

## PRESIDENTIAL LETTER TO THE SAN DIEGO MEETING

Rio de Janeiro, September 12th of 1955

Dear Fellow Members,

I should have been very happy to have been with you in person on the occasion of the recent meeting of the San Diego section of our Society.

Notwithstanding the fact that I remained unaware of this meeting until several days after it had taken place, the delays and difficulties of long distance foreign travel would no doubt have prevented my attending. I must rely therefore, as others have done, on the written or printed word to convey to all of you my personal greetings and to express my heartfelt thanks for the honour you fellow members have done to me by electing me as your President. Indeed while I feel I have done little personally to deserve it, the distinction which has fallen this year on a Brazilian member will also be reflected in the satisfaction shared by our resident members in Brazil. We are but very few, it is true, compared to the legions of both amateur and professional entomologists in your country, but this, as a small group, brings us closer together.

It has always been my aim to widen our local circle and bring in new adepts to our lepidopterological pursuits but, of course, in a country where in spite of its exuberance the lovers of nature are fewer in proportion to the educated population, progress tends to be much slower. To compensate for numbers I have tried to form new adepts to the study of Lepidoptera on the basis of modern techniques of dissection and the analysis of the genital organs. Addressing myself in particular to our younger fellow members everywhere I recommend to those who are interested in taking up the systematics of Lepidoptera seriously to use as much as possible the characters provided by the internal genital organs in order to define groups and species. Such methods, for instance, have revolutionized the systematics of the Mosquitoes and brought order out of virtual chaos. In my own group of Lepidoptera, the Arctiidae, which has been revised by entomologists of renown, I have been able to establish real affinities between species formerly allocated to different genera or even to different families (Ctenuchidae from Arctiidae in many instances).

While I recognize that the degree of definition provided by genitalic preparations varies according to families or even smaller groups in the Lepidoptera, I believe that even in cases where the genitalia have been considered to provide few characters for the differentiation of species, the solution lies in better techniques rather than in the switch to other and external morphological characters.

Next week I will be leaving Rio on a collecting trip to the interior of Brazil; this will be the third trip in three months of a series planned to cover a completely unexplored part of our vast country, entomologically speaking. Such a trip which would have taken months of hardships and even considerable danger, now can be undertaken in relative comfort and short time thanks to the airplane. Our Airforce has recently built several emergency airfields and radio direction stations for the convenience and safety of both home and international airlines. With the cooperation of our Airforce who have provided the transportation, I am able to take advantage of these nests of civilization in the wilderness. Unfortunately the drought which prevailed on the two previous trips made the yield a very small one. The rainy season is about due now, and I am hoping therefore to obtain this time much hoped for novelties as well as other interesting material for study.

Dear fellow members, perhaps some day in the not too distant future I will be able to visit your country with its wealth of scientific establishments and great museums. If this happens I will have the pleasure of meeting some of you personally and becoming better acquainted; if this cannot be, then at least for a brief moment you will have shared my thoughts and spirit.

Yours very truly,

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