ROLAND GRUBB KENT

ROLAND GRUBB KENT died on June 27th, 1952, at the age of 75, after a long illness. He was a Signer of the Call that led to the founding of the Linguistic Society, and a Life Member of the Society since 1927. But he was far more than one of the Society's founders: from the beginning until 1940 he was its Secretary-Treasurer, devoting sixteen years of unselfish and often thankless labor to the service of linguistics in America. In 1941, at the end of this long period of stewardship, he was the Society's President.

It was Roland Kent also who presided at that first meeting on December 28th, 1924, in the American Museum of Natural History in New York—the meeting at which our Society was organized. Its success was due in large measure to his able chairmanship. What he said on being called to the chair[1] reflects his attitude toward his position and his duties throughout his career: he 'stated that he appreciated the honor and asked the help of all those present in an effort to conduct the meeting efficiently, without loss of valuable time.' As in the many meetings that he was to guide in later years, the important thing for him was the business at hand.

The newly founded Society was almost immediately plagued by scholarly and financial problems. That it survived its difficult infancy, that even in the bitter years of the depression it not only held its own but grew in membership and effectiveness, we owe above all to the unceasing efforts of three men: George Melville Bolling, the first Editor of LANGUAGE; Edward Howard Sturtevant, the creator of the Linguistic Institute; and Roland Grubb Kent, the man at the helm. One tangible result of the Society's growth as an agency for the fostering and publication of scientific work was the early establishment of the two series of supplements to LANGUAGE: the *Language Monographs* in 1925 and the *Language Dissertations* in 1927. As Leonard Bloomfield has said,[2] 'Only those who, before the year 1925, worked in almost complete isolation can appreciate the change that came about with the existence of the Linguistic Society.'

Roland Kent was born on February 24th, 1877, at Wilmington, Delaware, the son of Lindley and Anna (Grubb) Kent. His father, a business man in Wilmington, had seen service as a volunteer in the Civil War and had risen to the rank of major in the Union Army. To this man's desire that his son should have a classical education, Roland Kent owed his early bent for languages, especially for Latin and Greek.

Young Kent received his preparatory education at the Friends' School in Wilmington. At the age of 15 he entered Swarthmore College as a sophomore. Here he received his B.A. degree in 1895, a B.L. in 1896, and an M.A. in 1898. Immediately after leaving Swarthmore he went to Germany to continue his studies, as was the custom for classicists. The year 1899–1900 he spent at the

[1] Proceedings of the LSA, Lg. 1.9 (1925).

[2] Twenty-one years of the Linguistic Society, Lg. 22.2 (1946).

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University of Berlin, the next year at the University of Munich. In Berlin he studied Greek epigraphy and Greek historians under Kirchhoff, and Attic orators under Wilamowitz-Möllendorf; in Munich he attended von Christ's 'philologisches Seminar', and studied archeology under Furtwängler, Roman historians under von Wölfflin, and Roman private life under von Müller. In 1902 he worked at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens. Later the same year he came to the University of Pennsylvania as Harrison Fellow in Classics, and received his doctorate there in 1903. In 1904 he was appointed Harrison Research Fellow in Classics. It was in this year that he married Miss Gertrude Freeman Hall, who survives him.

Kent's career as a teacher[3] began in 1896 at Lower Marion High School in Ardmore, Pennsylvania. In 1904 he was appointed Instructor in Greek and Latin in the University of Pennsylvania, the institution where he was to spend the rest of his life. He became Assistant Professor of Comparative Philology in 1909, and Professor in 1916; in 1942 his title was changed, at his own request, to Professor of Indo-European Linguistics. He retired in 1947. In addition to his post at the University of Pennsylvania, he held several concomitant teaching positions: from 1910 to 1914 he was Lecturer in Sanskrit at Bryn Mawr College; in the summer of 1921 he was Visiting Professor at the Ohio State University; and on five occasions—1928 and '29 in New Haven, 1938 in Ann Arbor, 1941 and '42 in Chapel Hill—he was on the faculty of the Linguistic Institute.

The broad range of Kent's scholarly interests is reflected in the list of the learned bodies to which he belonged. He was a member not only of the Linguistic Society but also of the American Oriental Society, the American Philological Association, and the Classical Association of the Atlantic States, as well as of two local groups: the Oriental Club of Philadelphia (of which he was Secretary-Treasurer from 1909 to 1919, and twice President, 1919–20 and 1934–5) and the Classical Club of Philadelphia (of which he was President in 1909–10). His lifelong admiration of French scholarship and his particular friendship for France are attested by his membership in the Société de Linguistique de Paris, the Société des Études Latines, and the Association Guillaume Budé. In 1925 he lectured at the Sorbonne; the next year he was named Officier de l'Instruction publique, and in 1934 he was decorated Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur. In the latter year, also, he was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; and in 1941 he became a Vice-President of the Philological Society of Great Britain.

