

Clyde Hadley Myers

February 6, 1883 — August 5, 1944

Clyde Hadley Myers retired from active service as Professor of Plant Breeding at Cornell University on March 7, 1944, and at the next subsequent meeting of the Cornell Board of Trustees was made Professor Emeritus. He was born on February 6, 1883 at Randolph, Illinois, and in 1907 was graduated from the Illinois Wesleyan University with the degree of Bachelor of Science. He served as Assistant in Plant Breeding at the University of Illinois from 1907 to 1910, and at the end of that period he was awarded the degree of Master of Science. He then entered the Graduate School of Cornell University, where he continued his studies in genetics and plant breeding. In 1912 the degree of Doctor of Philosophy was conferred upon him. In that year he was appointed Assistant Professor of Plant Breeding and in 1913 became Professor, which position and title he held until his retirement. His wife, Fleda Straight Myers, whom he married in 1910, and a son and a daughter survive him.

Dr. Myers' interests in research were concerned largely with bud-variation problems and the effects of environment on the known hereditary characters of plants. He chose potatoes as material for experimentation and showed that hereditary changes in vine and tuber characters were in some cases due to apparent alterations in the germ plasm. His experiments with potatoes had a very practical bearing on the kind and efficacy of methods used in bud-selection. In his teaching he laid much emphasis on this avenue of approach to the isolation of superior types of plants.

In his earlier investigations he was greatly interested in corn improvement and made extensive use of ear-to-row breeding procedure. Dr. H. J. Webber had initiated work in this field, but Dr. Myers carried it to the point where three new and valuable varieties were established. One of these is still the best open-pollinated strain of corn for grain production now existent in New York State. From 1912 to 1916 he gave much of his time to extension work, laying emphasis particularly on hill selection of potatoes and mass selection of corn. From 1916 until his retirement he devoted most of his effort to the breeding of timothy and cabbage. He produced two valuable strains of the former and several highly uniform new varieties of cabbage. From time to time he published bulletins covering results of his breeding work. His research in the genetics of cabbage and related Brassica species was such that he attracted a considerable number of graduate students whose interests were mainly concerned with improvement of vegetable crops.

Dr. Myers also helped organize the Crop-Improvement Program for China, which was a cooperative project between the University of Nanking, the former International Education Board, and Cornell University. In developing this program Dr. Myers spent the greater part of the years 1926 and 1931 in China, where he supervised a large program of plant breeding and conducted classes for training Chinese in methods of plant breeding and genetics.

He was a member of numerous professional and honorary societies, among which were the American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Genetic Society, American Society of Agronomy, Sigma Xi, and Gamma Alpha.

In 1939 Dr. Myers suffered a breakdown in health, a circumstance which eventually necessitated his retirement. Though it was the fervent wish and continuing hope of his colleagues in the Department of Plant Breeding, and of his numerous friends throughout the community, that Dr. Myers regain health and strength, this was not to be. He passed away quietly in the early morning hours of August 5, 1944.

Loyalty to his department and the things for which it stands was one of his outstanding characteristics. Ever a hard worker, he was never too busy to assist student or colleague in meeting situations or to aid others in the solution of problems. Sympathetic understanding characterized his professional and social contacts, and to this was added a fine geniality and a keen but always kindly wit. His superb tenor voice was for many a year a source of delight to students and townspeople. To his colleagues, accustomed to the charm of his unique personality, and to his wide circle of friends and associates, his sudden passing has brought a deep and painful sense of loss.