

VIGNETTES OF 100 YEARS OF THE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

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On March 12, 1984, we celebrate our centennial! The Entomological Society of Washington was conceived on February 29, 1884, at a small informal gathering and was born on March 12th at the first formal meeting at 1700 13th Street, N.W., in Washington. The Society was founded to foster the study of insects and to bring together those interested in the subject. In both of these objectives the Society has been eminently successful.

The history of our Society and its members is in many ways fascinating. I recommend the excellent histories written by the master story-teller, L. O. Howard, who was present at the creation, and by Ashley B. Gurney who brought the history up to date in our Proceedings of 1976 (78: 225-239) and gave references to all past histories.

A society is made up of individuals and each in his or her own way is unique. Some become stars and light up the sky; some plod along and hardly cause a dent in the sand; some are interesting, some dull; some good, some bad. Of some we hardly know a thing, only their names; but of others we know much, even something of their personality, manners, and dealings with others. For our 100th birthday I choose to tell not the larger stories of the Society but the stories of a few individuals. So much has been written of the three principal founders of our Society that I'll not dwell on them: Charles Valentine Riley (1843-1895), Leland Ossian Howard (1857-1950), and Eugene Amandus Schwarz (1844-1928). Nevertheless, I can't resist letting a few words about each of these three important men creep into these stories.

Our Society, from the very beginning, has not been an impersonal organization. On the contrary, it has been very personal, excelling in a mix of amateurism, professionalism, exchange of ideas, and conviviality. The minutes record how important the meetings were and various writers on the history of the Society have described the brotherhood that prevailed. Because some stories concern early meetings of the Society, and because today's meetings are conducted differently, a short explanation is in order. Very early meetings were held in the homes of members, but as meetings became larger, they were switched to various halls, such as the Sngerbund Hall. Members stayed after meetings, for what were called annex meetings, to talk informally about insects and very nearly everything else. It was a time for social intercourse and friendship, with lots of good refreshments. (Today we have a somewhat analogous practice; a few attendees gather before the meeting for dinner at a restaurant on 10th Street near the Natural History Building of the Smithsonian and all attendees take part in a short social period, with refreshments, after the meeting.)

Stories of members are part of the cherished history of our Society. They put living flesh and blood on the names in our Society. We hear and tell these stories over and over, and some stories get better or even worse in the retelling. I have scanned the publications of our Society, especially the minutes, read parts of biographies and autobiographies of a few members, and talked to anyone interested in the subject. Much has been borrowed (a little stolen?) and I thank all, dead or alive, for telling these stories. A few vignettes of perhaps a hundred stories that I have read or heard will serve as examples of how interesting entomologists of the past hundred years were, how they were motivated in their work, and how they were viewed by others. These stories concern members but not necessarily their activities in the Society. You might have other favorite stories. These are mine.

COCKROACH STORIES

At one of the early "annex" meetings a member spied a cockroach, and this began a round-robin of stories, with several members contributing their favorite roach stories. John B. Smith (1858–1912) relates the following sequence of what was said. Riley said that in his office there was a roach that had become quite tame and familiar. It manifested no fear of him, would watch him at his work and would, when a finger was presented, climb on it, run around on his hand, and make itself very much at home. Howard stated that he also had a tame roach, and this specimen had a fondness for tobacco. He would, when smoking, occasionally lay his cigar on the edge of one of the drawers of his desk and the roach would come to the moist end and feast on nicotine. When taking up the cigar again, he would shake off the roach who would wait until it was again replaced, and then the roach would again resume his feast. Another member, who modestly desired to have his name withheld, thought that insect intelligence had been much underrated. A young lady friend of his had a pet roach that used to frequent her dresser drawers and used to expect and appreciate the little tenderesses and endearments its mistress accorded it. For three years or thereabouts it lived happily, but then, for a short time, its mistress refused to notice it—other matters on her mind probably—and the little pet took it so to heart that it deliberately feasted on 'Pearl Powder,' knowing of its poisonous qualities, and died. Deliberately committing suicide! A marvelous instance of insect intelligence.

