

In Memoriam. Felix Bryk. By Per Brinck.

When Felix Bryk died Jan. 13, 1957, one week before his 75th birthday, an uncommonly chequered life came to an end. His destiny was very like that of the intelligentsia of the middle ages. Like them, he was a cosmopolite, travelling for a large part of his life to offices and museums, or working in them, wherever there was shelter for study and research. Like them, he had a desire for the knowledge of a polyhistorian and like them, he never became so closely bound to his field of learning — as is almost always the case with modern specialists — that he gave up his vivid interest in mankind and its many manifestations of life.

Entomology always played a unique role in his life and this in spite of the fact that his education was rather that of artist and humanist than of a naturalist. Also it was certainly no accident that entomology came to run like a red thread through his existence. Already during his later years at school he showed a lively interest in the insects and this did not diminish during the journeys of his years of development. His first publication appeared as early as 1906 (in Warsaw) and consisted of a slightly romanticized description of the life and ways of cockchafers.

His father, Adolf Bryk, a Vienna lawyer, like many others, seems to have thought that entomology was a child's sickness that would pass. After the family moved to Galicia, the son began to show such talents for an artistic career that he had to start at the Art Academy in Cracow. As a painter full of temperament and with esthetic ambitions, the young artist finally went to Paris and Florence where he met Aino Mäkinen, whom he married in 1909 at Myllykylä. With that his variegated years of travelling were certainly not ended but he had laid the foundation for that kaleidoscopic knowledge and broadened that tolerance which finally became one with his nature.

Together with the artistic studies, Bryk pursued his entomological and especially his lepidopterological interests with increasing intensity. Perhaps the cleft between these two fields of work is not so great as it might seem to be in the beginning; for there are very few groups of animals that provide so many occasions for study by aesthetes and artists as those very butterflies among which Bryk's interest particularly fell upon the brilliant Parnassiinae. He discussed these insects in many papers; the high point was reached by the great monograph in *Das Tierreich* (1935).

as an artist

Bryk came to Sweden during the first World War. Although here too he was industrious and exhibited [his paintings] in Stockholm, it was in entomology and the bibliographic research on Linné — a new field of activity — that he made his most remarkable contributions. The Linné studies were followed by a series of important publications. A part of this was the first issuance or re-printing of unknown writings by Linné or writings that were considered as having disappeared, another part was the result of bibliographic studies, most frequently with an entomological turn. During this time, Linné's *Minnesbok* [Memory Book] (Stockholm 1919), H. A. Müller's *Delineatio Regni Animalium (Linnaei Syst. Nat. Anim., ed. 8)*, Linnaeus abroad (Stockholm 1920, Suppl. 1921), Linné's *Adonis Stenbrohultensis* (Stockholm 1920), Linné's *Randaufzeichnungen zu Maria Sibylla Merianins Erucarum ortus* (Stuttgart 1920), and Linné as practical entomologist (Stockholm 1924) as well as the bibliographical surveys *Bibliotheca Linnaeana I and II* (Stockholm 1923), were printed. Bryk* ~~was~~ triumphed here: several of these writings came out in very small editions published by the author, and the final shape he gave many of them often implied the creation of a series of variants which were great rarities from the very date of publication.

[*insert, the bibliophile]

However, Linné and his time was not thereby a closed incident in Bryk's life. Until his last years he continued to publish different detailed studies in this field where, by his activity, he contributed to filling in many gaps in the earlier, more humanistically directed research. The followers of Linné, and especially our entomologists of the 1700s were venerated objects of study during recent years, as evidenced, among other things, by Karl de Geer's article in "Swedish Men of Science" (1952).

Remarkably enough, Felix Bryk combined an artists easy way of looking at existence and living it, with the "calendar-biters" indiscriminate "deep-sounding" into even the apparently most uninteresting details, as is necessary for a good bibliographer. He was unquestionably a good bibliographer and his work as publisher of "Lepidopterorum Catalogus" (after 1923) and with that, the revision of a number of families in this important standard work was of the greatest importance. Here, the same as in a number of papers of similar kind, he had extraordinary assistance partly in his excellent memory, partly in an unparalleled talent for picking just the desired point quickly from articles, critiques, or descriptions.

