

OTTO J. SCHEERER

Otto J. Scheerer (Aug. 13, 1858 . Mar. 24, 1938),

Professor of German, linguist, pioneer in Philippine linguistic studies, was born in Hamburg, Germany, the son of Adolf Scheerer, merchant, and Margarita Jones. He finished the gymnasium in Hamburg, and came to the Philippines in the early part of the 1880's when he was about 26 years old. He found employment in one of the German firms in Manila, then got married to Margarita Asuncion. Later he founded La Minerva Cigar Co. He became seriously ill with dysentery about 1895-96 and upon advice of his physician he found himself returning home; but upon reaching Hongkong, he stayed there for a time, and decided to return to Manila. His physician advised him to try the climate of Mountain Province, and so he sold his cigar factory and moved to the vicinity of what later on became Baguio sometime in 1896 just before the Revolution. He bought a piece of land, rather a big area, which included among other plots the site of the Pines Hotel at present. He planted coffee and the climate suited his health. He continued to reside there until the coming of the Americans.

When Dean C. Worcester went up to Baguio in search of a suitable site for a summer capital of the country, the only

white person there was Scheerer who received and guided the party. One of the results of his service was his appointment as provincial secretary of Mountain Province on Dec. 18, 1900 at 2000 pesos per annum. He wrote two valuable reports on the agricultural practices and culture of the Benguet Igorot or Ibaloy which found their way in the Reports of the Taft Philippine Commission (Washington, 1901). His services as guide and interpreter to the Taft Commission were noted by Daniel R. Williams (The Odyssey of the Philippine Commission, 1913, 260-77). His participation in drafting the act creating Mountain Province is acknowledged by D. C. Worcester (The Philippines Past and Present, 1930, p. 442), thus making Mountain Province the first to be taken out of military control during the American occupation.

Sometime in 1901 he sailed for Japan. He lived next door to Mariano Ponce, the Revolutionary plenipotentiary, in Tokyo. There he taught at the Gaikoku-Go-Gakko, a foreign language school, teaching German, then he taught at the Gakshuing, a school for the Japanese nobility. While in Japan, he found time to finalize his *The Nabaloi Dialect* (1905), in consultation with his son Adolfo. He made a short trip to Formosa, staying there six months. He was impressed by the cultural similarities of Northern Luzon and the aboriginal population of Formosa and wrote his observations

(see appended "List of Writings," 1906). He returned to Manila in 1907, with his Japanese wife, Toyo Kaiko.

In Manila he accepted an appointment as lieutenant governor of the subprovince of Batanes, a job which he discharged with success; he was responsible in having the sub-province converted into an independent one from Cagayan province. About the end of 1909 he resigned, but this took effect on January 7, 1910. He made a short trip to Japan, and upon his return was appointed as instructor in German in the University of the Philippines on June 1, 1911. He at the same time enrolled for advanced studies, and he received his M.A. degree in March 1915, submitting as thesis *The Particles of Relation of the Isinai Language* which was published later in 1918. On July 1, 1915, he was promoted to asst. professor of German and on Jan. 1, 1919, to assoc. professor, retiring from that position on June 1, 1929. He succeeded T. H. Pardo de Tavera as head of the Dept. of Philippine Languages when the latter resigned on Oct. 31, 1924. During his academic connection with the University, he founded *The Archive*, a short-lived journal devoted to Philippine linguistics.

Scheerer spoke German and French before coming to the Philippines; learned Spanish while in the country, and later Japanese. He knew Latin and Greek, and learned Tagalog, Ibaloy, and Iloko among Philippine languages. He was a pioneer teacher

of linguistics, counting among his pupils Carlos O. Brandes, Gabriel A. Bernardo, Cecilio Lopez, and Felizberto B. Viray.

He married twice. By his first wife, Margarita Asuncion, he had the following children: Graciana m. Lorenzo R. Onrubia; Donato m. Celerina Cortes; Adolfo m. Mercedes. By his second wife, Toyo Kaiko, he had Frank m. Josefina Gutierrez, and Elizabeth m. Aristeo Ycasiano.

LIST OF WRITINGS

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No biography of Scheerer has been found. The
sketch was based mainly on information furnished by Adolfo
Scheerer, son, and official records in the Commission of
Civil Service, Manila.

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