

ELIZABETH HAZELTON HAIGHT

1872 - 1964

Elizabeth Hazelton Haight was born in Auburn, New York on February 11, 1872. She was graduated from Vassar College in 1894, received the master's degree here in 1899 and the Ph.D. from Cornell in 1909. Following her graduation from Vassar she taught Latin for a year at Rye Seminary, for six years at the Emma Willard School, and a year at Packer Collegiate Institute. She returned to Vassar as Instructor in Latin in 1902. For the forty years until her retirement in 1942 she served in the successive ranks from Instructor to Professor and Chairman of the Department. An outstanding Classicist and feminist Miss Haight was among the last of a generation of dedicated women who comprised a distinguished company of women professors at this and other comparable colleges, a company which chose the profession of college teaching in an era when the choice was likely to preclude marriage and home life in the ordinary sense. Miss Haight made Vassar College her home and her life. She was a gracious lady and an impressive teacher who commanded the loyalty of generation after generation of students.

As a member of the faculty of Vassar College, Miss Haight was indefatigable in her effort to build up a strong department of Latin and to maintain for Classical studies the important place she believed they should occupy in higher education in the Liberal Arts. One of her many achievements for the Department and the College was the transformation in 1937 of one of the dingiest of Avery Hall's classrooms into the present handsome Classical Museum, which serves not only to house and display Vassar's valuable collection of antiquities and coins in an attractive setting, but also as a comfortable classroom and small lecture room.

Miss Haight had a firm grasp of both immediate and larger college problems. To the younger members of her own department she was both inspiration and guide, more zealous in emphasizing what could be praised in their work than in pointing out shortcomings. She was unsparing in her efforts to secure for all serious young scholars both opportunity and support for research, and unflagging in her interest in their efforts and achievements. In meetings of the faculty it was often Miss Haight who summed up the sometimes tangential discussion and defined the issue, clarifying the crucial questions and bringing the objective into focus. Presidents, trustees and other department chairmen talked over their diverse educational and administrative problems with her and went away aided by her experience and wisdom and strengthened by her unswerving devotion to the good of Vassar.

ELIZABETH HAZELTON HAIGHT (Continued)

In the mid-thirties, when scholars were fleeing Hitler's Germany, Miss Haight was chiefly instrumental in organizing a program of visiting scholars, which brought to Vassar a series of distinguished professors as guests, free to give open lectures and to meet with advanced classes and student organizations. Many of these were enabled through their visit to Vassar to secure appointments in

American colleges and universities.

Miss Haight was a vital force not only in the development of Vassar College but also in the larger field of Classical studies in America. Choosing as her special field the poetry of Horace and the Augustan Age, she published in 1925 her book on Horace and His Art of enjoyment. This was followed at frequent intervals by books on Apuleius and his Influence, Romance in the Latin Elegiac Poets, Essays on Ancient Fiction, The Roman Use of Anecdotes, and a number of others. Earlier, in the years from 1915 to 1919, she had collaborated with President James Monroe Taylor on a book about the College called simply Vassar, had edited the Autobiography and Letters of Matthew Vassar, and then in his turn The Life and Letters of James Monroe Taylor.

Miss Haight's books on the Classics were written for the student encountering the Latin texts of her Roman authors rather than for the specialized scholar, and many generations of Vassar students found through her a view of life seasoned by Horace, which became for them the "robur et aes triplex" of their lives. Her eminence as teacher and scholar was recognized by her election as president of the American Philological Association in 1934 – the first woman to hold that office since the founding of the Association in Poughkeepsie in 1869. On the initiative of a group of alumnae, the Trustees established in 1952 the Elizabeth Hazelton Haight Fund for Research in Classics, in honor of her achievement in research and her tenth year as Professor Emeritus of Vassar College.

Elizabeth Haight was one of the great builders of this College. Her name will always occupy a significant place in its history.

Myrtle Soles Erck

Theodore Henry Erck

Inez Scott Ryberg

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