That ends Smith's account of the meeting. Several of my colleagues thought Pearl Powder might have been an insecticide, but I couldn't find it mentioned in old books on insect control. At last I found it in a book on the history of cosmetics. It was a pomade and it contained several pernicious ingredients that could kill or, at least, disfigure. The entomologist's lady-friend would have used Pearl Powder on the face, neck, and bosom to produce an enamelled look, "the lily whiteness which so dazzles our eyes." O tempora! O mores!

THEODORE PERGANDE

An early member, Theodore Pergande (1840–1916), was an amateur entomologist in Germany. He came to the United States because the girls in Germany bothered him so much and because he disliked prayer meetings. In the United States he eventually enlisted in the Army and served through the four years of the Civil War, making entomological collections over various battlefields. In St. Louis he met Riley and came to Washington with him. When Howard, just out of college, noted Pergande's difficulties with the English language, he recom-



Fig. 1. Theodore Pergande.

mended that he study the masterpieces of English literature to cultivate a style of writing. Very soon thereafter Pergande, who made practically all the notes for the Bureau of Entomology for many years, began writing those notes in the style of Edmund Spenser's *Fäerie Queene* and similar masterpieces in English literature. It was entomology presented in a classical style.

Pergande was the subject of three items that have become special treasures to a few of us Washington entomologists. Two lovely genre photographs show Pergande as an old man, seated at a desk complete with neighboring spittoon, peering through a fine old compound microscope (at one of his aphids?) and then looking up at the camera. One wonders why he wears a heavy overcoat indoors—did he just come in from the cold and immediately sit down to look at a new specimen, or had he put on the coat to leave and then took one last look at an enigmatic aphid? More likely, his cold old bones needed the warmth of that coat in a drafty museum. Quaint as are the pictures, they are not so strange as a treasure now in my possession. I have a lock of Pergande's hair! It is in an envelope so labeled and dated Apr. 28, '95. How it came to me I cannot recall, but someday I'll pass on that bit of incunabulum to another. Systematists are intrinsically collectors, no matter what the subject.

THE SEAL OF THE SOCIETY

The origin of our seal has for a long time been a mystery. Jon L. Herring in the Proceedings of 1964 (66: 1) discussed the story of the seal of the Society and



Fig. 2. Theodore Pergande.

its use on the cover of the Proceedings. A 1916 obituary of Otto Heidemann, the engraver of the seal, said that the seal used on the cover of the Proceedings had been adopted as the official seal of the Society. However, Herring could not verify the adoption in a search of pre-1916 minutes of the Society.

Perhaps we will never know the origin of that early action, but I have uncovered a later adoption. At a meeting on 6 October 1932, L. O. Howard reported to our Society on his visit to the Entomological Society of France and told of his disappointment in not having a seal of our Society to put on a portfolio of greetings. In a discussion, after Howard's report, it was stated that the question of a seal had been discussed on a number of previous occasions and that many of the older members had looked upon the cover illustration of the male of *Rheumatobates rileyi* as the seal, "although it had never been officially designated as such." A motion was then duly made and seconded that the Society adopt as its official seal the emblem we now have (redrawn by Herring) on the cover of our Proceedings.

HENRY ULKE

Well before our Society was formed, entomologists in the Washington area met to discuss insects. One of the regulars of those early days was Henry Ulke (1821–1910). He had come to the United States in 1849 after spending time in a prison

