

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

JOHN E. COOVER (1872 - 1938)

Dr. John Edgar Coover, Professor Emeritus of Psychology, died at his home on the Stanford campus on February 19, 1938.

Dr. Coover was born at Remington, Indiana, March 16, 1872. His early education was received in the Public schools of Pennsylvania and Kansas. After a term at McPherson College he was employed in Colorado as a telegrapher and typesetter, a fact which influenced his later experimental work in the psychology of learning. In 1899 he received the degree of Bachelor of Pedagogy from the State Normal School at Greeley, Colorado and began his teaching career as a principal in the public schools. In 1899 he matriculated at Stanford University, where in 1904 he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and in 1905 the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology. After five years as principal of the high schools of Sonora and Dixon, California, he returned to Stanford to complete his graduate studies and to serve as laboratory assistant in the Department of Psychology. The degree of Doctor of Philosophy which he received in 1912 was the first doctorate in Psychology awarded at Stanford.

Upon completing his graduate work Dr. Coover was appointed to the newly created Psychical Research Fellowship established by Thomas Welton Stanford. He held this appointment for twenty-five years. Throughout this quarter-century of service his investigations of psychical phenomena were supplemented by teaching and research in other fields of experimental psychology, particularly in habit formation, psychophysics and statistical methods. He was promoted to the ranks of Assistant Professor in 1914, Associate Professor in 1921, and Professor in 1930.

In 1918-19 Dr. Coover served as Captain, S.C., U.S.A., with assignment to the Psychological Section of the Medical Research Laboratory at Hazelhurst Field., Mineola, Long Island, N. Y. His duties involved the evaluation and interpretation of psychometric and physical tests of aptitude for aviation service, and his contributions to this problem won high acclaim from his fellow officers. He was Associate Professor at Johns Hopkins University during the academic year 1927-28 and a member of the psychology faculty in summer sessions at Colorado State Agricultural College between 1923 and 1934. Except for these brief interruptions, his work at Stanford was continuous from his appointment as assistant in 1910 until his retirement as Professor Emeritus in 1937.

Dr. Coover's aptitude for scientific investigation was demonstrated in his first graduate year by an experimental study on the general practice effect of special exercise. His doctors dissertation in the same field ranks as one of the most important contributions ever made on the controversial issue of formal discipline, and marks the turning of psychological opinion away from extreme views which had become current. The interest aroused by his experiments in habit formation were permanent and led to extended investigations on various aspects of the learning process. Besides throwing important light on the theory of learning his experiments yielded two extremely valuable by-products of a practical nature: the kinesthetic method of learning touch-typing and a new system of abbreviated writing known as notescript. Part of his contributions to

learning are embodied in six publications appearing between 1922 and 1936, and even more important parts were in process of preparation for the press when he died.

For his epoch-making investigations of occult phenomena Dr. Coover will be long remembered. Undoubtedly the favorable attention directed to his scientific approach was a potent factor in inducing Thomas Welton Stanford to bequeath the residue of his fortune to Stanford University for psychological research. Dr. Coover's publications in this field began in 1913 with an article on thought transference and continued until his masterly **essay** in 1927 on "Metapsychics and the Incredulity of Psychologists". His eight publications on psychical research all exemplify the highest standards of scientific procedure and critical judgment. One of them, a monumental work entitled "Experiments in Psychical Research", is justly regarded as the most important single contribution which has appeared in this field.

Dr. Coover welcomed retirement as an opportunity to prepare for the press his massive accumulation of unpublished data on the psychology of learning, psychical research, and statistical theory. He entered at once upon this task with characteristic energy, but his life was unfortunately cut short before the undertaking was more than well under way. It is hoped that a considerable portion of the material can be prepared for publication by his colleagues, former students, and friends; other portions, it is to be regretted, may not be susceptible to treatment by others.

In all his teaching and research Dr. Coover adhered rigidly to the highest standards of scholarship and scientific caution. It was of his inmost nature to prefer quality to quantity and to pursue his work with complete lack of concern for popular approval or material advancement. His single-hearted devotion to science will ever remain an inspiration to his professional colleagues and to the select group of students who were privileged to work under his guidance.

Be it resolved that we, the Academic Council of Stanford University, extend to the family of Dr. Coover our deepest sympathy for their tragic and untimely loss, and record this memorial in our minutes.