Another truly great scientist lives only in memory. Dr. Victor Sterki, known throughout the world for his work in Conchology and Protozoology, passed away on January twenty-fifth at his home in New Philadelphia, Ohio. He was in his eighty-seventh year.

Dr. Sterki was the son of Swiss parents, Anton and Magdalene Miller Sterki. He was born in Solothurn, Switzerland, on September 26, 1846. It was not until he was seven that he started to school. It was a country school, and his first classes were attended in the building in which his grandfather had taught for twenty-nine years. Later, after five years in the "gymnasium" or high school, he entered the University of Bern as a medical student. Before this time, however, his love of nature had been expressed in his many studies and collections of the native fauna and flora. Several diaries, written during those days, tell of his collections of plants and molluscs.

Dr. Sterki, in a letter found among his effects, gave a vivid picture of his experiences in school illustrating the severe educational methods of that early day. His description reads as follows: "When I was about your age, I was sent away to another school and this was the first time that I was really away from home. I went on October 7, 1864. It was, what is called a gymnasium, but rather 'narrow'; mainly intensive study of Latin, Greek, German, mathematics and history. There was nothing of the natural sciences, and this I greatly missed. Life there was as in a monastery; as strict as that. Each day saw us up at five in the morning, summer and winter, then study, then church, then breakfast; nine to eleven and one to four. School except one afternoon, and the balance of the time was spent in the 'study.' By this I mean, forty of us in one room, each with his little desk, elbow to elbow; we were forbidden to talk, even to whisper. At noon: eat, then one-half hour to church, prayer and the saying of psalms, etc., all in Latin. Then about one-half an hour out in the yard when the weather was good, and of course, freedom to talk. There was even one old dilapidated bowling alley, and in winter, a few times, there was war with snow-balls; that was the wildest of our life. After

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the afternoon classes came supper, church and one-half to one hour recreation, bed at eight or nine. Even when going through the halls one was not permitted to talk to a fellow student that he passed.

“That year, with all of its drawbacks, may have had its advantage; it opened my eyes to many things and my naturally critical mind got food for thought—while I had, of course, to keep absolutely ‘mum.’ That I was actually a hypocrite can hardly be chalked up against me; I could not risk being expelled. I had been destined for the priesthood; my family thought that school was the place for me. It was; what had only been sprouting before came to maturity there. It turned me absolutely away from it—though it nearly broke my dear mother’s heart.”

Since that period in Dr. Sterki’s life he turned his talents to his medical work and to his hobby, natural history. It is this part of the man that we know best and the part that has left its impression upon the world of knowledge and upon his host of friends and correspondents.

Young Victor Sterki was never a robust person, and at the end of his medical course was subjected to a long sickness which, as he told the writer, had stunted and maimed him physically.

The winter following his long illness was spent in Munich University studying the Protozoa, and in the spring of that year he took the examinations that would permit him to practice medicine. He did not obtain his M. D. degree until later.* After taking the examinations, which he passed with highest honor, he served as poly-clinical, then as clinical assistant at the eye hospital of the University of Bern. Previous to this, while he was still attending his medical course, he had held the position of assistant of the Pathological Institute. This was in 1873, and in 1874, he went into practice for him-

*“In Switzerland, as well as in other European countries, the medical student has to pass a “State Examination” which entitles him to practice as a physician. This examination has nothing to do with the ‘Doctor of Medicine’ which is solely an academic degree, and involves not the right of practice. But most physicians graduate for the title; and the universities may, under circumstances, grant the ‘M. D.’ to an applicant, after he has passed the state examination satisfactorily, upon a good dissertation, and the fee required, without another formal examination. As Botany and Zoology, with comparative anatomy, are comprised in the (first or propaedeutic part of the) examination, a dissertation on such a subject could be accepted.” These notes appeared in the introduction of Dr. Sterki’s booklet written in 1895 and entitled, “Notes and Observations after twenty Years of Medical Practice in the Old and New World.”
self. It had been his desire throughout his medical studies, to go as a ship's surgeon, but the offer and the acceptance of the work at the clinic stayed him. While holding these positions, he studied his beloved Infusoria, and in 1878, he received his degree of Doctor of Medicine upon a dissertation on the morphology of the Oxytrichina. This work was a classic in its field, and caused many of the prominent zoologists, and especially Bütschli to inquire of this young student and to commend him upon his very valuable addition to knowledge.

