

TRYON REAKIRT (1844 - ?)

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Tryon Reakirt has been a mystery man to most entomologists who have tried to learn about him. All that has been known is that during the 1860s he was very active describing butterflies from the Americas and the Philippines. Nine papers written by him appeared in the Proceedings of the Entomological Society of Philadelphia and a tenth paper was published in the Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. The last appeared in 1868. From it the reader gets the feeling that others were to follow. They did not.

Carpenter (1945, 1953), in her supplement, gave no dates for him. Her reference to Essig (1931:737) supplies only incorrect information. The statement there that Reakirt "collected Lepidoptera throughout California and more particularly in the vicinities of Los Angeles and Sacramento, as well as in the Rocky Mountains.", as discussed below, evidently is utterly false. Carpenter's other reference for Reakirt is to Strecker (1878:262) where the statement is read "born in Philadelphia, Penna.", and there is a bibliography of his writings. Strecker could have written considerably more about his young friend, but was in a peculiar position as will develop.

Through the courtesy of Dr. Rupert Wenzel and of the director of the Chicago Natural History Museum, I have been allowed to read the letters from Reakirt and from his parents to Strecker. From the 74 items in the correspondence I have been able to construct a brief and incomplete biography of the man.

Tryon Reakirt was the son of John and E. C. Reakirt, born in Philadelphia on April 21, 1844. At the time that he appeared upon the entomological scene he was in partnership with his father and brother Daniel in the importing and wholesale drug business. In 1868 he branched out into business of his own while retaining an interest in the family concern. His new venture was the Delaware Lead Works in Wilmington, Delaware, where he manufactured white lead and later, lead acetate. This new venture during the depressed days that followed the Civil War was his downfall.

Reakirt became a member of the Entomological Society of Philadelphia on July 13, 1863 (Cresson, 1911:56.) At that time he was nineteen years old and apparently a young man of some financial substance. He became well known as a student of the butterflies of the American tropics and of the Indo-Australian region. He also wrote the first summary of our

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knowledge of the butterflies of the Rocky Mountain region (1866.) This was prompted by the collections brought from Colorado by James Ridings in 1864. In addition to Ridings's collection, Reakirt studied two earlier ones in the cabinet of the Society. These had been made by William Wood and Winslow J. Howard (see Brown, 1957.) W. H. Edwards considered Reakirt the North American rhopalocerist most competent to handle the very large collection of butterflies made by U. S. Minister A. A. Burton while serving in Bogota, Colombia. These had been sent to the Smithsonian Institution (see Brown 1960:163 *et seq.*). It was while publishing upon this collection that Reakirt dropped from the entomological scene.

A single letter in W. H. Edwards' file housed in the archives of the State of West Virginia is the most entomological letter that I have read written by Reakirt. It is brief, so I quote it in entirety to give the flavor of the man.

" W. H. Edwards, Esq.

" Philada Jan'y 26, 1868

"Dear Sir:

"Your favor of the 11th was duly recd: have been somewhat remise in not replying sooner.

"Hübner erected the genus *Doxocopa* in his Sammlung for the species *Idyja*: very appropriately, I think, separating it from the great mass of American and Foreign Apaturidae: from all which its species are readily distinguished by their peculiar facies. H. Schäffer considers it of good value.

"The balance of Amer. Apaturidae, Hübner placed under the name *Catargyria*, reserving *Apatura* for the Old-world species: since then, Boisd. has separated an Indian section, with the generic title, *Castalia*, and more recently Moore has added a fifth, *Dilipa*.

"I have come to the conclusion that *Ausonides* Boisd. Edw. = *Lanceolata* Boisd. It struck me very curiously, that out of the thousands recd from Cala I have never obtained the latter: so I compared descriptions carefully, and believe them to be synonymous.

"Did Grote bring back much of a collection with him?

"Very truly
/s/ Tryon Reakirt "

Reakirt's collection ultimately was incorporated with Strecker's and now constitutes a considerable portion of that collection in the possession of the Chicago Natural History Museum. The first letter from Reakirt in the Strecker correspondence is dated November 22, 1866, and apparently was written soon after the two had met. In it he announced that he was expecting a shipment of 1,000 specimens "of Philippines, Moluccan and Californian" butterflies. These he apparently had purchased from Lorquin. During the period 1866-1868 Reakirt employed Strecker to mount much of the material that he was receiving. There is no indication in these letters that Reakirt himself did any extensive field collecting.