After the close of the first World War, Bryk again went abroad. His longest journey took him to the East African biological station which was then looked after by the Science Academy. Here Bryk stayed from 1924-1926 and busied himself partly with entomological, especially lepidopterological, collections, partly with ethnographic studies. At first the latter studies were of a more general nature but were little by little directed toward a field which had interested him during his study years in Italy, namely sexual research. The result was "Neger-Eros" ~~Sexual Research in Africa~~ which was later translated and published in various English editions. After further compilations of material and complementary studies in London and Berlin, his great "Die Beschneidung bei Mann und Weib" came out in 1931. Also he long considered sexual research of current interest. In 1951 he published his Hans Maj: t Konung Gustaf VI Adolf collected works on "Linné as sexualist", where, among other things, he went through and repeated places in certain of Linné's publications which earlier publishers thought they ought to skip over, in consideration for Linné's memory. Certainly this was by no means for the reason that Bryk wanted to throw mud on that memory; he was a definite admirer of Linné, as few are. But he thought that the use of dashes or rows of dots in certain of Linné's writings in place of expressions or meanings that the publisher found irritating did not contribute ~~our-understanding-of-Linné's-~~ to increasing our understanding of Linné, as a human being.

During the 1930s Bryk worked for long periods in the Zoological Museum in Berlin, mostly engaged with revision and arrangement of Lepidoptera. When in 1939 he returned to Sweden, he was able to continue this work at the Naturhistoriska Riksmuseet and as a result thereof, a series of publications came out on the large material of butterflies in the Riksmuseet collections, especially the result of expeditions. Through his close study in this field, Bryk had with time obtained a good general view especially of the Macrolepidoptera of the palearctic region and this in connection with a great knowledge of the literature made it easy for him to quickly see aberrant, undescribed forms. This work of his is purely taxonomic; the wealth of new spp. and subspp. is great. His descriptions follow a classic pattern — with a weave that betrays the artist; the colors and patterns of the butterflies are described, often vividly, and he frequently gives a personally esthetic evaluation to an especially rich coloring or splendid color-constellation.

He also had an abiding interest in certain lepidopterological questions with general points of contact [with other questions?]. Thus he was the first to discuss the meaning and occurrence, in more detail, of sphragis in Macrolepidoptera, in "Grundzüge der Sphragidologie" (1918). His "Bibliotheca Sphragidologica" followed 2 years later, to which he supplied various new contributions in the course of the years.

During the 1940s and 50s, Bryk worked industriously at the Riksmuseet until his energy became inadequate. Numerous new papers were added to the series of publications which was previously very long; of course, in the first place, descriptions of new Lepidoptera or notes on entomological questions, but also articles on questions [concerning] Linné or chiefly problems of current interest in earlier Swedish nature investigation. Many of his contributions were brought out in the daily press; he was a good popular science writer, as is very evident in the series of early articles collected into one volume with the title "Wanderings in the realms of nature and of civilisation" [or "kultur"] (Stockholm 1924).

It ought to be an axiom that a book-lover collects books. Bryk was no exception, but his many travels and shifting conditions of life made it hard for him to keep and to enlarge his library as he basically desired to do. Thus the very interesting, personal collection of Linnæna which he built up in connection with his earlier studies on Linné was sold to get means for the journeys of the 1920s, and even later on many valuable books passed through his hands. However, he always kept a library which was rich not only in reference literature and his own writings, but also in the work of those authors who particularly interested him. From this library, as well as from his own rich experience, Bryk never hesitated to give generously, information and suggestions which might be of value to a piece of work. His characteristic and always very personally held correspondence often became temperamental comments with bibliographic notes on some question under debate.

Felix Bryk had 4 children by his first wife, of which his daughter Ruth is a famous ceramic artist. In 1939 he remarried, this time, Dr. Ella Claudia Krusche. In their home many Swedish and foreign entomologists enjoyed a precious hospitality seasoned with opinions and experiences from a host to whom no human being was a stranger.

Tr.: R. Ericson
Feb. 1958