

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

### OLIVER MARTIN JOHNSTON (1866 – 1953)

Stanford University has lost another link with its early years in the passing, on July 29, 1953, of one of its distinguished scholars and former administrators, Oliver Martin Johnston, Professor of Romanic Languages Emeritus.

Dr. Johnston's teaching career at Stanford University extended over a period of thirty-five years, from 1897 to 1932, when he became Professor Emeritus. During the last twenty-two of those years, from 1910 to 1932, he served as Executive Head of the Department of Romanic Languages.

Oliver Martin Johnston was born at Bastrop, Louisiana, on October 17, 1866. After receiving the B. A. and M. A. degrees at Mississippi College, in 1890 and 1892, respectively, he obtained the Ph. D. degree from Johns Hopkins University in 1896. In 1897 he was called to Stanford University, which was to be his home for fifty-six years.

A French Grammar for High Schools and Colleges, written in collaboration with the late Professor Elmore, and a long list of articles and monographs on French and Italian language and literature and, especially, on Dante, are testimony of his scholarship. After retirement he published an account of his life under the title, The Measure of a Man.

Dr. Johnston traveled extensively, during vacation periods, in Italy and France. As a visiting professor, during summer sessions, he taught at the Universities of California, Colorado, and Washington. He took an active part in professional societies: he served as Secretary of the Philological Association of the Pacific Coast from 1909 to 1913, and was elected President in 1917; he was elected Vice-President of the Modern Language Association of America in 1917; President of the Modern Language Association of Central and Northern California, and President of the American Association of Teachers of Italian in 1931.

A deeply religious man, he was one of the founders, and for many years a member of the board of trustees, of the Berkeley Baptist Divinity School at Berkeley, California. He also served his denomination as one of the early promoters of Baptist summer camps and laymen's organizations. He had in him the stuff of a crusader -- a crusader for truth and right -- and at the same time he was the gentlest of men.

Dr. Johnston's colleagues and students remember him as an able administrator, a wise counselor, and a generous friend. Above all, he was a gifted and devoted teacher. Despite extensive administrative duties, he continued to offer, up to the time of his retirement, a variety of courses in Old French Language and Literature, Old Provençal, Classical French Literature, Italian Literature of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, and Dante, in which latter field he

was a recognized authority. His course on the Divine Comedy was one of the most inspiring in the University. He pursued the study of Dante up to the very end of his life.

Stanford University was indeed fortunate to have, in the years in which it was acquiring its reputation as a great university, a man of the stature of Dr. Johnston as Head of its Department of Romanic Languages.

Aurelio M. Espinosa, Jr.  
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