James Halliday McDunnough, 1877-1962

Dr. J. H. McDunnough, linguist, musician, entomological taxonomist, and builder of insect collections, died in his 85th year, after a brief illness, at Halifax, Nova Scotia, on February 23, 1962. He was born on May 10, 1877, in Toronto, Ontario, where he obtained his early education at private schools, and at Jarvis Street Collegiate. His interest in entomology started as a boy, and with Dr. A. Gibson, Dr. E. M. Walker, Dr. R. S. Lillie and others, he formed an amateur biological club in Toronto just before 1900.

In 1897, Dr. McDunnough, accompanied by his mother and aunt, went to Berlin, Germany, where for six years he studied music and languages, played the viola in a symphony orchestra, tutored English to a Russian family, and toured England and Scotland. In 1904 he entered Berlin University to study entomology, and also as a prerequisite, enrolled in an extramural course in Modern Arts at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. In 1909 he received the M.A. degree from Queen's, and the Ph.D. degree from Berlin, based on a thesis on the structure of the intestine and its appendages of _Chrysopa perla_ L. Also, in 1909 he married, and through the kindness of his old friend, Dr. R. S. Lillie, Director of the Marine Biological Laboratory, Wood's Hole, Massachusetts, Dr. McDunnough was employed at the laboratory for several months. During the tenure at Wood's Hole he became acquainted with H. G. Dyar, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., who made arrangements for him to be curator of the Barnes collection of Lepidoptera. Dr. William Barnes, a wealthy surgeon of Decatur, Illinois, had developed a very large collection of North American Lepidoptera,
and Dr. McDunnough was the first of several curators employed by him. During the nine years of their association, they were extremely productive and published jointly many taxonomic papers. The first four volumes of the *Contributions to the Natural History of North American Lepidoptera* and *Illustrations of North American Species of the Genus Catocala* are outstanding examples.

In 1918, at the request of Dr. A. Gibson, Chief of the Division of Field Crop and Vegetable Insects, Canada Department of Agriculture, Dr. McDunnough spent the summer at Ottawa arranging the Macrolepidoptera in the Canadian National Collection for the privilege of taking some duplicate specimens back to Barnes. In April 1919 he left Decatur and returned to Ottawa as chief of the newly created Division of Systematic Entomology. He was thus the first officer appointed to devote full time to the National Collection of Insects, and for three years was without technical assistance. During that period he sorted the large accumulation of insects of all orders that had been acquired by the Entomological Branch, started building a reference library and established the practice of insect faunal surveys. This led to an identification service that, particularly in Lepidoptera, quickly embraced almost all of North America. This expanded his interests, and in 1921 he started research on Ephemeroidea, Odonata, Tabanidae and Hemiptera, and at the same time, continued his work on Lepidoptera. He spent 28 years at Ottawa and was superannuated in November, 1946. In this tenure and with a small staff, he developed the collection from a few cabinets and many cigar boxes, to one that comprised about 3,000 drawers, and large collections in alcohol and on slides. The collections contained type material of 5,690 North American species, and was one of the best collections of North American insects. The library had grown to about 4,000 bound volumes and several thousand pamphlets and authors' separates. The practice of conducting insect faunal surveys in Canada became routine, and Dr. McDunnough personally made collections in all of the provinces except Newfoundland, Saskatchewan and the northern Territories.

In November, 1946, he was appointed Research Associate, Department of Insects and Spiders, American Museum of Natural History, New York City. He enjoyed working at that museum but disliked the lack of nearby collecting places, and shortly after the death of Mrs. McDunnough on February 11, 1950, he left New York and went to the Nova Scotia Museum of Science, Halifax. At Halifax he retained his connection with the American Museum of Natural History, and the productiveness of his research at both places resulted in many American Museum publications. At Halifax, he devoted his time both in the museum and in the field mainly to Microlepidoptera. He continued working at the museum until November, 1961, when ill health confined him to his home at 1950 Robie Street. He was admitted to hospital in Halifax shortly after the New Year, and died on February 23, 1962. He was one of the very few remaining pioneers of North American lepidopterology.

Dr. McDunnough was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and of the Entomological Society of America. He was an Honorary Member of the New York Entomological Society and of the Lepidopterists' Society. He was editor of the Canadian Entomologist from 1921 to 1938.

Dr. McDunnough enjoyed classical music and made a fairly large collection of recordings of string solos, duets and trios. He also enjoyed golf and bridge. However, his work was his main hobby and he was a tireless collector and worker. His publications are numerous, and although the number of revisionary papers are few, he contributed a great deal by the descriptions of many new species.
species, the establishment of correct synonymy, and the “tying down” of old names.

Following is a list of his publications.

T. N. Freeman

List of Publications

89. — 1924. New Ephemeroptera from Illinois. Can. Ent. 56: 7-9, 1 fig.


(Received May 16, 1962)