

In Memoriam

P. A. Christensen

1888-1968



M. B. BRADY

What matters most with P. A. Christensen is that his reach should be felt as well as his grasp, that his classes—even at their most successful—should be remembered as a means, not as an end in themselves. For P. A. Christensen gave his students the most valuable education one ever gets, an exposure to a certain intellectual habit and attitude of mind. He had the enduring desire to see things accurately, and he taught his students “to see life steadily and to see it whole,” without bitterness or cynicism, without prejudices or preconceptions. I believe that his students recognize their debt to him not so much perhaps by the impressions made in the moments of illumination in individual classes as by the way in which their minds turn again and again with growing understanding and gratitude to an inspiration which the passage of time can do nothing to dim. P. A. Christensen wanted to know the truth, and he was honest in his quest of it. He saw the tragedy and the evil of life as well as its beauty and splendor. But if his eyes were open always to the darker aspects of human existence, they were open also to those aspects of life in which a growing good resides.