IN MEMORIAM

ERROL VIVIAN POLLARD

Professor Pollard will be best remembered in the academic community for his contribution to the translation of scientific German, and for his remarkable success in giving in brief time hundreds of graduate students a command over scientific German adequate for their scholarly purposes. His book on the translation of German was published in numerous editions and is used by students in virtually all of the country's major graduate schools. Those students who studied with him respected him for the concentration he required of them and were grateful to him for providing them with a skill required for higher degrees by graduate schools but often not furnished by the traditional methods of language teaching. His approach to translation of scientific German brought him increasing recognition from teachers with similar aims elsewhere, from scholars who deplored the neglect of syntax in the teaching of language, and from scientists interested in the workings of language translation.

Professor Pollard was born January 16, 1902, in Rexburg, Idaho. After attending the University of Utah in 1920-21 he went to Germany for three years, as a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He returned to the University of Utah in 1925, and completed his B.A. degree there in 1928. In the year 1929-30 he studied at the University of Poitiers, Tours, France, and was awarded a Diplome d'études francaises. In the summer of 1930 he studied at the University of Berlin. He continued his graduate studies at the University of Texas in 1930, completing his work for a Master of Arts degree in 1932 with a major in Germanic Languages and a minor in French.

Apart from teaching in Weber High School in 1928-29, all of Professor Pollard's career was spent at the University of Texas. He was appointed part-time instructor in 1930, became a full-time instructor in 1931, assistant professor in 1941, and associate professor in 1945. Although in poor health for the past two years he continued to teach until shortly before his death on 4 May 1960. From 1945 to 1953 he was chairman of the Department of Germanic Languages. He also served on various University committees, and held memberships in the American Association of University Professors and the South Central Modern Language Association.

In October 1942 Professor Pollard was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree by Midwestern University, Wichita Falls, Texas. When he awarded the degree, Dr. James B. Boren, president of Midwestern, expressed his appreciation for having been "one of many students who have been tremendously benefited by the Pollard system of teaching languages."

The "Pollard system" and its development may be among the more interesting matters to recall from Professor Pollard's academic career. His essential training was independent of the main tradition of German teaching, which at the time was concentrated on the study of forms. It was believed that if one could conjugate a verb, especially an irregular one, through several voices, moods, and six tenses that a language was mastered. Professor Pollard learned the futility of this method through his personal experience in Germany and through teaching numerous graduate students who had completed the required courses in the traditional method but still could not translate technical German. Noting that the essential differences between German and English lay in syntax, he formulated eleven basic rules to resolve the differences, while virtually disregarding the forms. His recognition of the importance of syntax, plus his forceful control as a teacher, led to the success of his students.
Professor Pollard's book was first published in 1936, under the title Pollard's Simplified German System. This underwent considerable expansion in the 1945 version entitled German -- The Easy Way. The second edition, published in 1947 under the name The Key to Rapid Translation of German was maintained with little change to the sixth edition called The Key to German Translation, published in 1959. In the November 1953 issue of the German Quarterly he published an article entitled "The Weak Verb -- How to Recognize It in the Infinitive," in which he aimed to simplify dictionary problems for students of German.

Although his teaching and the method he developed were his prime interests, Professor Pollard also took part in community matters, especially in the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints and the sports activities of the University. He is survived by his widow, by two sons and two daughters. His work is an example of the contribution which singleness of purpose and a fresh approach may make.

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