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A. A. GIRAULT AND HIS PRIVATELY PRINTED PAPERS¹

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Alexandre Arsène Girault was an eccentric Hymenopterist who specialized on taxonomy of the Chalcidoidea. It has been said that it is dangerous to study the parasitic Hymenoptera, for many of those who do end up in mental institutions, become alcoholics, or are, at least, a little odd. Girault was one of the odd ones.

He was born in Annapolis, Maryland on January 9, 1884 and died in Brisbane, Australia on May 2, 1941. He wrote of himself "I was always interested in Natural History objects but when a boy this did not become pronounced until I was about 15 years old At the age of 15, I dropped all of my former activities and commenced to pay attention almost solely to the study of insects. I have renounced not a bit of this study since. . ."—Girault, 1942. After receiving a B.S. degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute in 1903, he worked for five years in the Bureau of Entomology of the United States Department of Agriculture and from 1909 to 1911 was assistant in entomology at the University of Illinois. He was resident in Australia from 1911 until his death in 1941 except for three years when he worked at the United States National Museum as an expert in the classification of the chalcids. He published about 325 papers, the largest a 900 page work on Australian Chalcidoidea. Mr. Carl Muesebeck is a gentle man and would have been as charitable as possible in the obituary he wrote after Girault's death. His summary evaluation of Girault follows: "Brilliant, industrious and a keen observer, Girault might have contributed vastly more than he did to sound progress in the Chalcidoidea. Unfortunately, he was erratic and not suited temperamentally for participation in undertakings that require co-operative effort. He worked alone, largely ignoring other investigators in the same field and apparently unmindful of difficulties he might be creating for future workers. This was, indeed, carried to the point of irreparably damaging type specimens of many species of chalcid flies in efforts to see certain specific structures to which he happened at the moment to attach special importance. Furthermore, his descriptions are mostly inadequate for the recognition of the genera or species to which they apply. Undoubtedly, however, these shortcomings are in large part ascribable to continuing ill health and it must be acknowledged that in spite of them Girault added appreciably to our knowledge of a large and exceedingly complex group of Hymenoptera."—Muesebeck, 1942.

From this description of his career it would appear that there is little reason to single Girault out from the host of capable entomologists. But when we examine the 63 papers that he printed privately (De Santis, 1961) in Brisbane, Australia and at the Hillmead Press in Maryland the impression is different. Some of the titles illustrate the unusual character of these publications—"Loves Wooded and Won in Australia" (Girault, 1923a), "Microscopitis, Womanitis, and New Hexapoda" (Girault, 1923b), "Some Gem-like or Marvellous Inhabitants of the Woodlands Heretofore Unknown and by Most Never Seen nor Dreamt of" (Girault, 1925a), "New Queensland Insecta Captured Without Any Reference to Use" (Girault, 1925b), "An Essay on When a Fly is Loveable, the Ceremony of Baptizing Some and Unlovely Hate" (Girault, 1925c), and "Some Beauties Inhabitant not of the Boudoirs of Commerce but of Nature's Bosom—New Insects" (Girault, 1933).

The contents of the papers fit the titles. He was a man of many prejudices and was continually involved in feuding. He printed these papers himself because of his battles with editors and with his Washington boss, L. O. Howard. "Most of the journals of entomology in these United States are in the hands of little tyrants who do acts like

¹Paper presented at the 1972 Toronto meeting of the Michigan Entomological Society.

these: hold manuscripts indefinitely after their acceptance (then returning them with some paltry excuse) which may cause long delays and is a sort of moral imbecility, making arbitrary restrictions as refusing to print more than one article a month for any one author, meaning that the prolific author is loaded with chains which he must drag long; changing titles, and omitting sentences.”—Girault, 1917a. “Editors and other bully boys in authority now are becoming so difficult to deal with *sans* losing one’s self-respect, that the following matter is withdrawn from them being that refused by orthodox journals. Discrimination and covert pretexts (as polite refusals, long delays, nonreplies, petty excuses, unauthorized changes, confiscations . . . and so forth) by these petty tyrants as well as my own resentment and impatience have effectually barred them. They ought to be printed if only in defiance of whim.”—Girault, 1926a. “L. Ossian Howard told me these puny pamphlets were in bad taste. Replying I said that I knew not as to their being in bad taste but no doubt they had a bad taste.”—Girault, 1917e. The editors surely had reason for turning the papers down. Besides descriptions of new species they contain excerpts of his poetry, rantings against people and working conditions, and wandering discourses on various philosophical and scientific matters, most of them critical and many irrational.

He found his working conditions intolerable— “[I] was assigned to the U.S. National Museum, in a large supplies-room dominated by an innocent youth addicted to the Times and social gayety. Work was beneath him. My space here was 4 x 4; constant interruption, noise, boisterousness, whistling, and joking profiled.”—Girault, 1917e. He wrote a poem with the note “Lines composed . . . in a heat after leaving my *study* in the insect division U.S. National Museum, where I had endured the usual daily abuse for presuming to work in this place of amusement and consequent noise and interruption.”—Girault, 1917e. He had abundant criticism for the work of Ashmead, one of his predecessors who worked on the chalcids—“Think of ‘idealistic’ America allowing to be created without hindrance Ashmead’s chalcid flies, a mountain of falsity! This because of moral weakness for we knew it was false and had not the courage to say so. Fools, adamantine fools! this is not being civilized but demoralized.”—Girault, 1917a. The poem Girault dedicated to Ashmead is perhaps the most scathing of all—

False Captain! Ah! dark Error’s pioneer,
Enthusiastic dunce and shamming seer,
Aching for a days applause;
Low scholar ever wishing us to laud
Ambition’s wind-blown froth and sandy fraud,
Thus defying Heaven’s laws.

