IN MEMORIAM

AARON SCHAFFER

In the early hours of Sunday, February 24, 1957, Professor Aaron Schaffer was suddenly stricken with a fatal heart attack. Thus ended one of the longest careers on the faculty of the University. His students, friends and colleagues and French scholarship in general feel deeply the loss of this man's devotion to their interests. As a tribute to his prominence in the community, the Senate of the State of Texas formally adopted a special resolution in his memory.

Aaron was the oldest of five children in the family of Dr. Schepschel and Anna (Lapiduth) Schaffer. Born May 18, 1894, in Baltimore, Maryland, he began his education in the public schools of that city. His father, a native Russian educated in Germany (Ph.D., Leipzig), was a distinguished rabbi dedicated to learning and to the preservation of the orthodox Jewish faith. Nourished in a home environment of high cultural and spiritual ideals, Aaron's character throughout his life reflected its early formation.

In October, 1910, he entered the Johns Hopkins University. His superior college record shows his response to the stimulus of academic competition. He won the Maryland scholarship for 1913-14, the Tocqueville medal in French (1914), and in his senior year he was elected to membership in Phi Beta Kappa. He was graduated with the A.B. degree in 1914, and three years later he completed his doctorate at the same institution. During the interim he was awarded the Hopkins scholarship (1915-16) and the Severn Teackle Wallis prize for an essay on Larra (1916). For the year 1916-17 he was appointed university fellow.

Dr. Schaffer's professional career began as an assistant in German at his Alma Mater, a position which he held from 1916 to 1918. The following year he was appointed to an instructorship in French and English. In 1919-20 he studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and toured Belgium and Italy. Upon his return from Europe in 1920, he joined the staff of the University of Texas as an instructor in the Department of Romance Languages. His ability brought him steady promotions: adjunct professor (1923-25), associate professor (1925-28) and professor (1928). At the time of his death he had served continuously for more than ten years as chairman of the department.

Meticulous attention to his professional activities did not prevent Dr. Schaffer from indulging a natural love of the fine arts and lending enthusiastic support to various cultural organizations. His affection for belles lettres, creative as well as critical, is manifested in a published collection of verse and several volumes of poems, essays and plays left in manuscript. He was a regular patron of the Austin Community Concerts and the Alliance Française. In recognition of his artistic influence, members of the University Department of Music presented a concert for the benefit of the Aaron Schaffer Memorial Scholarship Fund established by academic associates and personal friends. Numerous gifts to this project (up to the present) amount to a perpetual endowment of over three thousand dollars.

Because of his accomplishments as a teacher and scholar at the University, which twice gave him research grants, Dr. Schaffer was the recipient of high honors from other sources. He was also awarded a fellowship by the American Council of Learned Societies in 1934; in 1938 the French Government named him Officier d'Académie; and he was elected the first president of the South-Central Modern Language Association for the year 1940-41. He had been a member of the Société des Textes Modernes over a long period, and in 1956 at a public ceremony the French Consul, in the name of his government, conferred upon Dr. Schaffer the title Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur. His membership in professional organizations included the Modern Language Association of America, American Association of University Professors and American Association of Teachers of French.

On September 16, 1923, Professor Schaffer was married to Miss Dorothy Grant, of New York City, and brought his bride to Austin, where they have resided ever since. No account of Aaron Schaffer's successful career would be adequate without reference to Dorothy's share in it. A model housewife and helpmate with a kind and affectionate nature, she was an essential complement to her husband's active life. Their congenial appreciation of literature and art, enjoyment of travel and whole-hearted participation in civic affairs have made them an unusual asset to our community, and the generous hospitality of their home will be gratefully remembered by a multitude of friends and acquaintances. The example of this couple to society illustrates the dictum of Racine: "Le bonheur semble fait pour être partagé."

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