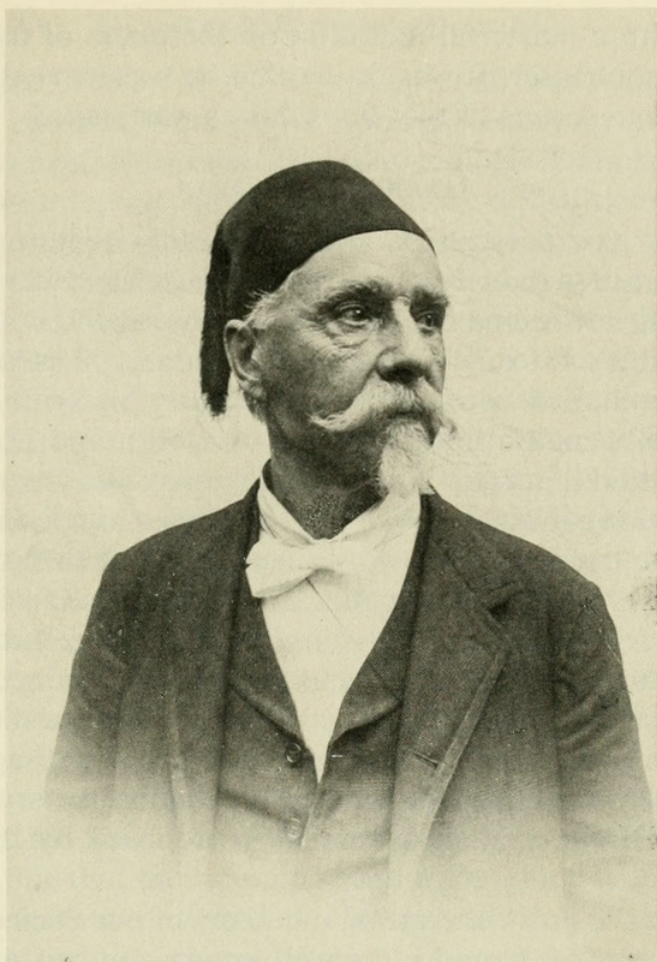


Fig. 3. Henry Ulke.

in Germany for political reasons. Eventually he settled in Washington as a photographer and portrait painter. He had previously developed an interest in natural history, especially entomology. Well known for his work as a portraitist of famous people, Ulke became known as "Painter of Presidents." He was a close friend of Abraham Lincoln, and his most famous portrait was of President Grant.

It is ironic that Ulke lived in the Peterson House on 10th Street in 1865. Lincoln died in that house after being carried across the street from Ford's Theatre. What could have been going through Ulke's mind on that terrible night? We might know if the autobiography of Ulke could be found. A few lines of it were quoted in an obituary written by his friends, but the complete work cannot be found today. Just a few weeks ago I had a call from a writer who is doing a study of Ulke, asking about that autobiography. No amount of searching has been successful. If anyone knows of it, please bring it forward so we can learn more about this interesting person who once graced our Society.

Because of his knowledge of beetles and his wonderful collection—he published an annotated list of the beetles of the District of Columbia area—he was sought after by famous entomologists. His stature can perhaps be summed up by the kind and touching words of William H. Dall, the natural history explorer and invertebrate zoologist, in a letter to Ulke, "... be sure I shall always think of you when I see a beetle."

At the conclusion of meetings held in the local Sängerbund Hall Ulke would

often entertain with a masterful rendition on the piano of the Pilgrim's Chorus from Wagner's Tannhäuser. It was fitting that he was carried to his final resting place as the subdued strains of that fine Chorus was played.

HARRISON G. DYAR

Every discipline has its rivalries, and entomology is no exception. Most are friendly, but sometimes the rivalry gets out of hand and develops into envy or jealousy. There has not been a duel with pistols or sabers, but systematists don't need pistols or sabers for dueling—words or names, if used dramatically, can bloody a man's reputation or wound very seriously his pride. The story of such a duel has been told many times by word of mouth and in print, even in the secular press. It is said that early in this century two of our members, both former presidents, developed a mutual dislike that developed into a nomenclatural battle. John B. Smith, the lepidopterist, was a huge man. When his rival Harrison G. Dyar (1866–1929) wanted to antagonize Smith he named an especially fat and ugly moth *smithiformis*. Another version says that he used the specific name of *corpulentis*. It didn't take Smith long to retaliate: he named a genus of moth *Dyaria*. That doesn't seem untoward until one reflects on the double entendre. The pronunciation of that generic name reminds one of a disagreeable and sometimes unmentionable malady. This is indeed a wonderful story, but unfortunately it is pure fiction. No such names were ever proposed by these entomological enemies!

