

IN MEMORIAM
ISAAC MCKINNEY LEWIS

Isaac McKinney Lewis, Professor of Bacteriology in the University of Texas, died of a heart attack in Austin on March 12, 1943. He had suffered an attack in the summer of 1941, but, after a long convalescence, he had apparently fully recovered. He is survived by two brothers, Dr. Charles E. Lewis of Waterville, Maine, and Mr. John R. Lewis, of Wolcott, Indiana. He never married.

Dr. Lewis, third son of Isaac R. Lewis and Margaret Jane (McKinney) Lewis, was born September 21, 1878, on a farm in Jasper County near Rensselaer, Indiana. He had the misfortune never to know his father, who died in the May preceding his birth. He was devoted to his mother, who had been a teacher, throughout her lifetime, and to her he gave the credit for instilling in him the desire to secure an education.

He attended the country school near his home and finished the eighth grade at the age of fourteen. By home study, while working on the farm, he prepared himself for a teacher's certificate, and at the age of seventeen began teaching in his home township of Barkley. In 1897 he entered the Indiana State Normal School. His work there was interrupted by trouble with his eyes following measles, and by the necessity of earning his expenses, but he was able to finish in 1904. He entered the University of Indiana in the fall of the same year, and in due course received there the degrees of B.A. in 1906, M.A. in 1907, and Ph.D. in 1909. During the year 1908-1909 he was instructor in botany in New Hampshire State College and Assistant Botanist in the experiment station. In September of 1909 he came to the University of Texas to be instructor in botany and to initiate work in bacteriology. He rose through the successive ranks to Professor in 1919. In 1918-1919 he was a captain in the Sanitary Corps, U.S. Army, stationed at the Yale Army Laboratory School. He was chosen Research Professor by the University of Texas in 1938-39. For a number of years he taught both botany and bacteriology; but the development, under his leadership, of the

work in bacteriology was such that for the last fifteen years this field has occupied his entire time. Throughout his career, however, he retained an intense loyalty to the parent science of botany.

His early life on the farm instilled in him an abiding interest in products of the soil. He was especially interested in livestock, and it was his custom to spend his vacation every summer on his farm in Indiana. Increasing deafness, concerning which he was very sensitive, deprived both him and his friends of much of the pleasure of free intercourse during his later years.

In productive scholarship Dr. Lewis was painstaking and tireless. Few of his publications show joint authorship, for he preferred to work alone, even to the extent that he himself prepared most of the media and glassware used in his research. Each experiment was repeated many times over before he accepted the results. It is plainly evident from a consideration of his publications that his primary interest was in the pure and fundamental aspects-of the subject. The caliber of the work done by him is attested by the letters of commendation which he received from many leading bacteriologists, both American and foreign.

He was a member of Sigma Xi, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Botanical Society of America, the American Phytopathological Society, the American Microscopical Society (vice-president, 1932), the Society of American Bacteriologists, and the Texas Academy of Science. In the Society of American Bacteriologists he was a member of the national council from 1940 to 1942. He was the organizer of the Texas Branch of that Society, and at the time of his death was serving his second term as its president.

The high esteem in which he was held by leading bacteriologists is further indicated by the following excerpts from a few of the letters written since his death:

"Professor Lewis' contributions to our knowledge of the intimate structure of the bacterial cell have been of primary and fundamental importance. Few works in recent years have approached this subject with such technical competence and with such sound analysis of results." Professor C. E. A. Winslow, Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Bacteriology, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

"The death of a distinguished man of science is always a great loss to that particular branch of learning and to human progress; but in the passing of Professor Isaac McKinney Lewis, bacteriology has suffered a

critical and severe blow far beyond the conventional loss which goes with the cessation of the labors of a research leader.

"Professor Lewis' contributions to bacteriology were not only fundamental and sound but unique, timely and directive. In the field of bacterial morphology and cytology his work was supreme and served as a much needed stimulus in an important but neglected branch of science. To the rapidly developing subject of bacterial variation, the contributions of Professor Lewis were at once progressive and conservative; and his acute, painstaking and sound work did much to forward and stabilize a subject of great basic importance which had reached a somewhat chaotic state.

"Although all may admire the work of a leader, it is rare that such a person is able, as Professor Lewis was, to instill a feeling of true personal affection among those who were not privileged to be associated with him or even to enjoy a personal acquaintance. The quality and loyalty of the students he sent forth in the world, his generosity in appraising the works of others in his own field of research, the courteous little notes written in his own hand, these, and many acts of kindness, make us all feel that a friend has gone." Professors J. M. Sherman and Georges Knaysi, Department of Bacteriology, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

"Dr. Lewis wrote on varied botanical and bacteriological subjects. I have been particularly impressed by the careful work he published on bacterial variation and cytology. He was not satisfied with the explanations of other workers, but insisted on looking more deeply into problems which interested him. Personally I have had great respect for and confidence in his results when he published. A real appraisal of the work, which he carried on, would require wide reading and review, and more time than I can well take now. Bacteriology has lost a devotee who contributed basically to its development." Dr. R. I. Buchanan, Director, Agricultural experiment Station, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa.

At the time of his death, he was engaged in preparing the manuscript for a book on the bacterial cell.

As a teacher Dr. Lewis was unexcelled. His lectures, sound always in matter, were invariably well organized, well presented, and highly interesting. Students trained under him were warmly welcomed if they transferred to another institution. Among his associates it has been a common experience to be told by former students that Dr. Lewis was the best teacher they had during their college career, either at the University of Texas or elsewhere.

As a man he was unselfish, kindly, modest almost to the point of shyness, with a lively sense of humor and a sparkling wit. If differences of opinion seemed to demand it, he could set forth his own with clarity and force. Under stress, he could pack more meaning into fewer and

more incisive words than most men; but he was utterly incapable of harboring ill feeling. True to the loftiest ideals, his conduct was irreproachable. Friends, colleagues, and students found him always easily approachable, sympathetic, and, in times of financial stress, generous with aid.

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