

JEAN CHARLEMAGNE BRACQ

1853 - 1931;

Jean Charlemagne Bracq, who died December 18, 1934 at his home in Keene, New Hampshire, at the age of eighty-one, had served Vassar College with distinction from 1891 to 1918, at first as John Guy Vassar Professor of Modern Languages, afterwards as head of the Department of Romance Languages and Professor of French. Although he came to America at the age of eighteen, he remained always a loyal son of France in his sympathies and in all his varied activities. He took an especially warm interest in the little town of Bertry near Cambrai which was his birthplace, keeping in touch with its schools and its library, which he had helped to found. One of its streets now bears his name in recognition.

A graduate of the McGill University and of the Newton Theological Seminary, he carried on further theological study in Edinburgh and in Paris at the Sorbonne. He was secretary of the McAll Association in Philadelphia for six years before going to Vassar. Later in life he received honorary degrees from Colgate and McGill. In his twenty-seven years at Vassar he built up from small beginnings a strong department of Romance Languages, in which the study of French was transformed from the mere learning of a language to the study of a civilization by modern methods. He was eager to interpret the spirit of France to young Americans and readily placed the resources of his learning at the disposal of American research students in France. As an anti-militarist he worked untiringly to further international understanding and was three times a delegate to international peace conferences.

In his book, *France Under the Republic* (1910), he showed himself an enthusiastic defender of the Third Republic and of governmental policy in French colonial expansion. His paper on French Rights in Newfoundland furnished the historic basis for the settlement of certain long disputed questions concerning the Newfoundland fisheries, and he took a prominent part in defending the French government at the time of the separation of church and state. He lectured and wrote on a variety of subjects and published articles and pamphlets too numerous to be listed in this place.

JEAN CHARLEMAGNE BRACQ (Continued)

Many honors came to him: he lectured before the Lowell Institute; was decorated Officer of Public Instruction and Chevalier of the Legion of Honor; he was elected Laureate of the French Academy and Laureate of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences,

Paris. When he retired in 1918, he was subsidized by the Canadian Government to travel and study French-Canadian history and social life, the fruit of which research was another important work, *The Evolution of French Canada* (1924), which was later translated into French and for which he was awarded a gold medal by the Franco-American Society. A tireless worker, he left unfinished at the time of his death a very considerable manuscript.

In his life as a member of the Vassar community, his friends remember best the ordered dignity of his home, where he and Mrs. Bracq dispensed a gracious hospitality. A neighbor recalls that it was because of his activity on behalf of the motormen and conductors of the Poughkeepsie Street Railway that the Company enclosed the car platforms. The same neighbor relates how some twenty years ago, he sent to Keene for a number of young pine trees, which he presented to the householders along Professors' Row. He was meticulous in performing his social duties as a citizen.

The Faculty of Vassar College wish to record their sense that, in the death of Professor Emeritus Jean Charlemagne Bracq they have lost a member who reflected honor upon the group by his persistent industry in research of importance, his loyal service to three countries, and his very real achievement as teacher and author. And they desire that this minute be sent to Mrs. Bracq with the most sincere expression of sympathy in her bereavement.

Amy L. Reed

Henry S. White

Florence Donnell White

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