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JOHN MERTON ALDRICH

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On May 27, 1934, with the passing of John Merton Aldrich, the nation's greatest accumulation of dipterological information has ceased to be. Easily the leader in this branch of zoölogy, Aldrich will be missed, and there is no one in line who is prepared to continue where he left off.

At the age of sixty-eight, Aldrich still counted on several more years of productive work. His mind was as keen as ever, and physically he had no intimation until two weeks before the end that an abrupt catabolic derangement was to close his life. He had even completed plans to start early in June on another of his biennial collecting trips to the Pacific Coast.

Aldrich was born on January 28, 1866, in Olmstead County, Minnesota. He attended school at Rochester, near by, and in 1888 completed the course for the B. A. degree at South Dakota State College. In 1889-1890, he studied under Professor A. J. Cook at the Michigan State College, and in 1891 received the degree of M. S. from South Dakota State College. Leaving an assistantship at South Dakota in 1892, he went to the University of Kansas in order to study with Professor S. W. Williston, and was awarded another degree of M. S. in 1893.

In 1893 the new University of Idaho opened, and Aldrich was selected to found its Department of Zoölogy. He married Ellen Roe of Brookings, South Dakota, and moved to Moscow. The loss of his wife and infant son four years later caused him to plunge most deeply into his dipterological work, and he began his card catalogue of the literature on Diptera, a project to which he contributed almost daily

until his last illness. By 1905, when this catalogue had reached publication size and was about ready for submission to the Smithsonian Institution, Aldrich married Della Smith of Moscow, Idaho, and securing sabbatical leave of absence from Idaho went to Stanford University for a year. His Ph. D. degree was awarded by Stanford in 1906. Fortunately Aldrich had moved his library and collection of Diptera to his father's house because during his absence the University of Idaho burned to the ground.

Aldrich always regarded Moscow, Idaho, as home. He had built a beautiful house at the edge of the University campus facing Moscow Mountain, his best beloved collecting ground, and there had established his library and collection. He had every prospect of continuing his useful work at Idaho, when suddenly after twenty years of service as its most eminent professor his connection with the University of Idaho was terminated. It is unnecessary now to reopen the sorry case and discuss the vagaries of an incompetent administration other than to recall that those of us who knew the situation well regarded the dismissal as an outrageous and unwarranted interference. Aldrich's ashes have been returned to Moscow, Idaho, and placed beside his first wife and his only child.

Idaho's self-inflicted loss proved to be the nation's gain. Dr. Howard immediately appointed Aldrich to the Bureau of Entomology, and for the next five years he was stationed at Lafayette, Indiana, to investigate life-histories of Oscinidæ and other Diptera affecting cereal crops. The death of Frederick Knab in 1918 made it necessary to transfer Aldrich to the National Museum, where he was appointed Custodian of Diptera and Associate Curator.

In 1928 Aldrich presented to the National Museum his personal collection of Diptera, numbering 45,000 specimens and 4,000 named species. With this he donated the unique and extensive card catalogue of Diptera. This index is the only source of information on all the literature of all the American Diptera, and with its cross references to synonymy is invaluable to all workers. It brings the Aldrich catalogue of 1905 to date. His library is the most complete assemblage of books and articles on Diptera, and de-

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servedly should be acquired by the National Museum to complement the collection and index.

Aldrich always generously shared his library, records, specimens, and information. Most present day dipterists owe more to him than their printed words of thanks can imply. Beyond the tremendous wealth of specialized information he held regarding the Diptera he was versatile in many lines. He was devotedly interested in the All Souls' Unitarian Church in Washington, of which he was a trustee, and conducted classes in religious history and education. He was keenly interested in politics and daily followed the doings of Congress. He was one of the organizers of the Thomas Say Foundation and served as editor from 1916 to 1931. He was secretary-treasurer of the Entomological Society of America from 1915 to 1920, and President in 1921. In 1926 he was President of the Washington Entomological Society.

Aldrich had a remarkable gift of locating rare species on his collecting trips. His more extensive journeys included Utah and California, 1911; Alaska, 1921; Guatemala, 1926, and Sweden, 1930. He was meticulously careful in mounting specimens, in arranging the Museum collection, and in entering the records in his great index. His diary has daily entries for some fifty years, not merely a line or two, but a careful description of the happenings that befall an eminent man.

The accompanying bibliography, transcribed from the card index by his secretary, Mrs. Willis, gives his publications in chronological order. Outstanding in the list is the catalogue. This monumental work stimulated so many publications on the Diptera that its very importance in the progress of American entomology led to its rapid obsolescence. Would that its author could have been spared a few more years to give to all the codified information that he alone possessed. We regret his passing, but are thankful that such a man has lived and has been enabled to leave a permanent impress on science.

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