IN MEMORIAM

ROBERT ADGER LAW

R. A. Law, Emeritus Professor of English, died on August 17, 1961, from injuries of a fall. He is survived by his wife, four children--Elizabeth (Mrs. James Hazlett, of San Mateo, California), Joanna (Mrs. David Martin, of Palm Beach, Florida), Thomas (a lawyer of Fort Worth, Texas), and Mary Hart (Mrs. Reith Harrington, of Santa Rosa, California)--, and by ten grandchildren.

He was born March 8, 1879, in Spartanburg, South Carolina, his father, the Reverend Thomas Hart Law, a Presbyterian minister in this city. In 1898 young Law graduated B.A. from Wofford College, in Spartanburg, and after a brief period of teaching enrolled as graduate student in Trinity College (now Duke University), which, in 1902, awarded him the M.A. He won scholarships both here and at Harvard, where under the great Shakespearean, G. L. Kittredge, he gained the Ph.D. in 1905. The next year Harvard did him the honor of retaining him on the English staff, and in 1906 Dr. Law accepted an invitation from the University of Texas to join the Department of English. At this time in the early history of this institution Professor Callaway was recruiting a staff to include such other young scholars as Payne, Griffith, Campbell, and Wharey. Four years later, in 1910, Law married Elizabeth Mannigault, of Summerville, South Carolina. Advancing steadily through the ranks, in 1919 he was made Full Professor.

When in 1957 Professor Law retired he had served the University for 51 years. The record of these years is one of single-minded dedication to scholarship and teaching, yet not without signal contributions in various fields both academic and religious.
Throughout his long association with the University Dr. Law managed judiciously to divide his time between teaching and research. Generously sharing courses in the English Renaissance with his younger colleagues, for a half century he stood as chief mentor in this important period—a Texas Kittredge in the field of Shakespeare. Scores of his students, now teachers over Texas and the nation, went on to study under him for the graduate degrees. Deeply involved as he usually found himself in scholarly projects of his own, Dr. Law never neglected the primary claims of his students. As a former student has written:

He had a keen sense of the dignity of the human being, and his kindly regard and courteous manner conferred the status of friend on those who came under his tutelage. In later years when he indulged in prideful moments, it was always in terms of the success of his students in their later careers.

A glance through his bibliography is proof of the range and direction of Dr. Law's publications. Generally speaking, his scholarly interests over the years have centered upon the sources of Shakespeare's plays and the relationship of these sources to the genius of the dramatist. Dr. Law's eminence is reflected not in merely belonging to various academic organizations—these are listed under his name in Who's Who, Directory of American Scholars, and other such sources—but in a record of his work as member. Regularly Dr. Law has represented the University at the annual meetings of national and regional Modern Language societies, always active in leading discussion. His popularity in this role has gone far in identifying Texas with the best traditions of American scholarship. The following list exemplifies the variety of Dr. Law's activities: 1909, he was a charter member of the Folklore Society of Texas and, 1912-1913, its President; 1919, Chairman of the English Section of the Texas State Teachers Association; 1927-1929, Chairman of the
Shakespeare Group of the Modern Language Association of America; 1933, member of the Committee of Twelve of the National Conference of Teachers of English, to study the teaching of English; 1934-1935, Chairman of the English Drama Group of the M.L.A.; 1931-1934, member and later Chairman of the Monograph Award Committee of the M.L.A.; 1939-1943, Chairman of the Supervisory Committee for the New Variorum Shakespeare; 1949-1961, member of the Advisory Board of The Shakespeare Association of America. In 1923 Dr. Law delivered the Commencement address at Wofford College, and in 1949 his alma mater conferred upon him the Litt.D.; in 1940 he received the LL.D. from Austin College, at Sherman, Texas.

