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September 2015

Henry Johnson Correspondence

Henry Johnson 1855-1918

Frances R. Johnson

Henry Ernest Dunnack 1867-1938

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Recommended Citation

Johnson, Henry 1855-1918; Johnson, Frances R.; Dunnack, Henry Ernest 1867-1938; and Maine State Library, "Henry Johnson Correspondence" (2015). *Maine Writers Correspondence*. 291.

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JOHNSON, Henry.

Born at Gardiner, June 25, 1855.

Died, February, 1918.

Third
February
1922

Dear Sir;

I am making a collection of books by Maine authors to be placed in a special section of the State Library. These books are not to be lent but are to form a permanent collection so that students and other persons may have an opportunity to study at any time. We have already made a good start in securing volumes for this collection. We have the works of Edwin Arlington Robinson, Holman Day and a great many others.

We are asking each author to autograph the book and to add any notes that may explain why the book was written if there is any particular thing in connection with the writing or publishing of it. I am familiar with your "Dante", "The Seer" and the little pamphlet on "Sacred Themes". If you will be kind enough to send us these three books properly inscribed together with your bill for the same it will be a great favor and will add very much to the items in our collection. I am not asking any one to give the library these copies of their books. Please accept my thanks for anything you may do to help us in this matter.

Very truly yours,

MAINE STATE LIBRARY

by

Librarian.

Prof. Henry Johnson,
Bowdoin College,
Brunswick, Maine.

JOHNSON, Henry.

College professor; born in Gardiner, Maine, June 25, 1855; son of Richard Elliot and Louisa Abbie (Reed) J; A. B. Bowdoin College, 1874; student at Universitys of Göttingen, Leipzig and Berlin; PhD., Berlin, 1884; has studied and traveled about five years in Europe at various periods since 1875; (Litt.D., Bowdoin College, 1914); married Frances M. Robinson of Thomaston, Maine, July 26, 1881. Professor of modern languages, 1877, librarian, 1880-3 Bowdoin College, and curator Bowdoin Art Collection, Walker Art Building, since 1894. Member Dante Society, Cambridge, Mass., Modern Language Association of America, Archaeological Institute of America, Phi Beta Kappa. Editor; Schiller's Ballads, 1888; Midsummer Night's Dream, 1888. Author: Where Beauty is and Other Poems, 1898; The Seer, and Other Poems, 1910. Translator; Les Trophées, Jose-Maria de Heredia, The Sonnets, 1910; La Comedia di Dante Alighieri, 1892-1914. Died, February, 1918.

For further biographical data see also pamphlet "Henry Johnson" in Maine Collection.

233 WALKER STREET,
BROOKS, MAINE.

Feb. 18th - 1922

H. E. Dumont, Esq.
Librarian of State Library
Augusta.

My dear Mr. Dumont:

Your letter of the 3rd
addressed to my late
husband, Prof. Henry Johnson,
should have been answered by
myself earlier but illness,
and inconvenience in, at that
time, putting my hand upon
one of the books, induced
the delay - My husband died
in Feb. 1918. I am sure he
would be glad to have me
comply with your desire to
have him reprinted in the
State Library and would feel

honored by such representation.
I am forwarding by parcel.
post. all his published work
except the "Devine Comedy", a
^{extra} copy of which I do not have.
If desired they may be
obtained of the Yale University
Press at New Haven - I
am glad to present them
I am forwarding to the
Library - I regret the books
are not autographed - I have
inserted some of his autographs
as being all to be possible to
do -

Very sincerely yours
Francis W. Johnson.
(Mrs. Henry Johnson)

253 MAINE STREET,
BRUNSWICK, MAINE.

Feb. 22nd.

My dear Mr. Sumner:

I find the enclosed
letter of the 18th. in a
box with other papers,
quite safe-tracked, and
am forwarding immediately.
I am ever sorry for this
stupid delay. I hope
the package of books, which
I am sure was posted,
reached you in due
season.

Very sincerely Yours
Francis D. Johnson
(Mrs. Henry Johnson)

Twenty-third
February, 1922

Dear Mrs. Johnson;

I received the books some days ago and this morning your letter came to hand.