Dyar was one of the most interesting members of our Society. His activities in noctuid and mosquito systematics are well known, but his exploits in his non-professional life are almost unbelievable. Dyar was a great digger of tunnels. In 1906–1916, from his first home near Dupont Circle in Washington he dug complex tunnels on various levels that extended approximately 200 or 500 feet and were large enough for a man to stand in. The tunnels were discovered in 1924 when a delivery truck fell through the pavement into one of them. The discoverers, not knowing the origin, thought the tunnels were used by German spies in World War I or by bootleggers during prohibition. Why did Dyar dig? He said he started digging a deep trench for his wife's hollyhocks, became interested in digging, and simply continued. He dug very wide and deep trenches, proceeded to wall and arch them with enameled brick, and finally covered and hid them with earth. In one version of the story he said they were for playrooms for his son but in another said simply that he liked the smell of fresh earth and dug for exercise. The outcome of his other exploits is almost as strange. Dyar, a wealthy man, maintained two homes; in one he had a wife, in the other a mistress. His amorous duplicity was discovered when two children named Dyar met in school and began talking of their fathers. They were surprised when they discovered that their fathers worked at the Smithsonian, then more surprised that they worked in Entomology, and finally astounded that their fathers worked on mosquitoes. The secret was out—their fathers were the same man! The stories are often combined, saying that the tunnels were dug between the two homes, but there is nothing to substantiate that embellishment.

When Dyar died W. T. M. Forbes said in an obituary that "there is no one to take his place." In more ways than he could have imagined, Forbes was right.

HUBBARD'S SCOLYTID BEETLE

Henry G. Hubbard (1850–1899), the coleopterist, was a first-class collector. The cabinets of the National Museum of Natural History are amply blessed with his specimens, many from places that are today ecologically nonexistent. He spent much time in Arizona to help heal his respiratory difficulties, and there he extensively investigated the fauna of the giant *Cereus* cactus. It was an unexplored area and the fauna of the cactus had not been studied. Anything could turn up—and did. Eugene A. Schwarz, his very close friend and scientific colleague, wrote to Hubbard from Washington on January 10, 1897, about the reaction of John B. Smith and A. D. Hopkins to a specimen sent from the cactus. “I must confess that your account of the ‘most marvelous Cioid’ did not strike me particularly and made up my mind that it was a species of *Ozognathus* (Ptinidae), the males of which have peculiarly-formed horns on the head. On Saturday upon returning from office after 4 o’cl P.M. I found your package and in order to see whether everything was all right I opened the pill boxes. When I came to the box containing the ‘Cioid’ and looked at the latter I came near being paralyzed and it required a superhuman effort and a swallow of whiskey to recover. Your Cioid turns out to be a most remarkable and entirely new genus of Scolytids!! In fact it is a long time since I put my eyes upon a more odd-looking creature than this species. After recovery I mounted at once a couple of specimens, for it happened that at 5:35 P.M. I had invited Smith, Hopkins and Alwood to dinner at Gerstenberg’s with the understanding that they should spend the evening hours in my room, all three of them to leave between 9 and 10 o’cl with the B & O R.R. During dinner (everything as usual fried in cockroach grease) I narrated about that Scolytid and Hopkins could hardly wait for the time to look at it. Upon returning home the specimens were at once exhibited and Hopkins became perfectly wild with excitement and cursed his miserable West Virginia Scolytids because they did not show any distinguishing characters except after most painful scrutiny. One of your Scolytid males happened to be alive and we had an opportunity to watch the movements of this wonderful species. Smith got also excited and in order to prevent further mischief I had Ida at once fetch a pitcher of lager beer. This smoothened the excitement and two subsequent pitchers were drunk to your health, and it was unanimously voted that no one but yourself would have been able to unravel the secrets of the *Cereus* fauna.”

