

view of this fact, which may have been overlooked, and also because of the complicating effects of pantothenic acid and other nutrilities in tissue extracts, the use of fungi in quantitative testing for vitamin B<sub>1</sub> in extracts appears hazardous in the extreme. At the time the writer's first suggestion was made the current conceptions regarding the chemistry of the vitamins were exceedingly primitive, and the suggestion, even though it did not turn out to be directly usable, was nevertheless of some value as provocative of thought and experimentation. The writer believes that the observations referred to, which form the basis of the proposed tests for vitamin B<sub>1</sub>, are interesting and important scientifically but that their value as the basis of quantitative tests is questionable.

ROGER J. WILLIAMS

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY,  
OREGON STATE COLLEGE

### FIRST RECORD OF THE BLACK WIDOW SPIDER IN MINNESOTA

DURING the past several years numerous records have been published on the occurrence of the black widow spider in the United States. While generally

regarded as a distinctive southern species it had been reported from every state in the Union except Minnesota. Numerous unsuccessful attempts had been made to collect it in this state, and we can now add definite record of its occurrence here.

On May 21 and 22, 1937, the black widow spider was collected in southeastern Minnesota, in the southern portion of Houston County, a few miles north of the Iowa state line and across the Mississippi River from Wisconsin. Three female specimens were taken, at points several miles from one another. All were found on the sun-exposed sides of hills, where they had built an irregular web under a protruding stone. One specimen was sent to Professor R. V. Chamberlain, who determined it as *Latrodectus mactans texanus*.

A method by which the black widow spider may become further distributed is shown in the finding of a female *Latrodectus mactans* at Hallock, Minnesota, the specimen having been carried from Mississippi in a truck-load of bee-hives.

DONALD DENNING

DIVISION OF ENTOMOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

## SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

### FOREL

*August Forel. Out of My Life and Work.* Translated by BERNARD MIALL. W. W. Norton and Company, New York. Pp. 352. 1937.

FOR fifty years past we have known of Forel as one of the great leaders in entomology, specializing in ants, which he studied from all parts of the world, describing over three thousand new forms. We have known of his patient investigations of the life histories and habits of ants, and from various sources have come intimations of his unique personality. We have been told how he was led, by his experiences as physician to those mentally deranged, to take up the fight against the use of alcoholic drinks, so that people in the opposing camp nicknamed him "The Great Phylloxera." We have heard how he condemned the false standards and evil practices connected with sex, and spoke of these things in any company with a frankness which in earlier days was considered shocking.

When I was a young man, having incipient tuberculosis, I seriously contemplated residence in Switzerland. Circumstances decided otherwise, but I got so far as to read about Switzerland, and for a time almost lived there in imagination. It is curious to think how different my life would have been, had I adopted Switzerland as my country. Although well content to be an American, I have never lost my sentimental regard for that little European country, which combines

so much of physical beauty with such a diversity of folks, living peacefully in a genuine republic. At all events, I have missed something by not living in Switzerland; I might have been one of the friends of Forel.

Forel was born in 1858 and died in 1931. Toward the end of his life he decided that he could best tell his own story, neither undervaluing nor overvaluing himself. He felt that he had made many friends and enemies, through his advocacy of reforms, and regretted that some might be offended by his narration. Yet, "I can not get out of my own skin, nor do I wish to." As a matter of fact the book is extremely frank in its statements of facts and its estimates of people, including Forel's nearest relatives. The reader naturally can not say whether all the judgments are sound, but the impression gained is that of a most lovable and entirely sincere personality. He describes in considerable detail his attitude toward religion, which in due course of time led him to reject Christianity altogether. Near the end of his life he adopted the world-religion of the Baha'i, which had its origin in Persia. It was between his fifth and eighth years that he began to study ants. "The social life of these insects had a great fascination for me. I did not as yet understand their habits, but I saw how they helped one another, and how they crept into their nests; and I became extremely curious as to the contents of the latter."