The year following his entry into practice, Dr. Sterki married Miss Mary Lanz of Huttwyl, Switzerland, and came to the United States in 1883. Settling in New Philadelphia, Ohio, to begin a medical practice in the New World, he was stimulated to greater efforts in the study of nature than ever before. First, he began a collection of minute gastropoda, and, after some years of work, this collection was purchased by the Carnegie Museum, where it now resides. In 1909, he was appointed Assistant in the Section of Recent Invertebrates (under Dr. A. E. Ortmann, Curator), a position he held (in absentia) until the time of his death. Since 1909, Dr. Sterki spent the majority of his spare hours upon his collection of Sphaeriidae. However, he found time for the study of Protozoa, Mosses, Land and Water Mollusca, and for working in his garden. His garden was as well described in his notes as are some of his shells. Hardly a period of fluctuation in his surroundings missed his notice.

Here, surrounded by the many cases of shells, fossils, and his library of more than a thousand pamphlets and bound volumes, one sees more of the true lover of nature than of the medical practitioner. Truly it seems the routine of practice irked him; lent itself as a stimulus to scientific research instead of a hindrance. Dr. Sterki was an earnest student of molluscs throughout his life. My own friendship with him during the last three years leads me to characterize him as a man of very genial and hospitable manners, always agreeable and unpretentious. The world has lost a great collector and an untiring student as well as a friendly, helpful man. He is survived by two daughters, Mrs. Bertha Medley and Mrs. Fanny Cavanaugh and a son, Walter. One daughter, Mrs. Beatrice Parr, died in December of this past year, seemingly precipitating her father's end.

The collection of Sphaeriidae, numbering over twelve thousand identified and catalogued lots resides in the laboratory of Recent Invertebrates of the Carnegie Museum along with his collection of
**Pupillidae** and numerous other collections from America and elsewhere. However, the collections made by Dr. Sterki cover more than just the minute mussels, the *Sphæriidae*, as the Herbarium contains over one hundred and fifty botanical specimens, mainly mosses and ferns.

The Library of the Carnegie Museum has been enriched by over two hundred and seventy-five bound and unbound volumes, and over one thousand, five hundred pamphlets. Many of these are valuable to the investigator and constitute a much sought-for addition to our working library. The published articles from Dr. Sterki’s own pen number some one hundred and fifty-one.

The collection of minute gastropoda, which has resided in the Museum since 1909, is composed of nearly four thousand “lots.” This forms a collection of many thousands of specimens. His remaining collection of gastropoda and pelecypoda, which was obtained by this Museum at Dr. Sterki’s death, will undoubtedly number some hundreds of thousands of specimens, and it includes material from many very valuable exchanges with European museums and specialists. A few fossils collected during his youthful expeditions into the Swiss Alps constituted the least valuable and the smallest part of his extensive interests.

The collection of minute pelecypoda, the *Sphæriidae*, is the crowning success of Dr. Sterki’s long and useful life. It numbers over twelve thousand “lots” of shells. It has been estimated by him to contain between five hundred thousand and nine hundred thousand specimens. This collection is unique in that out of over two hundred and fifty species so far catalogued by the writer there have been over one hundred and fifty described and named by Dr. Sterki. In the twenty-five note-books kept by him over a period of more than thirty years are many unpublished descriptions of new species as well as voluminous notes on his own and other’s species.

Dr. Sterki was the authority in his field; the one that held within his greying head the greatest part of the knowledge of this interesting and difficult animal group. It is now for the younger students to carry-on and build from his amassed data a suitable and living monument to a life not wasted. *The Monograph of the Sphæriidae of the World*, the work upon which his life was spent is yet to appear. It is the fond hope of the writer that this great effort will see the light of day through the efforts of this laboratory.

**Stanley T. Brooks, Curator, Section of Recent Invertebrates.**
SCIENTIFIC PAPERS BY DR. VICTOR STERKI*


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*This is as complete as it can possibly be made at the present; Dr. Sterki leaving no bibliography.
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