

IN MEMORIAM
ERMA MAY GILL

Erma May Gill, daughter of William H. and Minnie I. (Whittington) Gill, was born June 24, 1880, in Houston, and died suddenly while visiting relatives in San Angelo, Texas, December 30, 1949. She was buried in Austin a few days later. Reared in Houston, she attended the Houston High School from 1893 to 1897. On completing the course there she began teaching and continued to teach Latin and English in the Houston City Schools nineteen years.

Miss Gill entered The University of Texas first through summer sessions, which she attended consecutively from 1912 through 1915. She also came for the long sessions of 1913-14 and 1915-16, and received the B. A. with Phi Beta Kappa honors in June, 1916. In her senior year she was assistant in Latin, and from 1918 to 1920 taught freshman classes as a tutor in English. On receiving the M. A. degree in 1929 she was made instructor and continued in that rank nine years with the exception of 1927-28, when she held a university graduate fellowship. She won her doctorate of philosophy in 1929, and was promoted to, an adjunct professorship. With a change of title to assistant professor in 1936 she held this rank until her death. Thus save for a two-year interval, 1916-18, she has been connected with the University as student or teacher for the past thirty-seven years.

Miss Gill's first love was teaching, but scholarship was a close second. In both she was unmistakably thorough. She gave each of her students individual attention, frequently entertained them singly or by classes in her own home, and followed with affectionate interest their personal careers after they left the campus. Much of her time was devoted to teaching more than one course in creative writing, and, unfortunately for her own strength, she scarcely knew how to refuse accepting an extra student who requested instruction in writing or desired her to direct his master's thesis. For more than a decade she has headed the committee in charge of departmental writing contests, and was long one of the most valuable committee members in the ready writers' contest of the Texas Interscholastic League. On several occasions her pupils took prizes in contests outside

the University, state or national, and in each instance their success gave her personal gratification. To this warm interest the students responded. On her death one of them, an associate editor of the Daily Texan, printed in that journal a sincere and excellently expressed tribute to Miss Gill as a teacher. Another former student has established in her memory a prize contest in one of the poetry magazines.

For graduate training Miss Gill was fortunate in having instruction from such distinguished scholars in the University faculty as Edwin W. Fay, Morgan Callaway, Jr., Killis Campbell, and James F. Royster, all recently deceased. Each of these men contributed toward her habits of meticulous care in the solution of literary or linguistic problems, and made her like the doing of it. Her master's thesis treats "The Style of John Wycliffe as Exemplified in His Translation of the New Testament." Her doctoral dissertation is entitled "The Relation of The Comedy of Errors to Its Plautine sources. Two long chapters of this dissertation were published in The University of Texas Studies in English: the first in 1925, "A Comparison of the Characters in The Comedy of Errors with Those in Menaechmi," the second in 1930, "The Structure of The Comedy of Errors in Relation to Its Sources." Both these articles immediately attracted favorable notice from Shakespeare scholars elsewhere, their titles are to be found in the standard bibliographies, and they are recognized as thorough and dependable treatments of an important Shakespeare problem. In 1941 Miss Gill read before the South-Central Modern Language Association meeting in Dallas a paper yet unpublished on "Jonson's Humor Characters," and she was engaged on several other research topics up to her last days. She printed little partly because of heavy teaching responsibilities, but also because her scholarly conscience forbade the publication of shoddy work.

Outside the University her interests included many years' service as associate editor of College Verse, active participation in the local and state organizations of the American Association of University Women, especially leadership of its poetry groups, and membership in the Modern, Language Association of America, the South-Central Modern Language Association, and the Conference of College English Teachers of Texas. She served one year as vice-president of the

local chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. In her private life Miss Gill was most generous with her time and her money, as those closest to her might bear witness. On controversial subjects her judgments were tolerant but definitely independent. Unostentatious in all that she did, her long and busy life counted for more in various corners than this community ever knew.

Albert E. Cooper,
Annie S. Irvine,
Oscar E. Powers,
Thad W. Riker,
Robert A. Law, (Chairman).

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A.W.C., Manager