

MATHILDE MONNIER

1876 - 1954

Mathilde Monnier, Professor Emeritus of French, was born in Switzerland on May 26, 1876, and died there at her home in Porrentruy, on April 22, 1954.

She came to Vassar in 1909, after teaching for seven years at Putnam Hall in Poughkeepsie, and served the college as a distinguished member of the French Department until 1944.

Miss Monnier's work in the first World War was significant. In 1918 she was granted leave of absence to assist American soldiers of foreign origin at Camp Devens, and in the summer of 1919 she was with the Y.W.C.A. in France, dealing with the problem of sending French war brides to America - an experience she described in the Vassar Quarterly of May 1920.

While greatly attached to her work and her friends here, Miss Monnier remained the European in our midst. Her summer vacations and her subsequent leaves of absence were spent in travel and, most often, at her apartment in Paris - where she entertained many of the contemporary writers with whom she was acquainted. Miss Monnier's students were admiring and devoted; they felt her power and her charm and were appreciative of her tireless efforts on their behalf. All her life she counted many lasting friends among them. As a teacher she maintained strict discipline and the highest standards. Under her instruction the students worked their hardest, and longed to excel. They discovered not only the meaning of the classics but also the rhythm and the tone. For Miss Monnier was one of the rare teachers of language and literature who was herself a poet. This was proved - long before her own volume of verse appeared - by her exquisitely sensitive and musical reading of the literature she taught. She introduced and established in the Vassar curriculum the first courses in contemporary French literature and in diction.

In 1920 Miss Monnier and Miss White collaborated in translating from the French a novel by Isabelle Sandy, Andorra, which was published by Houghton Mifflin.

Miss Monnier's volume of poems entitled Dispersion, appeared in 1942, published in New York by Editions MATHILDE MONNIER (Continued)

de la Maison française, in a series which included works by several of the leading French writers. One of the publishers remarked after reading the manuscript: "Il y a de la musique dedans." As in her work, so in her bearing, there was artistry and distinction, and in her life clarity of purpose courageously carried out to the end.

Respectfully submitted,
Winifred Smith
John R. Miller
Margaret de Sghweinitz
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