

## LUTHER EVERET WYMAN

WITH PORTRAIT

By LOUIS B. BISHOP

**L**UTHER EVERET WYMAN, an Associate Member of the American Ornithologists' Union since 1907, for two years President of the Southern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club, and for the last twelve years Curator of Ornithology in the Museum of History, Science and Art in Los Angeles,



Fig. 68. LUTHER EVERET WYMAN.

died at his home in Los Angeles on January 7, 1928, from pneumonia after a short illness. Able and conscientious in his work, of abundant charity to all, with a keen sense of humor, kind and obliging to every one and always ready to help, his death

leaves a gap in the Los Angeles Museum, in the Cooper Club and in the hearts of his friends that will never be filled.

He was born in Sycamore, Illinois, on September 20, 1870, the second of seven sons of Byron and Nettie (Lowell) Wyman, of whom five survive him. His grandparents, moving from Vermont, obtained the home farm under the homestead law, and it is still held in the family. His love of nature developed early, for his teacher in the primary school in Sycamore, which he attended when he was five, said he was a most interesting child, but with his pockets always full of reptiles and other curiosities. While in the Sycamore High School he made a collection of mounted birds, which he later gave in part to that school, in part to the University of Chicago. His collegiate training was in Knox College at Galesburg, Illinois, where he was graduated in 1892. This education he was able to obtain through a loan from his uncle Luther Wyman, for whom he was named.

Starting active life thus in debt to his uncle, his enthusiasm for natural history was perforce suppressed by the necessity of repaying this indebtedness and making his own living. His first position was as a Columbia Guard at the World's Fair in Chicago. Later he was for about fifteen years a Member of the Board of Trade in Chicago, where he succeeded so well as to soon repay his uncle. He was married in Chicago on July 11, 1899, to Alta Penfield, who survives him. Two children were born of this union, both dying in infancy, but a living memory to their father to the time of his death.

The strain of the responsibilities of his work in Chicago were too great, and he suffered a nervous breakdown which compelled him to sever his connection with the Chicago Board of Trade. But there he had formed the acquaintance of Frank S. Daggett, also a Member of the Board, and with a kindred love for natural history, and especially for birds. When freedom from other duties allowed, they roamed together the fields and woods near Chicago, collecting and studying birds, and became fast friends.

Removing with Mrs. Wyman to Nampa, Idaho, for his health, he bought an apple ranch. There they lived for four years, his health steadily improving in the outdoor life and with the opportunity for pursuing his studies in natural history. There he became a member of the Biological Survey, sending many specimens of birds and mammals to Washington, and, Mrs. Wyman tells me, both of them enjoyed their life there to the utmost.

But through no fault of his, Idaho apples became a drug on the market, so that he was ready to answer the call to Los Angeles which now reached him. His friend, Mr. Daggett, had removed to Los Angeles some years before, and had been appointed Director of the Museum of History, Science and Art; and the opportunity came to this museum to obtain a complete collection of the wonderful Pleistocene fossils in the La Brea asphalt pits. To superintend these excavations Mr. Wyman was summoned, and thus his first work in southern California was in paleontology. This work he performed so well and carefully that only regrets were left for those who would excavate farther. The remarkable collection of these fossils in the Los Angeles Museum is thus a monument to his ability to perform well varied tasks and to his conscientiousness.

When this was done he was appointed Curator of Ornithology in the Museum, which position he still held at his death. But though ornithology was his official field it involved but a small part of his duties. In the field of natural science, mammalogy and herpetology also fell to his share, and his duties in each were

efficiently performed. To these in later years photography was added, an art in which he became so proficient that more and more of his time had to be given to it. Not only was he called on to photograph objects of natural history, and the paintings of different exhibitions staged in the Museum, but also subjects for the art classes of the Otis Art Institute and almost every sort of thing that could be portrayed by the camera. For his own pleasure he continued this study on occasional trips to the Mohave and Colorado deserts, and depicted the wild, weird life of those regions with a faithfulness and love for truth, beauty and art that few others have attained.

Of strictly scientific work he did little, as he had little opportunity for it. A bibliography of his papers, compiled by Mr. George Willett, accompanies this article. The "Field Book of Birds of the Southwestern United States", prepared in collaboration with Miss Elizabeth F. Burnell of the Nature Department of the Los Angeles public schools, was his chief work. This was a labor of love, and will long stand as an authoritative popular exposition of the birds of this region. His ambition had been to see the Los Angeles Museum the leader in scientific research in all branches of natural history in this part of the world; and he had prepared a study of the Western Gull, which was ahead of its time in appreciation of the various plumages and their sequence. But this was never published, and he was doomed to see his larger vision fail of fruition. To those in authority at the Museum the entertainment of the people and instruction of the young seemed more important than the advancement of science. But he never complained, and said to me only recently, "If they won't let me work in science, I will do to the best of my ability what they wish me to do."

And this was his course in life. Never to complain, to bear disappointments and reverses cheerfully, to help others, and so from apparent failure to win success. In Chicago he lost first his children and then his health and business; in Idaho conditions beyond his control nullified his efforts; and in Los Angeles he could not carry out his scientific bent. But his loving wife was always with him, his love for the lost children of his youth he distributed among all other children, and he was never too busy or tired to give of his best to those puzzled about some bird, mammal or reptile. During his later years he suffered from partial blindness in one eye and from frequent severe headaches, but he still attended to his various duties with unflagging zeal. To the teachers in the Los Angeles public schools he was a helpful and unfailing guide; to the children that thronged his steps always kind; to the other employees of the Museum a reservoir of kindness and sympathy; to the Audubon Society of Southern California a constant help and inspiration; to the Cooper Club a tower of strength, a most efficient Secretary for many years, full of faithfulness and knowledge, and a President who should have been made permanent; and to his friends a delight.

Such was the man, and such his true forte in life; and those who came in contact with him in his varied activities now arise and call him blessed.

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