Hubbard was to die two years later with his faithful friend at his side.

ALEXANDRE ARSÈNE GIRAULT

If, in the history of our Society, there was no member more important than Howard, no member more strange than Dyar, no member more kindly than Schwarz (though John M. Aldrich might compete, for he often gathered underprivileged children at Christmas time, gave them money, and took them on a shopping spree in his automobile), then there cannot have been a member more paranoid and vitriolic than Alexandre Arsène Girault (1884–1941). No entomologist ever used scientific writing in a more personal way than did he.

He worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture 1904–1909. He became disillusioned and went to Australia where he worked for the Department of Agriculture and Stock. Then 1914–1917 he was again in the USA working for

Agriculture. Finally he returned to Australia to work again for Agriculture and Stock, never to return to the USA, though he never gave up his American citizenship.

His ideas of how he should do scientific work were definite, no matter that he might have been hired and instructed to do certain tasks not to his liking. Usually he was hired as an economic entomologist, but he felt that the use of entomology for economic purposes was a prostitution of science and learning. The word commerce, used often in his publications, was usually substituted for economic entomology and was meant to be as derogatory as possible.

Hating the economic entomology he had agreed to do, even hating his beloved taxonomic work if it had to be done on species of economic importance, he worked long and hard at home on the kind of taxonomy he loved. Diatribes against economic entomology, his superiors who assigned it, his colleagues who practiced it, and philosophical opinions began to enter his scientific writings. For those reasons and for several other scientific reasons, his superiors and various editors would not accept his manuscripts, so he began publishing privately. He was hardly ever devious or cryptic in his statements; he didn't use the rapier—his weapon was the broad-sword and headsman's axe. He could be and often was vicious. He was, if anyone ever was, an embittered man.

He had many prejudices. One of them involved women. He detested what today is called women's liberation, calling it "womanitis . . . a serious disease which doth pock and burn, nay congeal, our very hearts." He even gave a scientific description of such "abnormal females" and proposed the new scientific name *Homo perniciosus* for them. This is not to say that he hated all women—far from it—he evidently cared very much for his wife and respected other women. It was the new women emerging in the 1920's that vexed him.

After taxonomy, surely his first love was poetry. (He named many species for it.) He composed poems and used them for delivering his opinions of colleagues, both favorable and unfavorable. Perhaps his most famous poem was the one about his earlier USDA superior, another member of our Society: the poem entitled "A Song after the manner of 'Auld Lang Syne,' on some prominent 'Economic Entomologists' (who forsook insects for trade)," begins

Should A. L. Quaintance be forgot
And other childish men?
Who their first love let go to pot
that they might fatten.

He seemed to hate almost everything and everyone in Washington. In an article of 1918 he said "This work was done in Bedlam, that is, the Insect Section, U.S. National Museum at Washington, a place unfit for scholarship." Girault's most vituperative attack, perhaps, was directed at William H. Ashmead, a colleague on the Chalcidae, a president of our Society. He minced no words, saying Ashmead "... threw half the chalcid world into convulsions." In poetry he all but drew and quartered Ashmead.

False Captain! Ah! dark Error's pioneer,
Enthusiastic dunce and shamming sneer,

Aching for a day's applause;
 Low scholar, ever wishing us laud Ambition's
 wind-blown froth and sandy fraud,
 Thus defying Heaven's laws.

Arise! Come, get thee from thy shelt'ring grave
 Where, strong walled, e'en thou coulds't dare be brave

With impunity's gaunt grace;
 Ah, come, past coward, lily-livered liar,
 Fair-tongued sweet-mouthing unctious friar
 Let's see what's writ across thy face!

