IN MEMORIAM
REGINALD HARVEY GRIFFITH

Reginald Harvey Griffith, son of Rev. Richard Henry Griffith, a Baptist minister, was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, February 3, 1873, and died quietly in Austin, December 10, 1957, being buried there two days later. Dr. Griffith had long preparation for the teaching of English. After graduation at Furman University in 1892 as Master of Arts, he taught for five years in North and South Carolina public schools and one year acted as professor of English in Furman University. Meanwhile he had spent two years of graduate study in Johns Hopkins University, and in 1901-02 was the senior fellow in English in the University of Chicago. Three years later he completed the requirements there for his doctorate of philosophy. He then married in 1906 Miss Alice Mary Matlock, who by several years preceded him in death, leaving two daughters.

To the University of Texas Griffith came in 1902 as a young instructor in English, and rising by degrees attained in 1919 a full professorship. He was appointed by President Splawn a member of the original graduate faculty on its formation in 1925, was elected in 1929 an honorary member of Phi Beta Kappa, delivered three lectures in 1936 as the University Research Professor, and retired as professor emeritus in 1952. At that time he had taught English on this campus longer than anyone else, lacking a half-century by only a few months.

Academic recognition came to Professor Griffith from several quarters. In 1910 he was appointed to the Board of Visitors of the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, and acted as chairman of one of the important committees of the board. He served three summers as professor of English in the University of Chicago, and one summer each in Columbia University, Duke, and the University of Colorado. In 1925 his alma mater, Furman University, conferred on him the Litt. D. degree. Nominated by the customary committee to be president of the South-Central Modern Language Association he refused that honor but was afterward elected the first honorary member of that body. He was also voted an honorary member of the Texas Conference of College Teachers of English, of which he had been founder and first president. His name appeared several times on
the annual program of the Modern Language Association of America for the presentation of research papers, and so long as his health permitted, he was active in the meetings of the local Fortnightly Club.

A keen pleasure gained from association with students, genuine love of learning, and fondness for the game of research made Dr. Griffith an excellent teacher. Upon his retirement during the fall of 1952, all salary payment naturally ceased, but in ignorance of the strict legal regulations, he continued to meet and instruct an advanced class in eighteenth century drama until the end of the semester. He knew how to convey his enthusiasm for the subject taught to his students, particularly graduate students, and to induce them to carry on. It was under his direction that Floyd Stovall, now chairman of the English Department of the University of Virginia, wrote the first acceptable University of Texas dissertation with English as a major. He directed seventeen other dissertations and some ninety or more theses for the Master of Arts. Men and women who acknowledge special debt to the stimulus of his teaching are now carrying on "the great torch" he lighted to students in various American colleges and universities. "The exactness of scholarship which he continuously inculcated," writes one of them, now professor of philosophy and dean in a well known Texas university, represents a point of view that those of us who knew him will ever appreciate."

From early years Griffith was a lover of books" and outside of the classroom he, felt most at home seated in a comfortable library chair. The academic year of 1900-01 he spent as a student in the Library of Congress, he obtained a leave of absence from teaching in 1912-13 to study in the British Museum, which he visited for three more vacations, and he devoted other long periods to the libraries of Harvard, the University of Wisconsin, and the Bodleian. Hence rose his vision of a rich library for The University of Texas, particularly a library of rare books. This dream had its first step to reality in 1917, when he initiated with President Vinson the purchase from a gift by Major George W. Littlefield of the John H. Wrenn Library, then in Chicago. At the dedication of that library in 1920 he was the chief speaker, expressing in a notable address, "The Great Torch
Race," his hopes for the future establishment of a library comparable to those in Washington, New York, and California. In his subsequent capacity of curator of the Wrenn Library, Dr. Griffith through many years not only gave hours each day to the further acquisition of rare books, but was largely instrumental in later additions to the Wrenn, first, of the Aitken Library, made possible through special act of the Texas Legislature, and, again, of the Stark Library, a gift of the family of that name. These three collections, supplemented by numerous purchases, have been beautifully housed in rooms where Griffith loved to linger. During recent months the University has been able to buy his own private library, consisting of rare volumes and other material with special emphasis on Pope, which are not duplicated in previous University collections. Thus the Griffith name will be preserved to future generations of scholars from Texas or elsewhere, applying research to the same field of English literature as he labored in.

