferent. Moreover a ready wit without sharpness was an instrument which served to brighten and clarify whatever it touched. With no inclination to be exclusive she evinced a marked capacity for friendship, whereby she became a merry companion in the

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recreations of the campus and countryside. All these traits and activities are remembered as the spontaneous overflow of an abounding spirit within. But alas that rare mental endowments were cast in a frail physical frame, and that a life so full of promise has been thus cut off at the beginning of a brilliant career! The college has truly been enriched by her presence, the memory of which will long remain.

James F. Baldwin