IN MEMORIAM

JEFFERSON REA SPELL

(November 9, 1886-March 3, 1967)

Jefferson Rea Spell was born in Pottsboro, Grayson County, Texas. He attended Allen Academy in Bryan from 1901 to 1905 and The University of Texas in Austin intermittently from 1905 to 1913, when he took his Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in classics. During this period he also taught Latin in the high schools of Bartlett (Williamson County), San Antonio, and Navasota (Grimes County). He was married in 1908 to Lota May Harrigan, who was to become his life-long collaborator and a meticulous and productive scholar in her own right as well as a highly successful teacher of music. They had one daughter, Lota Rea, who in 1935 married Clyde W. Wilkinson, now a professor of English in Florida State University in Tallahassee.

In January 1920 Spell was appointed Instructor in Romance Languages at The University of Texas at Austin, and in the same year he earned an M. A. degree at The University of Texas at Austin, writing his thesis on "Spanish Teaching in the United States." He was advanced to the rank of Adjunct Professor in 1927 (called Assistant Professor from 1936), Associate Professor in 1939, and to Professor in 1944, serving in this capacity until his retirement in 1960 as Professor Emeritus. In 1931 he received his Ph.D. degree from the University of
Pennsylvania for a dissertation entitled "The Life and Works of José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi" and published under this same title by The University of Pennsylvania Press. From 1944 to 1946 he was invited to be Guest Professor in the Summer School of the National University of Mexico. In 1939 the Mexican Academy conferred on Dr. Spell its Diploma de Honor for his work in the field of Mexican literature. He was a member of the Modern Language Association of America, of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, and of the International Institute of Ibero-American Literature, of which he was Vice-President and Acting President from 1943 to 1949. In 1967, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese the Texas Chapter named him Member of the Year, in memoriam; and the Association at its Annual Meeting in Chicago awarded to his widow a handsome desk pen inscribed "Jefferson Rea Spell, en señal de aprecio por servicios meritorios prestados a la A.A.T.S.P."

Two interests may be said to have dominated Dr. Spell's intellectual life: one, his efforts to establish the claim to literary excellence of the Mexican writer José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi; the other, his desire to bridge the gap between the Anglo-American and the Ibero-American cultures of the continent. In both endeavors he was singularly successful.
It was very early in his scholarly career that he became interested in the works of Lizardi, an interest which continued unabated till the day of his death, when he was working on the definitive edition of this author's chief work, El Periquillo Sarniento, published in 1816, and recognized as the first Latin American novel. It is not too much to say that it is owing to Dr. Spell's efforts that this work has become a 'best seller' in Mexico. His one-volume edition sold, between 1959, when it appeared, and 1965, some 35,000 copies, thus exceeding the sales of Don Quijote.

In the field of inter-cultural understanding Professor Spell also made a lasting mark. As literary historian and critic, as bibliographer, as reviewer of dozens of books, as builder of the Latin American Collection in The University of Texas Library, and as a highly esteemed teacher he helped to make Spanish American literature better known and understood by his fellow countrymen. In addition to his scholarly works on Lizardi, Dr. Spell wrote many books and articles tracing the influence of Rousseau's thought in Latin America before 1833, editing plays of the Mexican writer Eusebio Vela, interpreting the work of outstanding Spanish-American writers such as Gálvez, Güiraldes, Azuela, Barrios, Rivera, Quiroga, Gallegos, Alegría, and many others.

For Texans it will be of interest to learn that Dr. Spell was the first to write about the García Library, bought in 1920 by The University of Texas on the suggestion of Librarian E. W. Winkler, Historian Eugene Barker, and Dr. Charles W. Hackett, Professor of Latin
American History. He collaborated with Sturgis E. Leavitt and Madaline W. Nichols on what has become one of the basic research tools in the field, *Revistas Hispanoamericanas, Indice Bibliográfico, 1843-1938*. Largely through his efforts, the library holdings in Latin American literature, which numbered scarcely two dozen books in 1920, when he was appointed instructor, had at the time of his death grown to some 25,000 volumes and is now generally considered to be one of the finest collections of Latin American literature in the world.

Dr. Spell was a hard worker, an indefatigable reader, and a great traveler. During vacations, in the company of his wife, he visited not only Mexico, which he loved, but also Cuba and every country of Central and South America except Venezuela. The Spells also traveled widely in Europe, visiting England, Switzerland, Portugal, but of course more particularly Spain. And everywhere they went, they met scholars and made friends for themselves and for their university.

Dr. Spell was highly respected both at home and abroad as a pioneer in cultivation of cultural relations between Spanish America and the United States. During his more than forty years at The University of Texas, he had under his direction many students, to whom he gave unstintingly of his time and counsel. His departmental colleagues remember him as a gentle man, co-operative and quietly efficient. Having received a thorough classical education as an undergraduate, he maintained throughout his life a wide variety of humanistic interests.
Dr. Spell was a devoted husband and father. He bore the infirmities of age with patience and fortitude. Of a rather retiring and unobtrusive personality, Dr. Spell was most intimately known by a small circle of friends who affectionately remember his quiet sense of humor, his loyalty, and his unfailing considerateness. He will be missed by many.

Lizardi asked that his tombstone read: "He did all he could for his country." Similarly it might be said of Spell: "He did all he could to make Spanish-American, and especially Mexican, literature known and appreciated." In so doing he went far toward bridging the age-old gap between the Anglo- and Hispanic-American cultures.

\[Signature\]

Norman Hackerman
President of The University of Texas at Austin, Texas

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Eugene M. Nelson
Secretary of the General Faculty

These resolutions were prepared by a Special Committee consisting of Professors Lee M. Hollander, A. B. Swanson, and Theodore Andersson, Chairman.