

FLORENCE DONNELL WHITE

1882 - 1950

The Faculty of Vassar College expresses its deep sense of loss in the death on December 15, 1950 of Florence Donnell White, Professor Emeritus of French.

Miss White was born in Alna, Maine, on January 23, 1882. She graduated from Mount Holyoke College in 1903, taught for two years at the Springfield, Massachusetts, High School, and received her M.A. degree from Mount Holyoke in 1907. Continuing her graduate study at Bryn Mawr, where she was a Fellow in Romance Languages, and also at the University of Paris, she received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from Bryn Mawr in 1915.

She came to Vassar in 1908, and was glad to carry on her whole career in the college which she loved and on which she has left her distinctive mark as an educator and as a person. The gratitude felt by Miss White's students for what her teaching means to them was well expressed in one letter, received at the time of her retirement in 1947, when the Florence Donnell White Fund was established:

I felt when I left Vassar and feel even more strongly after twenty-four years that her teaching gave in fullest measure what a college education should give: respect for scholarship, honesty and humility in the practice of it, and as an end result of four years of study a foundation of knowledge of and interest in the subject so well-laid that nothing can destroy it.

There were no easy short-cuts in Miss White's courses - for herself or her students... Her students were well-informed, because she informed them well, with the highest standards for thorough work, with a belief in the importance of exact knowledge as against guesswork and good intentions, and with a mastery of her subject which, shared with them, gave them a fund of appreciative familiarity with France that they would use and enjoy for the rest of their lives.

Miss White was chairman of the department of French from 1918 until 1946. She served on the most important elective committees of the faculty; among those which claimed her activity for the longest periods were the FLORENCE DONNELL WHITE (Continued)

Committee on the Curriculum, on Students' Records, and the Advisory Committee. She published a study of Voltaire's Essay on Epic Poetry, and in collaboration with colleagues made translations from the French and Spanish. She was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, of the Modern Language Association, the American Association of Teachers

of French, the American Association of University Professors, the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Colonial Dames of America.

Outside the college she participated in the activities of the Institute of International Education and she was one of the originators of its program for the Junior Year Abroad. In recognition of her constant work in furtherance of understanding between the French and American people she was made Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur in 1934.

Miss White's clarity of mind, her keen wit, her absolute justice, and her unfailing enthusiasm are qualities recalled by all who knew her. They enabled her to carry the responsibilities of teaching and administrative tasks with untiring strength and without ever seeming to be burdened. She had the tact and true sociability which came from a generous interest in people. A staunch New Englander, she had a deep affection for France, its literature and its people. In France, where she spent almost every summer, she counted many friends, one of whom has written, characteristically, "No one could have made the United States better respected and loved than she did."

The Faculty of Vassar College, who have long had Miss White's sustaining presence among them, will keep the memory of her distinction, her wise counsel and her gracious company.

Mary Landon Sague

Maria Tastevin Miller

Margaret de Schweinitz

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