Kent is known to the world as a Classicist and an Iranist. His early training and the beginnings of his career reach back into that period, just before the turn of the century, when the study of Greek and Latin was still a sine qua non for the humanist, and when those two languages served as a point of departure for linguistics—in those days called simply philology, or at most comparative philology. Like many other classical linguists of his day—compare Sturtevant's concentration on Hittite—he chose a field of research outside the confines of Greek and Latin: Old Persian. The study of Old Persian was much to the fore in the first two decades of this century: witness Bartholomae's *Altiranisches*

[3] See his own account, Pedagogue's progress, CW 42.82–7 (1948).

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Wörterbuch, 1904; Tolman's *Ancient Persion lexicon and texts*, 1908; Weissbach's *Keilinschriften der Achämeniden*, 1911; Meillet's *Grammaire du vieux perse*, 1915; and Johnson's *Historical grammar*, 1917.[4] There can be no doubt that it is for his work in Old Persian that Kent will be best remembered, at least outside the immediate field of Latin philology. It is most fortunate that the ripened fruit of Kent's Old Persian research has been distilled into a single work for succeeding generations of scholars: his *Old Persian grammar, texts, lexicon* (New Haven, 1950)—a great monument to his memory, perhaps the greatest. For this book alone, even if he had written nothing else, Indo-Europeanists and Iranists alike would be forever in his debt.

Despite his concern with Old Persian, however, Kent remained faithful to his first love, the Classics. In this field he will be remembered especially for his small popular volume, *Language and philology* (Boston, 1923); for his monograph *The textual criticism of inscriptions* (1926); and for his two famous textbooks, *The sounds of Latin* (1932, 3d ed. 1945) and *The forms of Latin* (1946). But it was as editor and translator of Varro *De lingua latina* (1938) that he displayed his scholarly acumen to best advantage; for this was a task to test his powers to their limit.[5] Only two translations of Varro existed before Kent's English version: one French and one Italian. He showed, in this work, that he was not only a linguist but a great philologist as well, in the broadest sense of that term.

Roland Kent was a man of courage, integrity, and inflexible will. He worked and lived by the rules. He was fierce in attack and in defense; but whether he had his way or not, he carried out the will of the majority without gloating and without rancor. A rule might seem to him good or bad, but a rule was a rule: it was there to be followed until the majority saw fit to repeal it. Students and colleagues found him always ready to help them with their problems. Where his own knowledge allowed him to give advice, he was unstinting of his time and his counsel. With sham and pretense he had no patience. He was quick to detect it, and merciless in his attack. He did not suffer fools gladly.

Roland Kent was a faithful churchman, an Episcopalian of the Anglo-Catholic type. He was buried on June 30th from the Church of the Good Shepherd in Rosemont, Pennsylvania.

GEORGE S. LANE, *University of North Carolina*

THE FOLLOWING BIBLIOGRAPHY was prepared by Kent himself and has been edited by Bernard Bloch; it is assumed to be substantially complete. In addition to the works listed here, which he published as a private scholar, Kent published a number of items as Secretary-Treasurer of the Linguistic Society from 1925 to 1940. These include the Proceedings of the first seventeen annual meetings and the first three summer meetings of the Society (printed in LANGUAGE, Vols. 1–11, and in the *Bulletin*, Nos. 9–14); several unsigned obituaries of members (printed in the Notes and Personalia department of the journal); and a large

[4] See in particular Kent's résumé, The present state of Old Persian studies, JAOS 56.208–21 (1936).

[5] On the Herculean labor of editing and translating Varro, see Whatmough's review of Kent's work in CP 34.379–93.

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number of small news items concerning the members' activities (also in the Notes and Personalia).

The following abbreviations are used in the bibliography:

AJA	American journal of archaeology
AJP	American journal of philology
AOS	American Oriental Society
AYB	American year book
CJ	Classical journal
CP	Classical philology
CR	Classical review
CW	Classical weekly
IF	Indogermanische Forschungen
IJ	Indogermanisches Jahrbuch
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern studies
Lg.	Language
LSA	Linguistic Society of America
MLJ	Modern language journal
PAPA	Proceedings of the American Philological Association
PAPS	Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society
PG	Pennsylvania gazette (publication of UP)
PQ	Philological quarterly
TAPA	Transactions of the American Philological Association
UP	University of Pennsylvania

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