Arise! Come, get thee from thy shelt’ring grave
Where, strongly walled, e’en thou couldst dare be brave
With Impunity’s gaunt grace!
Ah, come, past coward, lily-livered liar,
Fair-tongued sweetmouthing unctious friar
Let’s see what’s writ across thy face!

—Girault, 1929a

His most sarcastic and critical remarks scattered throughout his works are addressed either obliquely or directly against L. O. Howard. The poem “The Entomologist” is subtitled “not a true one this time but he who is now called The Entomologist in the Nation’s Dept. of Agriculture.”

Didst think that I like those poor others could be sold?
My soul a slave to thee? ‘Twas this no less!

Who taught the Fool truth could be bartered for gain?
Thou art lost, thy own high soul is lost, died
The day that for paltry things thy heart was slain—

—Girault, 1917e

Evidently the situation became intolerable both for Girault and for Howard—“Three years ago I returned to America with the hearty sanction of L. O. Howard who after greeting me and without necessity or occasion [said] ‘He’s a little man’ . . . I was

deliberately persecuted under the guise of 'public opinion' . . . then I legitimately criticized these conditions, some work of these men. H. mistakenly used this for his excuse [Treason]; he imposed silly rules, dictated criticism at the form not the sense, got hopeless about confuting, got a democratic majority, got order of transferral through another and 'pon my refusing to substitute a mere 'job' for my beloved work he dismissed me."—Girault 1917e. Girault was off again to Australia and we can be sure that Howard breathed a sigh of relief.

But in Australia things were hardly better. The feuds continued and there is a poem titled "A song after the manner of Auld Lang Syne on some prominent 'Economic Entomologists' (who forsook insects for trade)." The first verse of this is:

Should A. L. Quaintance be forgot
And other childish men
Who their first love let go to pot
That they might fatten.

—Girault, 1919

and continues in the same vein. He named a genus *Shilling-worthia* dedicated to Dr. Johann Francis Illingworth and with a description "Like *Polynema* but petiole, head, abdomen, mandibles, absent. S. Shillingworthi blank, vacant, inaneness, perfect. Nulliebiety remarkable, visible only from certain points of view. Shadowless. An airy species whose flight can not be followed except by the winged mind. From a naked chasm on Jupiter, August 5, 1919."—Girault, 1920.

He was more vehemently anti-woman's lib than any outspoken critic of today. In the paper titled "Miscroscopitis, Womanitis and New Hexapoda" he pleads: "God save us who are subject to troubles in this world and here's such a one as might well end us. What is a special itch of paralysis to this not hitherto unknown scourge now come upon us as an epidemic? A water-blister, a mere hookworm, Sirs. Let me tell you here's a serious disease which doth pock and burn, nay congeal our very hearts. Heaven help we poor hounded, sorely wounded and pitifully degraded men, since Woman the Giver, has betrayed us and will ruin us with her wild unnatural ideas."—Girault, 1923b. In another paper titled "Homo perniciosus and New Hymenoptera" he describes *Homo perniciosus* as an "Abnormal female (loveless, without offspring); heart functionless; mammae aborted; psychology novel (as supposed) but artificial; gay, high-colored, feral, brass-cheeked, shape lovely like Woman but nature hard (selfish, thoughtless, proud, unsympathetic, irresponsible, aggressive, irritant, insensible, luxurious, pugnacious, over-active, inquisitive, mischievous, voracious, and even carnivorous, antagonistic, ungentle, immodest, critical, competitive, poisonous); conduct unstable (even inclined to treachery), the lips compressed, body strong. Everywhere but rare in natural habitat.

From young adults, these commonest, 1923 Australia."—Girault, 1924.

With all of his prejudices, Girault took real delight in his chalcids, calling them "Stars that galaxy the fields." (Girault, 1917c), titling a paper "Descriptiones Stellarum Novarum" (Girault, 1917d), and writing one of his poems:

Eh, are not these the loveliest things
Nor jewels nor gold nor crown of kings
These me give to quench my soul
It's thirst for the beautiful.
Our pearls, our gems, our gold a useless ware
Beauty dwells but where God and Nature are.

—Girault, 1917b

Compilations of quotations on a variety of subjects could be assembled—on machines, on liberty, on the scientist, on the professor, on scientific labels. And many of the ideas would be in accord with those of the present under-thirty generation. The following excerpts are put together to form a more or less connected essay on commerce.

"These beautiful species are quite harmless yet they must be called pests in order to be respectable and in order to be paid. The entomologist is now a kind of lackey to Modern Commerce."—Girault, 1926b. "What a rattle and din Commerce makes in this world now? What's it all about?"—Girault, 1929b. "Commerce ought not to be allowed to have the power it does—crudeness is no word for it. It props up vice with law . . . It

will buy gain with corruption and is a disguised wolf. It means to eat the world up.”—Girault, 1928. “Research is a labour of love. Strange then to find it all done now-a-days as a labour of wages . . . Nature is to be explored and known by mankind not only because she holds so much food and means for living but also and mostly because she is the expression of the majesty of the mystical All.”—Girault, 1920. “Science for use induces or forces attempts at impossibilities, hastiness and falsehood. We serve convenience of a tyrant, not fact or truth. It is common in commercial-ruled countries, as in tragic America, where life is enslaved to business and sacrificed to the Baal. The soul of Science as of poetry is freedom”—Girault, 1926c. “Science and poetry ought to marry; the progeny would be sanity.”—Girault, 1924.

A fitting conclusion is that used by Girault at the end of one of his papers. “Dedicated to all those who in the dress of a political party, or in active resistance in these present days, fought for the right, liberty, spirit, good, purity, the poor, the true Demos and not the false, Life and not death—in effect who opposed the domination of Commerce, a gross corruption and degeneracy.”—Girault, 1928.

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