

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

WILLIAM D. BRIGGS

With the death of William Dinsmore Briggs on February 17, 1941, Stanford University has lost a distinguished scholar and an inspiring teacher of English. Dr. Briggs had been associated with the university as student or teacher during most of its fifty years. He came to Stanford as a student in 1892, was graduated with the A.B. degree in 1896, and then spent the next three years in graduate work at Johns Hopkins and Harvard universities. After receiving the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Harvard, he taught English and German at the University of Vermont and Western Reserve University, returning to Stanford as a member of the English faculty in 1906. During the last 16 years Dr. Briggs has served as executive head of the English department. He would have reached the age of retirement after the next academic year.

Professor Briggs's interests were unusually wide and varied. His early training was taken with a view to becoming a physician. His interest gradually transferred from scientific study to English philology and literature. During the earlier years of teaching at Stanford, he assisted Dr. Ewald Flügel by giving some courses in the department of English Philology, although most of his teaching lay in the department of English literature. During his vacations from teaching, he traveled extensively, studying in various cultural centers in Germany, England, and elsewhere, adding constantly to his scholarly training in the field of English. Gradually his work was centered in the Renaissance period of English literary history, and it was largely in this field that he made his chief contributions as scholar and teacher. He was particularly noted for his excellent edition of Marlowe's Edward II, and his articles on Marlowe and Ben Johnson, published in various learned journals. In recent years Dr. Briggs had made rich collections of material on the history of English criticism and on the life and thought of the 16th century, which it is hoped can be made available through publication.

His most lasting monument, however, is in the memories of his students and colleagues. His graduate courses have long been outstanding, and his wise and unselfish administration of the department of English has contributed greatly to the successful growth of English studies at Stanford. A large number of able graduate students have been advanced to degrees under his scholarly influence and guidance, and all phases of the work of the department have been promoted and improved.

Professor Briggs possessed encyclopedic knowledge in his own field and illuminated this knowledge by his wide learning in history, philosophy, and kindred subjects. A calm and dispassionate judgment in the presentation of a wealth of scholarly detail made his teaching attractive to generations of students of English literature, and his courses are remembered and praised by all who have been privileged to take them. By his colleagues who have come to know him best he will be remembered with affection and appreciation.

Be it resolved, therefore, that we, the Academic Council of Stanford University, express our appreciation of the faithful and valuable service of William Dinsmore Briggs and extend our sympathy to his widow, Ethel Twitchell Briggs, and further, that we record in the minutes of the Council this memorial to one of Stanford's brilliant graduates and distinguished teachers.

Arthur G. Kennedy
A. C. Whitaker
A. Grinan