I cannot tell you how grateful we are for the splendid gift of Professor Johnson's books. Fortunately we have a copy of the "Divine Comedy", so that now our set is complete.

In addition to what you have already done, I wonder if you can send me a biography or tell me where I can find one. I wish to be able to supply all who may come to the State Library for information about Maine authors with all the information necessary to make a thorough study of that author.

I am sending to you under separate cover a copy of "The Maine Book" with my compliments. This book may be of interest to you.

Sincerely yours,

State Librarian

Mrs. Frances R. Johnson,
256 Main Street,
Brunswick, Maine.

A VERSE TRANSLATION OF DANTE.

The Divine Comedy, Translated by Henry Johnson. New Haven; Yale University Press, 1915, \$2.50 net.

The new translation of Dante, by Prof. Henry Johnson of Bowdoin College is reviewed as follows in *The Nation*:

A translator of the Divine Comedy, says Professor Johnson, "must receive his first impulse from within, and must continue to the end in a kind of solitude, looking to a reward that is ideal." But with the completion of a work so excellent as this, the long solitude changes into a rich and enduring companionship. To the student of Dante, whether novice or adept, this book will bring deeper devotion, and, in some measure, fuller intelligence. The rendering, faithful and vigorous, at once interprets; and its new emphases light up many a waiting facet of doctrine or of imagery.

Mr. Johnson's translation is, like Longfellow's, in line for line blank verse. The comparison thus inevitably suggested honors both men. Both seek, first of all, absolute fidelity to the poet's thought; and both, through patient scholarship, achieve. Longfellow strives, moreover, to reproduce with the utmost possible exactness the inner form of the original. He manages nearly always to equate line with line, and he retains to a remarkable degree, sometimes throughout whole sentences, the very order of the Italian words. But the resultant phrasing, admirable as a tour de force, is not infrequently obscure

II.

and somewhat foreign in its idiom.

For the will to be formally exact, Mr. Johnson substitutes the will to be clear; and his success in this respect affords the main distinction of his work. The phrasing, even in very difficult passages, satisfies the eye of the analytical mind--and the listening ear as well. For reading aloud, this version is better adapted, in the reviewer's opinion, than any previous verse translation of the Divine Comedy. In the classroom it carries the meaning directly and cogently; and it will yield memorable service among groups of friends.

The greater part of the task is well done; and there are many lines and tercets of notable beauty and power. Moreover, the workmanship rises when the content is most poetic, so that the finest passages are admirably rendered. Francesca's confession, for instance, the interview amid the burning tombs, the coming overseas to Purgatory, and the vision of the Cross in the fifth heaven are retold--worthily. We quote the first lines of the first passage:

And I began: "Poet, I fain would speak

With those two yonder, who go side by

side,

And seem to be so light upon the wind."

And he to me: "Thou shalt observe when they

Draw near to us; then call them in the

name

Of Love, that is their guide, and they

will come."

III.

Soon as the wind had bent their course to-
ward us,

I lifted up my voice: "O weary souls,
Come speak with us, if it be not for-
bidden."

As doves, when summoned by their longing,
fly

On open, steady wings to the sweet nest,
Borne onward through the air by their
desire;

So left they then the throng where Dido was,
And came to us through the malignant
air,

So powerful was my affection's call.

"O living creature, gracious and benign,
Who art now journeying through this
dark air,

Visiting us who dyed the world blood-red,
Were now the Universal King our friend,
We would both pray to him to grant thee
peace,

Because thou pitiest our wayward ill.
What pleases thee to hear, and what to speak,
That we will hear, and thereof speak to
you,

IV.

While yet the wind is hushed for us, as
now."

Johnson, Henry.

Shakespear's The Tragedie of Macbeth
A Midsommer's Nights Dreame
Les Trophees, Heredia, Sonnets.
On Sacred Themes
The Seer and Other Poems
Where Beauty Is.

Autographed: Henry Johnson.

(These autographs were tipped in
the books by Mrs. Johnson, as she
presented the books to the library
after Mr. Johnson's death.)

The Seer and Other Poems. (2nd copy)

Autographed: Dr. George T. Little
with the old-time esteem
Nov. 24, 1910. of Henry Johnson.