Girault, like so many taxonomists, used scientific names to single out special people. Many of his new generic and specific names are obviously dedicated to the writers, musicians, philosophers, and historians. He touched many social causes with his names: *pattersoni* (1936), "to Haywood Patterson, a persecuted Negro of Alabama;" the timely *judaei* (1937), "to the still persecuted jews;" and his soaring championing of a former boxing champion, *johnsoni* (1922), "to Jack Johnson, American world hero, gentleman and high symbol. . . delighting Man's world in all perfections. Great in appetite, no man has ever equalled his bicipital girth. A man allied with heaven, pugilistic, fashionable, dissipated, improvident and non-poetical. A true Heaven-born O homo, already acclaimed by thee." Girault's words could soar—no doubt about that.

In Australia Girault evidently found his superior J. F. Illingworth as guilty of prostituting entomology as his American superiors. His twist of Illingworth's name in a scientific name and his scientific description are insulting, and his dedicatory paragraph is cleverly composed false praise. The genus and species are, of course, fictitious.

Shillingsworthia

Like *Polynema* but petiole, head, abdomen, mandibles absent. *S. shillingsworthi*, blank, vacant, inaneness perfect. Nulliebiety remarkable, visible only from certain points of view. Shadowless. An airy species whose flight cannot be followed except by the winged mind. From a naked chasm on Jupiter, August 5th, 1919.

This so thin genus is consecrated to Doctor Johann Francis Illingworth, in these days remarkable for his selfless devotion to Entomology, not only sacrificing all of the comforts of life, but as well his health and reputation to the uncompromising search for truth and for love of "those filmy people of the air." Honour him!

At times his life was quite harsh, he being once reduced to rock-breaker in a stone quarry. On the 2nd of May of 1941, after fleeing thither and yon, after the death of his wife, after great worry over the support of young children, after being broken in body, after several stretches in asylums, his tortured soul left his body on an island near Brisbane. Dahms recently summed up Girault's life so succinctly, so perfectly—he was a tragic figure whose tragedy came from setting the world against himself.

PLAGIARISM OR COINCIDENCE?

In 1915 all nomenclatural hell broke loose in the Society. It involved two members, taxonomists, who argued over whose presentation of a new genus was first. The Society and its officers were involved because the supposed theft of a new generic concept occurred at a meeting. W. R. Walton read a scientific article at a meeting on February 4th in which he proposed a new genus for a previously described species. Then C. H. Tyler Townsend published a new but different generic name for this same species on February 12th in the *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington*. It was charged that Townsend, who was present at the February 4th meeting, had heard Walton discuss the new genus and had rushed into print with his, Townsend's, new and different generic name for the genus. Townsend claimed that he had submitted his manuscript to the Biological Society at 7:00 PM on February 4th, and he presented his typewritten manuscript and the galley proofs to investigators. Charges, countercharges, investigations, resignations, and withdrawal of resignations flew fast and furiously. Walton finally published his article in our *Proceedings* of June 8th but merely said in a footnote on page 96 that he had presented his new genus in a paper that was "read February 4th, but was anticipated" by Townsend in a publication of February 12th. How all this was resolved I do not know. All that I have here related is in the files of our Society, but I could not determine the guilt of either member, not even if there was guilt.

HOWARD AND HIS WIFE

During the first fifty years of our Society L. O. Howard was a great leader of entomology in Washington. His autobiographical *Fighting the Insects* is a delightful and informal account of that period. He was an important man, knowing and associating with many distinguished people, presidents included. He tells the story of when his wife was invited to give a concert of songs in the White House before President Theodore Roosevelt. (She was an accomplished soprano and met Howard at a choral society in Washington; he could sing well in any voice.) Howard, though invited, could not attend because of a trip. He did have a few minutes before leaving, however, and went to the outside of the White House and tried to talk his way past guards to stand under the window to hear his dear wife sing. He tells that story in such a delightful way. (Of all the Society members who went before me, I would like to have known Howard most of all.)

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