

## *Obituaries*

### GEORGE LYMAN KITTREDGE

The loss of George Lyman Kittredge was a sad blow to the scholarly world. Many of us were accustomed when we stumbled in knowledge to think, "Oh! well, we'll ask Professor Kittredge about that." There are many times when we do not know where to turn now that he is gone.

Mr. Kittredge was born in Boston on February 28, 1860, the son of Edward Lyman and Deborah (Lewis) Kittredge. From Roxbury Latin he went to Harvard College where, with an attitude of playful ease, he swept up prizes and honors; graduating as the first scholar of a learned class. Scholarship did not demand of him seclusion and obscurity; he was Ivy Orator for his class and president of the O.K., the chief literary society of the day. For six years after graduation he taught Latin at Phillips Exeter Academy and on June 29, 1886, he married Frances Evelyn Gordon of Exeter. The next twelve months they passed in Europe, particularly Germany, where part of the time was spent in university study.

After another year at Exeter, Mr. Kittredge went to Cambridge to become the successor of Francis J. Child under whom he had done informal graduate work in 1882-84. It seemed impossible at the time that anyone could replace Professor Child, but that great scholar chose his successor well. Mr. Kittredge took up and finished the work on Scottish ballads and then went on to become master of all of the fields in which his predecessor had been internationally famous. Indeed, so well did he wear his old

teacher's mantle that the anecdotes which were told about Child fifty years ago have now become favorite "Kitty" stories of a new generation of Harvard men. Authentic anecdotes enough soon gathered on his colorful character. Recently there came to light in the correspondence of a colleague one which might well be preserved here because it is the authentic beginning of a tradition. This colleague heard a Radcliffe girl praising Professor Kittredge to a friend, a student of science in Harvard. Finally the boy asked plaintively, "Who is this Kittredge, anyway?" After a moment of shocked silence the girl asked, "Why Rolland, have you ever heard of *God*?"

The mannerisms which Professor Kittredge showed in his relations with the undergraduates were a deliberate teaching method and not the simple vanity of a college character. To the graduate students who could take stronger intellectual meat he was quite another man, gentle and intensely interested in their problems. Men who had observed him from afar were surprised to find upon nearer acquaintance that behind the brusque manner was a thorough courtesy and respect as well as consideration for lesser minds. His ideal of scholarship left no room for vanity or egotism. The world might regard him as the unchallenged master of his field, but he had no such confidence in his infallibility. His internationally famous studies of Beowulf, Chaucer, and Shakespeare were based on a profound knowledge of the classics and of the medieval and modern languages and literatures of Europe; and his attitude that such a preparation was desirable for the study of English literature has greatly influenced college teaching in America, although even Harvard had to recognize, finally, that the ordinary candidate for the doctorate in literature could not acquire such a mastery of philology.

The first of Professor Kittredge's scholarly books was

*The Language of Chaucer's Troilus* which appeared in 1894, the year in which he attained a full professorship. Of the dozen other important books which came from his pen we know best *The Old Farmer and His Almanac* (1905), and *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (1929). In addition to these he contributed more than sixty articles to the publications of learned societies. At various times he was president of the Modern Language Association, the American Folk-Lore Society, and the Colonial Society of Massachusetts. He was a member of the American Philosophical Society, a corresponding fellow of the British Academy, an honorary fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and of Jesus College, Cambridge. Nearer at home, he was active in the Prince Society and the Club of Odd Volumes. He was elected to the American Antiquarian Society in 1901 and in April, 1907, read before it his famous "Notes on Witchcraft" to which George Lincoln Burr replied four years later.

At various times Mr. Kittredge received honorary degrees from Brown, Chicago, Johns Hopkins, Harvard, McGill, Oxford, Union, and Yale. He served as Northcliffe Lecturer at the University of London in 1932 and in 1936 retired from active teaching. His remaining years were devoted to editing new editions of Shakespeare. He died on July 23, 1941, survived by his widow and three children, Dora, Frances Gordon, and Henry Crocker. C. K. S.

### CHARLES HENRY TAYLOR

In the death of Charles Henry Taylor the American Antiquarian Society lost one of its staunchest supporters and most active members. Not since Isaiah Thomas has any one donor given to the Library so great a mass of historical material. For thirty years books, pamphlets, news-

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