

# Royal Ewert Montgomery

*May 6, 1896 — June 13, 1966*

Royal Ewert Montgomery, son of Robert John and Lillie Matthews Montgomery, was born in Moline, Illinois. His father was a manufacturer of building elevators. Royal Montgomery, however, did not care for business but was early attracted to the academic life. After service, 1918-19, in the military intelligence division of the United States Army, he returned to the University of Chicago. He received the Ph.B. degree from that institution in 1921, the M.A. in 1923, and the Ph.D. in 1925. His work as a teacher started before his formal education was completed and continued until his retirement. He was an instructor in the University of Missouri in 1921-22, an assistant and an instructor in the University of Chicago in 1922-27, and an Associate Professor in the University of Texas in 1927-29.

Royal Montgomery came to Cornell University in 1929 as an Assistant Professor, and became a resident of Ithaca for the rest of his life. He was promoted to Professor in 1937, surrendering that rank only to become an Emeritus Professor in 1964.

From his regular base of operations here, Professor Montgomery moved out occasionally, though usually only in an intellectual sense. Travel was not for him. Thus he was on the staff of the Brookings Institution in 1938. He served on the editorial board of *The American Economic Review* from 1938 to 1941. He was a public representative and chairman of various industry commissions, Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor in 1940-45. He was an arbitrator and public panel member of the National War Labor Board in 1942-45. He served as a representative of the American Economic Association on the Social Science Research Council. Beginning in 1947, he served as an arbitrator on the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

Montgomery was, however, best known for his written works. His first book was *Industrial Relations in the Building Trades* in 1927. Then came (with H. A. Millis) *Labor's Progress and Problems*, and *Labor's Risks and Social Insurance*. Both were published in 1938. Another work with Millis, *Organized Labor*, appeared in 1945. These books are substantial contributions to labor economics. Some of his other and more general interests are represented by the chapters in the *Dictionary of the American Economy* on the impact of war on America, the development of collectivism in the U.S., and labor in the American economy.

Professor Montgomery was a broadly educated scholar. His interests were wide. They comprised principally the full range of economic studies including dissenting doctrines, American history, and English. He read much.

He saw labor in its setting and its economics as a part of general economics. He was blessed by an extraordinary memory, so retentive that he seemed never to forget anything. He cultivated the language. He knew the nuances as well as the meanings of words, and how to organize them for effective exposition. In short, he was an excellent writer.

He was also devoted to his teaching. He always wished to teach as many courses as possible. Although shy and never seeking popularity, he attracted the respect and liking of many students. A number of able professors in leading universities had written their doctoral dissertations under his direction.

Montgomery's adult life can be divided into three parts. The first, in the 1920's, was the period of preparation and of promise. The second, comprising the 1930's and perhaps half of the 1940's, was the period of brilliant fulfillment. It was in those years that nearly all his writing was done and that graduate students crowded his seminars. He inspired them by his immense learning as organized in his keen mind, and by his seemingly tireless energy. With the third came the shadows that, save for small and temporary departures, continued progressively to darken his days.

Royal Montgomery was a quiet, unassuming person. He had high standards of honor. His manner was singularly gentle. There was also in him an innate refinement. Nothing vulgar or intentionally unkind was ever said or done by him. He never sought preferment or pushed himself forward. In a group he was likely to say little. Not one to take the initiative in making acquaintances and cultivating friends, he was always appreciative of any attention given him.

He was never married. He is survived by his sister, Mrs. Rosemary Kupper.

*Paul M. O'Leary, Leonard P. Adams, M. Slade Kendrick*