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R. C. Osburn, Connoisseur of Living

When I first met Raymond C. Osburn in 1936, he was 64 years old and chairman of the department of zoology and entomology at Ohio State University. I came to him as a new member of the staff on the entomological side of his department. A tall, slim gentleman with the lines of his face emphasizing his happy nature, he received me graciously in his office. Looking at me through his horn-rimmed glasses with a lighted stogie in his hand, he talked easily about the department and his own interests. He was thoroughly at home in this book-filled, specimen-cluttered room, which contained a work table, a roll-top desk, and a highboy desk, at which he sometimes stood to do his work.

Osburn had worked in that room since 1917 and in the opinion of some members of his staff had become too comfortable there to exert himself competitively for the benefit of his department. I believe, however, that he was too gentle and honest and too absorbed in his professional work to apply pressure or to indulge in campus politics to obtain what was needed. He tacitly encouraged the senior members of his staff to help themselves, if they could; and they did. He was not without accomplishment, however, in the expansion of facilities for zoological research and teaching at O.S.U., for it was generally acknowledged that he was responsible for the

establishment of the Franz Theodore Stone Laboratory at Put-in-Bay, Ohio, through the generosity of Julius F. Stone.

The only instrument I remember in Osburn's office was a binocular dissecting microscope, for he was essentially a direct observer of nature and a natural philosopher who did not resort to experimentation and instrumentation—an old-fashioned naturalist.

Osburn's broad professional interests are indicated by his membership in 22 societies, national and local; by the places in which he chose to spend his summers, usually hydrobiological stations; and by his numerous publications of amazing variety. He worked on Bryozoa, oysters, fish, dragonflies, and two-winged flies, particularly the beneficial flies of the family Syrphidae. He promoted the care and use of natural resources in Ohio, gave generous service to *Biological Abstracts*, and held office in many of his societies. Although no scientific law or well-known hypothesis is associated with his name, he added to zoological knowledge all along the line, and his advice and help were in demand in the aquatic side of his work.

Surprisingly, Osburn's most comprehensive and important work was done after his retirement at age 70 in 1942. Then he was called to Southern California to study the collections of Bryozoa made by the Hancock Foundation ex-

peditions in Pacific waters from Alaska to Peru. He described and directed the illustration of many new species and produced three volumes on the taxonomy and distribution of these marine organisms. No one was more surprised than Osburn when, in recognition of the excellence of his work as represented by the first volume, he was named to receive the Daniel Giraud Elliot medal of the National Academy of Sciences for 1950. I was present in the auditorium of the National Academy on the evening of 26 April 1954 when Alexander Wetmore presented Osburn to the audience, and the award was conferred upon him by Detlev W. Bronk. At 82 he stood as straight and responded as easily and gracefully as ever. Then he and Mrs. Osburn departed for a visit to one of their favorite regions, the Great Smokies. What an inspiration to young biologists was this grand climax to Osburn's scientific career! He died on 6 August 1955.

To me Osburn was more important as a connoisseur of living than as an impersonal scientist. He loved literature and was noted among his students and friends for his ability to read poetry aloud. I once requested him to read *Tam O'Shanter* at a Hallowe'en party—he knew it by heart and declaimed it with relish in his rolling bass voice. He was noted also for his skill in composing light verse for any occasion. It sparkled with his quips and always had the light touch without barbs.

Thanks to modern electronics, Osburn seemed to be with us on the morning of 29 November 1955 in Cincinnati when Ohio State University alumni of his department assembled at breakfast in his memory. A recent tape-recording of his recitation of some of his most humorous verse was heard, and in our imagination we saw again that tall, gallant figure, stogie alight, eyes twinkling, head mobile, performing as of old.

FRANK L. CAMPBELL
*Division of Biology and Agriculture,
National Academy of Sciences—
National Research Council,
Washington, D.C.*

Everyone who enjoys thinks that the principal thing to the tree is the fruit, but in point of fact the principal thing to it is the seed. Herein lies the difference between them that create and them that enjoy.—FRIEDRICH WILHELM NIETZSCHE, *Maxims*.