In the summer of 1868 Reakirt founded "Tryon Reakirt & Co." and the Delaware Lead Works. That summer he turned over to Strecker his butterfly collection to be sold to raise additional funds. The original

price was set at \$1,800. For some months Strecker held the collection under agreement to sell it for the owner. Meanwhile Reakirt entered into negotiations with the New York Lyceum (later the American Museum of Natural History) for purchase of the collection. In October, 1869, he was informed that the funds necessary could not be raised. Then he offered the collection to Strecker for the Reading Natural History Society for \$1,400 plus \$46 that Strecker owed him. This deal fell through and Strecker agreed to purchase the collection for the same sum. A timetable of payments was arranged, but Strecker made none of the stipulated payments. Meanwhile Reakirt was in serious financial trouble. Correspondence between the two men stopped with a letter from Reakirt dated August 18, 1870.

Early in 1871 Reakirt disappeared. He fled the country. The first letter giving an indication of this is one written by John Reakirt, Tryon's father, on February 17, 1871. The letter is cryptic. Mr. Francis J. Lederer, Chief County Detective in the District Attorney's office in Philadelphia, gave me the leads that allowed an understanding of the case. Both John Reakirt & Company and Tryon Reakirt & Company were forced into involuntary bankruptcy by action taken in the U. S. District Court for Eastern Pennsylvania on February 18, 1871. (Docket 5, cases 1310 and 1311.) These cases dragged out beyond the death of John Reakirt, and possibly Tryon, and finally were closed in June, 1879. This is the reason that Strecker said so little about Reakirt in his note, published in 1878.

When Tryon Reakirt fled from the United States he went to Lima, Peru. In exchange for acting as a mail-drop, to keep Reakirt's place of hiding secret, and for later acting as an investment agent for him, Strecker was relieved of making payments beyond the token ones he had made for Reakirt's collection. He earned it!

Reakirt resumed correspondence with Strecker by a letter dated June 11, 1871, mailed at Lima, Peru. Altogether Strecker received eleven letters from the exile. In these Reakirt used the name Theodore Rand. At one time Strecker was approached to procure a passport for Reakirt in the original spelling of his family name — T. Thomas Reugert. Inquiry at the U. S. State Department and the National Archives produced no application in that name. Other letters to Strecker inquire about countries without extradition treaties with the United States. Still others set up a system by which Reakirt could invest money in the New York Stock Market through Strecker.

The last letter addressed to Strecker from Reakirt was written sometime in the fall of 1872. The envelope is empty, the postmark removed but a face stamp "London 30 Nov 72" indicates that it had been transshipped then. In letters to Strecker there were some hints that Reakirt would move to Rio de Janeiro. There also was the information that he was

suffering from dysentery. Nothing further is known about Tryon Reakirt.

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TWO SPECIES OF HESPERIIDAE PREVIOUSLY UNRECORDED FROM THE UNITED STATES

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Two species of HesperIIDae (HesperIIDinae) described from Mexico and previously unrecorded north of the Rio Grande were collected by the author in the vicinity of Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas, during October and November, 1963.

Vidius perigenes (Godman) was first taken on October 20 and for several days thereafter; the last specimens were somewhat worn. The length of the forewing costa of the male is 12-13 mm, that of the female 14-16 mm. The upper surface of the wings is dark brown without spots, the costa of forewing and the fringes, lighter. The fringes are not checkered. The underside of the forewing costa and apex, and the entire hindwing, are cinnamon colored with light veins. On the hindwing there is a pale ray that runs the length of the wing at the upper edge of the discal cell. The genitalia are figured by Exans (1955). The figure of the valve is recognizable. That of the uncus is inaccurate, showing the cleft too wide, the lateral lobes too flaring and the lateral processes too large.

This species was taken in tall grass growing in the open, usually along ditch banks and railroad rights-of-way. Often the insects hid in the thick clumps or took refuge near the bases of the culms. *V. perigenes* was not seen to visit flowers nor to choose open perches. It is therefore easily overlooked.

Lerodea dysaules Godman was first taken October 17 and the last captures were November 13. These are the first and last days of the