

Leslie Nathan Broughton

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Like every indefatigable scholar, Leslie Nathan Broughton found many things to engage his attention. Because of an interest in teaching, he prepared two useful textbooks; as a friend of scholarly publication, he helped edit the *Cornell Studies in English* for many years; and as an authority on the romantic poets, he reviewed several important books. But these were incidental to his work on four major projects.

About 1900, students of literature discovered how much they could learn about the major poets by studying their use of words. Appreciating the value of word-lists for this purpose, Professor Broughton joined with five other editors in compiling a concordance of the poems of Keats (published 1917), and later undertook, with Benjamin F. Stelter, a similar service for Robert Browning. Although he intended his preface to the latter work merely as generous acknowledgment of assistance from some hundred volunteers and agencies, he unintentionally revealed his own abilities as a director of such complex enterprises.

Then he turned to two other huge tasks. Annually for twenty years he collected, transcribed, and arranged some three thousand items for the invaluable *Bibliography of the Modern Humanities Research Association*. And he joined with Professor Clark S. Northup in preparing a bibliography (soon to appear) of writings relating to Browning.

At an early time he developed an enthusiasm for the character and writings of William Wordsworth. His dissertation on the Theocritan influence and later his teaching, kept him close to the subject. When a donor presented to the University a large collection of Wordsworth's books, letters, and similar materials, Professor Broughton was placed in charge of it and gave valuable guidance and direction in regard to technical processing and management. During his service as curator, he saw the items increase from 1700 to over 3000—a few standard, others rare, and many unique. He also published catalogues and volumes of letters of which almost any modern discussion of the poet must take account. In the Library, his dry pleasantries and knowledge of bibliographical matters made him friends and admirers among the staff.

Professor Broughton's students found in him a teacher who believed that they could acquire a better education by working out their own conclusions than by accepting without thought conclusions that he could easily have supplied ; hence, he often listened with kindness and patience to discussions that he must have found elementary, and refrained from offering corrections that must have seemed to him obvious. His colleagues learned that he took special pleasure in helping others with their work, even at the expense of time and labor to himself. If some one

delivered a paper, he made a point of attending the meeting and saying an appreciative word; indeed, he visited the campus upon such an errand less than a month before his death.

But perhaps the quality that especially impressed those who had much to do with him was his devotion to his subject. What in other persons might have seemed a preference or an accomplishment became with him something for which to live. To him (at least, so his students could easily believe) the personalities of Wordsworth and Coleridge had remained as vital and compelling as though the poets still were alive. In his presentation of them, the men and their writings blended into a harmonious picture, which one needed only to attend to if he would increase his enjoyment and understanding of hundreds of matters. Since the days of Browning societies and Kipling clubs, no authors have attracted at Cornell such devoted and wide-spread attention—an attention that culminated in 1950 in a series of exercises of national interest. The modest and industrious man who lent so much aid to bringing this situation about will not easily be replaced.

W. H. French, B. S. Monroe, G. F. Shepherd, Jr.