Within the University Dr. Law has held similarly important posts. Elected in 1925 to honorary membership in Phi Beta Kappa, in 1942 he served as President of Texas Alpha Chapter; and 1947 he delivered the annual lecture before the chapter at Rice Institute. Here at the University he was Chairman of the Department of English, 1923-1925; a member of the Graduate Council, 1937-1941; of the Interscholastic League Council, 1923-1925; of the Athletic Council, 1923-1927, and its Chairman, 1925-1927; of the Editorial Board of Studies in English, 1925-1943. In 1955 Dr. Law served as Councillor of the Texas Poetry Society, and from 1959 until his death he was Chairman of the Texas Joint English Committee for School and College, a group directing English workshops each fall over the state.

Such has been the range of Dr. Law's services for the improvement of education in Texas and beyond. When as a young man in 1906 Dr. Law came to Texas from Harvard, the University was in its infancy. Since that time he has not only witnessed its growth but has shared intimately the responsibility of directing the channels of that growth. In the field of
English studies at Texas he joined Griffith and others in promoting scholarship of a high order. From their example as well as precept generations of students—graduate and undergraduate—have gained a truer understanding of learning and of life.

Still another phase of his work remains to be noted. To Dr. R. A. Law, religion was a motive force which shaped all living, the church as warm and vibrant part of his life as his home and his University teaching. For fifty-four years until his death he remained a devoted member of the University Presbyterian Church. In May, 1907, he was ordained and installed as a deacon. Soon he was teaching a Bible class and helping young Dan Penick to establish the first program designed for college students to be undertaken by any of the Presbyterian (U.S.) churches in the nation. Though Dr. Law was younger than his colleagues on the Session, he was made an elder on April 10, 1910. The following year he was elected Clerk of the Session, a position which he held for some fifteen years. In this post Dr. Law became an authority on church order and procedures. He knew the history of the church and was intimately acquainted with the evolution of its doctrine and customs. Pastors who have served the University Presbyterian Church frequently turned to him for rules of church order or historical interpretations of procedure.

In the early 1920s the congregation of the University Presbyterian Church faced the serious problem of increased enrollment at the University. As chairman of a Building Committee Dr. Law played a significant role in the campaign that resulted in the dedication in 1926 of a new educational building, costing $125,000.
Dr. Law's church interests extended beyond the local church. As early as 1910 he was Chairman of a Home Mission committee that established religious services in several areas of Austin. During the years, he represented his local church at many meetings of the Presbytery. For the Synod of Texas he served for nearly a decade on a committee to develop and supervise Presbyterian colleges, schools, and homes within the state. He was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary for thirty-six years—1922-1958. On occasion he represented his Presbytery at meetings of General Assembly, and in 1951 he was elected Vice-Moderator. Such has been the long and distinguished service of Dr. Law to his church.

For Dr. Law retirement from the class room meant no folding of the hands. Aside from his continued publications, in March, 1960, before the College Conference of Teachers of English, in Houston, he delivered a paper entitled "Griffith as a Texas Pioneer," a theme on which Dr. Law could speak with feeling and authority as one who had shared equally with Griffith the pioneering days of the University. His last scholarly study Dr. Law read just a year later, March, 1961, at a meeting of the South-Central Renaissance Conference, in Georgetown, Texas. In his subject, "The Composition of Shakespeare's Lancastrian Trilology," he returned to the history plays, a subject to which he had devoted much attention through the years.

Apart from an instinctive bearing as a Southern gentleman, Dr. Law's most distinctive quality was an uncompromising principle of conduct which was both moral and intellectual, its origin tracing perhaps to the stern religious discipline of his father's home. Wherever the source, this trait marked Dr. Law as a man who in his devotion to the
cause of education in Texas did not shrink from a fight for its improve-
ment. Such men, whether on the floor of a faculty meeting or off, are
not universally approved. But those who have thought him wrong would
never have questioned his sincerity or his high purpose. In manner
less often persuasive than militant on behalf of what he knew to be
best, he, too, was

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph.

Joseph R. Smiley, President
The University of Texas

Eugene W. Nelson, Secretary
The General Faculty

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