

James Morgan Sherman

May 6, 1890 — November 5, 1956

On November 5, 1956, Professor James Morgan Sherman died at his home in Ithaca. His death terminated an active scientific career in dairy science and bacteriology, where his contributions earned him world-wide acclaim. His scientific publications, numbering more than 100, spanned the years from 1914 to 1955 and paralleled the period of rapid development of bacteriology in the United States. Through his research and that of his students, through his teaching, and through his active participation in scientific societies, especially the American Dairy Science Association and the Society of American Bacteriologists, his influence in the development of agricultural bacteriology was not surpassed by that of any other scientist of his generation. His philosophies, engendered in his many successful students, continue to be dominant in the bacteriological thought of this country.

Professor Sherman was born at Ash Grove, Virginia, on May 6, 1890. He attended primary school in Virginia and high school in Washington, D. C. After he received the B.S. degree from North Carolina State College in 1911 he undertook graduate study at the University of Wisconsin where he was a Graduate Assistant and was granted the M.S. degree in 1912 and the Ph.D. degree in 1916.

From 1914 to 1917 he was Instructor and Assistant Professor at Pennsylvania State College. In 1917 he became Bacteriologist with the U. S. Department of Agriculture and held this position until 1923 when he came to Cornell University as Head of the Department of Dairy Industry. In 1955 he retired as Head, but continued on as Professor of Bacteriology.

Professor Sherman's major research work concerned the microbes in agriculture, industry, and medicine, and centered in particular on the bacteria of importance in the dairy industry. One cannot read far into the literature of the streptococci without encountering the "Sherman criteria", a term that has come to embrace a series of cultural and physiological reactions described by him and used widely in the study of these bacteria. His introspective monograph, *The Streptococci*, which appeared in the first issue of *Bacteriological Reviews* in 1937, described in detail and firmly established the taxonomic relationships between many species of this important genus. For his pioneering work with a cheese-ripening microorganism, *Propionibacterium*, his colleagues honored him by assigning the species name "shermanii" to this bacterium.

Professor Sherman's preoccupation with his many university and professional duties left him little time for outside activities or hobbies. He approached his formal teaching, of which he did a great deal at Cornell, with the same

Careful preparation and thought that marked his research. He recognized the important role of the university teacher and encouraged good teaching.

In research, Dr. Sherman promoted individual and independent thought. Under his administration his staff enjoyed and were grateful for a free rein in the pursuit of their separate researches.

Professor Sherman was a member of various educational, scientific and professional societies, numbered among which were the American Chemical Society, the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, of which he was a Fellow. He was a member of the honorary and professional societies Sigma Xi, Phi Kappa Phi, Alpha Zeta, and Gamma Alpha.

His more prominent positions and activities also included the following. From 1923-34 he was Secretary-Treasurer of the Society of American Bacteriologists, in 1936 its Vice-President, and in 1937, President. From 1937-1944 he served as Associate Editor of *Bacteriological Reviews*. During this same period, from 1936-1944, he served as Associate Editor of the *Journal of Bacteriology* and was Editor-in-Chief of this publication during the years 1944-1951. He was a member of the Editorial Committee of the *Annual Reviews of Microbiology* from 1944-1955, and a member of the Board of Editors of the Cornell University Press from 1938-1943.

His offices in the American Dairy Science Association during the years 1928-1930 included those of Secretary-Treasurer, Vice-President and President. In 1931, he was a delegate from the United States to the World Dairy Congress. At various times during his career he was consultant to the Surgeon General of the United States Army, the Chemical Corps of the United States Army, the Federal Security Agency, the United States Public Health Service, the National Research Council and the New York State Department of Health. In recognition of his outstanding contributions, in 1948, the University of North Carolina awarded him the honorary degree of Doctor of Agriculture.

Professor Sherman's quality of humbleness, so striking to many on first meeting him, reflected itself in the simplicity of his daily life. He had no sympathy with pretention, and little time for the publicity-seeking scientist. Although by nature he was a retiring person, he never hesitated to defend his principles, and could do so in a forceful and persuasive manner. He found a deep but modest satisfaction in his own accomplishments and those of his students. In many ways, by his own example, he impressed on his students the importance of good workmanship and of accuracy in detail, whether in the laboratory, in teaching or in writing. He was a relentless critic of shoddy thought and the hastily-drawn conclusion.

Professor Sherman sought and enjoyed the fellowship of his colleagues at Cornell. Among his professional associates throughout the country he numbered a host of loyal friends, young and old. His acquaintances and friends who are not in a position to judge his merit as a scientist and teacher, remember him for his personal charm and dignity, his gentle manner, and his warm concern for the welfare of others.

W. H. Burkholder, R. F. Holland, H. W. Seeley