

## IN MEMORIAM: WINSOR MARRETT TYLER

BY WENDELL TABER

WINSOR MARRETT TYLER, a Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union, died on January 9, 1954, in his 78th year following an unfortunate accident in his own home. Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on April 28, 1876, the son of Daniel Gage Tyler and Mary Elvira Marrett Tyler, he attended, as did so many of his contemporaries among the old Boston families, the Noble and Greenough School, a prominent private school still in existence. At Harvard, from which he graduated in 1899, he led a quiet life with social activities limited to membership in the Golf Club.

Graduating from the Harvard Medical School in 1903, he served for two years as House Officer at the Boston City Hospital, then, after a brief respite during the summer months, became in turn Assistant House Surgeon and House Surgeon at the New York Lying-in Hospital in New York City. In the autumn of 1906, he entered the private practice of medicine in Lexington, Massachusetts. On October 22, 1910, he married Gertrude Mabel Ball, also of Lexington, who died in 1929 after divorce in 1924. A son, John Gage Tyler, of Caribou, Maine, survives.

Winsor Marrett Tyler relinquished his medical practice to become a captain in the army medical corps on May 20, 1918, and was serving as surgeon at Fort Greble, Rhode Island, when discharged on May 22, 1919. He resumed his private practice in Lexington and also acted as Medical Examiner for Middlesex County in Massachusetts. Comfortably situated financially, he retired in 1927 in order to devote the major portion of his time to ornithology. To the end, however, he remained actively in touch with his first profession through medical journals.

As a child he was imaginative and greatly interested in books containing bird or animal pictures. From this it was but a short step to a direct, energetic interest in outdoor life. Regularly while in college he would walk the 10 or more miles to his home in Lexington, absorbing nature the while. There, it was his duty to harness and exercise the family horse, a procedure which allowed of further delightful contact with nature. He soon attracted the attention of his neighbor, Walter Faxon, and from that time forward his development along ornithological lines was rapid. The instructor was good: the material was excellent.

In the medical profession he had been a far deeper student and observer of human actions than many doctors: in the field few in-

cidents of bird behavior escaped him. His approach is evident in early papers such as "A Vireo Courtship" and "The Shrike in Action" in 'Bird-Lore' in 1912, and "Notes on the Nest Life of the Brown Creeper" in 'The Auk' in 1914. The prominent associations which followed his election to the Nuttall Ornithological Club on May 3, 1909, provided further stimulus, and during the next 15 years he published many short papers and notes in 'The Auk,' 'Wilson Bulletin,' 'Oologist,' and 'Bird-Lore.' In 1917, he was elected a Member of the A.O.U., and in 1950, a Fellow.

It was only natural that papers such as the foregoing should have attracted the attention of Arthur Cleveland Bent, who encouraged him to commence writing life histories. The 37 life histories, some of them not yet published, and the "General Remarks on the Family Parulidae" prefacing the most recently issued volume, "Life Histories of North American Wood Warblers," speak for themselves. Known only to a few, though, has been the interminable delving into available ornithological literature in his own well-balanced library or at the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard. Bent writes, "Dr. Tyler was my partner in producing my Life Histories and a most important helper. Without his extensive and thorough research through literature on American birds, and without the hundreds of references to pertinent matter that he sent me, I should never have attempted to make these Life Histories as nearly complete as I could. For each of my nineteen volumes, he carefully read through everything published in the many volumes of *The Auk*, *The Condor*, *The Wilson Bulletin*, *Bird-Lore*, and other important publications. I regret that I did not give him more credit for all his careful work which was so helpful. He should have been named as one of the authors."

His sympathetic understanding of people appears at its best in his memorial of Glover M. Allen in 'The Auk.' Never made public, though, were the numerous three or four page sketches about his own boyhood, his medical life and experiences, or his general penetrating observations on humanity. All unconsciously, he portrays himself in speaking of what time does *to* a man and *for* a man in his 25th college report, saying, "I hope time has changed me for the better since, twenty-five years ago, I left college, a very ignorant and a very useless boy. Do I mean that I was ignorant when I graduated? Yes, college had taught me very little, but it had given me, as it gave us all, power to learn. We know something after all these years and we are able to do some one thing well."

For many years after becoming associated with Bent, he maintained an apartment at 112 Pinckney Street at the foot of Beacon Hill in

Boston, looking out over an overgrown vacant plot of one and a quarter acres, and the Charles River. As he worked he could hear and identify from his window the numerous migrating warblers and other species. His hearing was acute and accurate right up to the time of his death. During the long winter months he read Shakespeare, year after year. "A play a day" was his motto. With the advent of spring the skill and grace of the professional baseball player invariably drew him to the ball park. A favorite spring walk was along the mile-long Esplanade to the Harvard Bridge and back, with an opportunity to see various ducks. Later, he would turn to the Boston Public Garden to observe the warbler and sparrow migrations, or stroll around Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Watertown. Frequently he would drive out to the Sudbury River Valley or ramble around his childhood haunts in Lexington. Having given up his car with the advent of the second World War and gasoline rationing, and allowed his driver's license to lapse, he passed successfully early in 1953 the necessary examination to regain his license in anticipation of driving during a forthcoming trip to Florida.

For many years Laurence B. Fletcher and he, accompanied by various other ornithologists, made a Christmas census of Cohasset and the South Shore region of Boston. Much of this trip was on foot. His final full day in the field, though, was a canoe trip after the war, in company with James Lee Peters and Joseph A. Hagar, to study the several thousand migrating Knots at the mouth of the North River in Scituate. In the last two or three years of his life, he would go from time to time of a spring or summer evening to the easily accessible marshes along the Charles River in Newton to observe the night herons, rails, and marsh wrens. On one such occasion in 1953, after watching an adult Yellow-crowned Night Heron, a species rare in this region, which was flying back and forth, he remarked, "I knew what the bird was not."

Rendered incapable of writing in recent years by a stroke which partially paralyzed his hand and left him in a generally weakened condition, his thoughts funnelled increasingly into those channels in which his particular friends were engaged, the A.O.U., Bent's Life Histories, the Nuttall Ornithological Club, and the Maine Audubon Society. He looked forward eagerly to and enjoyed attending for the first time as a Fellow an A.O.U. meeting, that of Montreal in 1951. Flying, too, was a delightful new experience. Shortly before his death, he completed rereading the entire series of Bent's Life Histories.

Quiet, sensitive, and of a rather retiring nature, he went out rarely



THE NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION OF THE NUTTALL ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB AT THE RESIDENCE OF C. F. BATCHELDER, JANUARY 5, 1948. In the foreground from left to right are Morton E. Cummings, Donald C. Alexander, C. F. Batchelder, and Winsor M. Tyler. In the background are Arthur W. Argue and James Lee Peters. Photograph by Nathaniel C. Nash, IV.

in public, yet was always ready to help those who came to him. He shrank from positions of prominence in front of his fellow men and avoided as much as possible heated arguments. Persons from all classes of life who did come in contact with him, however, felt quickly his personal magnetism and were strong in their appraisal of him as an outstanding personality. Peters did prevail on him to serve on the Council of the Nuttall Ornithological Club where his calm, clear understanding of human nature as well as birds proved of great value in analyzing problems and procedure. Although never actively engaged in banding, he served as a Councillor of the Northeastern Bird-banding Association, and he permitted the Massachusetts Audubon Society to carry his name as a Contributing Editor. Perhaps the greatest tribute came after his death from Charles Foster Batchelder who, approaching his own 98th birthday and recuperating from a heart attack, considered seriously attending the funeral.

*3 Mercer Circle, Cambridge, Massachusetts, April 18, 1954.*