But the dream of a world-famous library for Texas was not the only one that intrigued Dr. Griffith. In 1916 he conceived and saw committees carry out a University-wide celebration of the three-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death and of Harvey's discovery of the circulation of blood. Amid programs, pageants, and afterward-published lectures, Dr. Griffith modestly kept himself in the background until one suspicious moment, when dressed in appropriate Elizabethan costume, he mounted the stage before a large audience to announce the election of a new president of the University, Dr. Robert E. Vinson.

He also envisaged years before it came into being the creation of a university press worthy of the institution whose name it should bear. This press would, he believed, enlarge the bounds of human knowledge with publications of other than commercial value, placing "emphasis on scholarly studies in many fields and Southwest regional material." On his appointment as chairman of a committee to investigate the problem, he collected facts about other presses, brought to Austin experts for consultation, laid out plans, and finally secured action from the Regents. The University of Texas Press was established, in 1950, the committee headed by him chose the
present director, and in recognition of what he had done, a large and striking portrait of Dr. Griffith hangs today before the headquarters in Pearce Hall.

His role was that of a seer, a prophet, in university administration, rather than a ruler. True, for two years he was chairman of the English Department at a period when the responsibilities and the prestige of such an office bore less heavily on the temporary occupant than is true nowadays. But he found routine duties more irksome than rewarding and gladly resumed longer hours for instruction and private study. His final reputation will rest primarily on his printed contributions to knowledge, particularly knowledge of Pope and his circle. The list of his published writings (available upon request from the Office of the General Faculty) indicate unfaltering activity in research for almost fifty years. The final item on the list, dated about a year before his death, is worthy of special notice. It is a brief review of Fraser's discussion of The Court of Venus, a revised Harvard dissertation, which had its beginning in Griffith's own research. He had found in the end-papers used for binding a copy of More's Utopia in the Aitken Library several leaves of A Boke of Balettes, evidently a sixteenth century collection of lyrics, whose name was unknown. Building up a Griffith's discovery and comparing the test with two other fragments in distant libraries, Dr. Fraser was able to establish many facts concerning an important English anthology published ten years ahead of Tottel's supposedly pioneer volume of Songs and Sonnets. The Griffith review, accepting the conclusions of Fraser, fittingly closes a brief chapter of research in English literary history, which he also began.

Yet unquestionably, the most valuable product of Professor Griffith's career lies in his monumental two-volume bibliography of Alexander Pope, issued by The University of Texas in 1922 and 1927. This work quickly established itself as the standard bibliography of a great English writer and also a source of important information concerning the period severed. Its significance can best be judged, however, by excerpts from reviews by an American and an English authority in the field. George Sherburn, professor of English successively in Chicago, Columbia, and Harvard universities, declares: "Mr. Griffith with his larger resources and the
larger scope of his work, displaces all other attempts in the field. For serious students of Pope this volume is as indispensable as the Elwin-Courthope edition of the poet. With its precise dating of each item it gives a view of Pope's early career more accurate and more detailed than can be found anywhere, else, and it gives miscellaneous bits of information that are priceless." Professor Edith J. Morley of the University of Reading writes in The Year's Work in English Studies for 1928: "The full notes under the separate items contain many curious and valuable pieces of information about copyright law, about authors other than Pope, and about a hundred and one other matters that are of interest to literary students. The volume is immensely valuable and erudite, but-it is also simply arranged and easy to use."

So Dr. Griffith left his mark on the University as a teacher, a ripe scholar, a writer, and a farseeing counselor. In his declining years, without a home of his own, remote from all kindred, his life was made happier by the devotion of friends, frequent visits by former pupils, and correspondence with scholars in foreign lands. Having retired from teaching and reached the age of eighty, he grew an impressive full Shavian beard and once more crossed the Atlantic alone for study in Italy and Great Britain. Poring over tomes in the Bodleian Library one day, he attracted the attention of a guide heading a party of visitors. "There," he explained the functionary, pointing to the bearded visitor, "you see a typical Oxford don carrying on research."

Memorial Resolutions Committee

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