

Laurence Pumpelly

July 4, 1881 — March 14, 1954

Laurence Pumpelly had his roots deep in our own soil. He was born in Owego, N. Y., the son of Mr. and Mrs. James F. Pumpelly. His family, which numbers many distinguished members, had been established in Owego since the eighteenth century. He was educated at the Owego Free Academy and at Williams College, where he received the degree of A.B. in 1902. He took graduate work in chemistry at Cornell and at the University of Strasbourg, which awarded him the degree of Ph.D. (in Chemistry and Physics) in 1907. In 1909 he was appointed Assistant in Chemistry at Cornell. His tastes turning rather to language and literature than to science, he spent a year in study at the Sorbonne, and returned to Cornell as Instructor in Romance Languages in 1911. He became Assistant Professor in 1914 and Professor in 1923. He retired as Professor Emeritus in 1946, after thirty-seven years of service to Cornell.

During the First World War he was attached to the American Red Cross in Paris. In 1919 he was secretary-interpreter of the Red Cross Commission which visited the ravaged countries of eastern Europe. The Serbian government recognized his valuable aid by decorating him with the Order of Saint Sava. Deeply interested in the work of the American Field Service, he was concerned for years with the awarding of its scholarships for foreign study.

He married in 1921 Mile. Jeanne Pataud of Paris, who survives him. Their home was for many years a charming center of social life.

A brilliant, inspiring, and devoted teacher in both his introductory and his advanced courses, he was beloved by generations of students of French and Italian. His *French Reader for Beginners*, published in 1926, is still a standard text in its field. A linguist of unusual range, he was able to draw on his wide knowledge of Romance, Germanic, and Slavic languages in illustration of his special subject, Romance Philology; and his lectures on French Historical Grammar, which he was often urged to publish, were a model of clear and precise presentation. The French Government rewarded his long devotion to the cause of French culture by making him a Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur. He served several terms as Chairman of his Department, as Chairman of the Underclass Advisory Board, and, over a long period of years, he was an invaluable member of the University Committee on Music.

Professor Pumpelly represented an attitude toward scholarship and life which seems rarer now than in the past. He sought and found delight in learning; he was convinced that the purpose of scholarship is to adorn and illuminate life as well as to serve social and professional ends. His humane spirit lives on in that of many students who were inspired by his example.

M. G. Bishop, Harry Caplan, M. L. W. Laistner