

Edward Meyrick, B.A., F.R.S., 1854–1938.

EDWARD MEYRICK, one of the most renowned workers on the microlepidoptera of the world, died at his residence, Thornhanger, Marlborough, England, on the 31st March, 1938. He was the son of the Rev. Edward Meyrick and was born at Ramsbury, Wiltshire, on November 24th, 1854. He was educated at Marlborough College and Trinity College, Cambridge, and was for 37 years a schoolmaster. He went to Australia in December, 1877, taking up a position in Sydney Grammar School in 1878. During 1882-83 he taught at Christchurch Cathedral Grammar School, New Zealand, but returned to Australia to teach at the King's School, Parramatta, N.S.W., till the end of 1886, when he left for England and became assistant master at his old school, Marlborough College, a post he held until his retirement in 1914.

It was in January, 1886, on his return from an entomological trip to the Tableland of Mount Arthur, that the writer of this notice first had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Meyrick. Rather spare and tall in figure, upright, and extremely alert, his personality was most impressive and his manner inspiring. His keen enthusiasm was irresistible. Although searchingly critical, his criticisms never discouraged those he criticised, but induced them to make greater efforts to attain scientific accuracy. His concluding remarks, when commenting on a crude essay on entomological classification written by a young and inexperienced author, may be quoted as characteristic: "You have only made the common error of theorising from insufficient facts and the remedy is to study more facts. Please do not take offence at my plain speaking, which is intended for the benefit of yourself and of science."

Mr. Meyrick's first contribution to our *Transactions* was read before the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury on the 4th May, 1882, and appears on page 3 of volume XV. From that time, until his last paper in 1937, a period of 55 years, he regularly contributed articles on New Zealand Lepidoptera, his work in this respect alone probably constituting a record. But it must be borne in mind, in reviewing the activities of so great a worker, that his publications relating to the New Zealand fauna constitute only a very small fraction of his life work, and it is quite beyond the scope of the present notice to give anything more than the briefest possible sketch of his general entomological work. It is estimated that during sixty years of active work at least 20,000 new species were described by Meyrick, as well as many new genera and several new families of Lepidoptera. His output was prodigious. He wrote many papers on the Lepidoptera of Australia, New Zealand (besides those in our *Transactions*), the South Pacific Islands, Burma and Malaya, India, South Africa and South America, besides his contributions to such works as Wytzman's *Genera Insectorum* and Junk's *Lepidopterorum Catalogus*. He made a notable contribution to the knowledge of the Lepidoptera of his native land in *A Handbook of British Lepidoptera*, published in 1895, of which he issued a revised edition in 1928, now in general use. As the publication of so many descriptions, published in various parts of the world, proved inconvenient, Mr. Meyrick started in March, 1912, his *Exotic Microlepidoptera*, humorously described in the preface as "a spasmodic entomological magazine on one subject by a single contributor. Of this he issued four complete

volumes and part of volume five, making a total of some 2,500 pages. With the issue of *Exotic Microlepidoptera* his separate papers were mostly discontinued, except additions, etc., to the New Zealand Lepidoptera which continued to appear in our *Transactions*, and a series of papers in the *Transactions of the Entomological Society of London* on South American species.

Mr. Meyrick was elected an Honorary member of the New Zealand Institute in 1907. He became a Fellow of the Entomological Society of London as early as 1880, being the second senior Fellow when he died. He joined the Zoological Society of London in 1889, and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1904. He was awarded the Captain Scott Memorial Medal of South Africa in 1927. He was president of the Marlborough College Natural History Society until 1914, and played a great part in encouraging the study of natural history in the school.

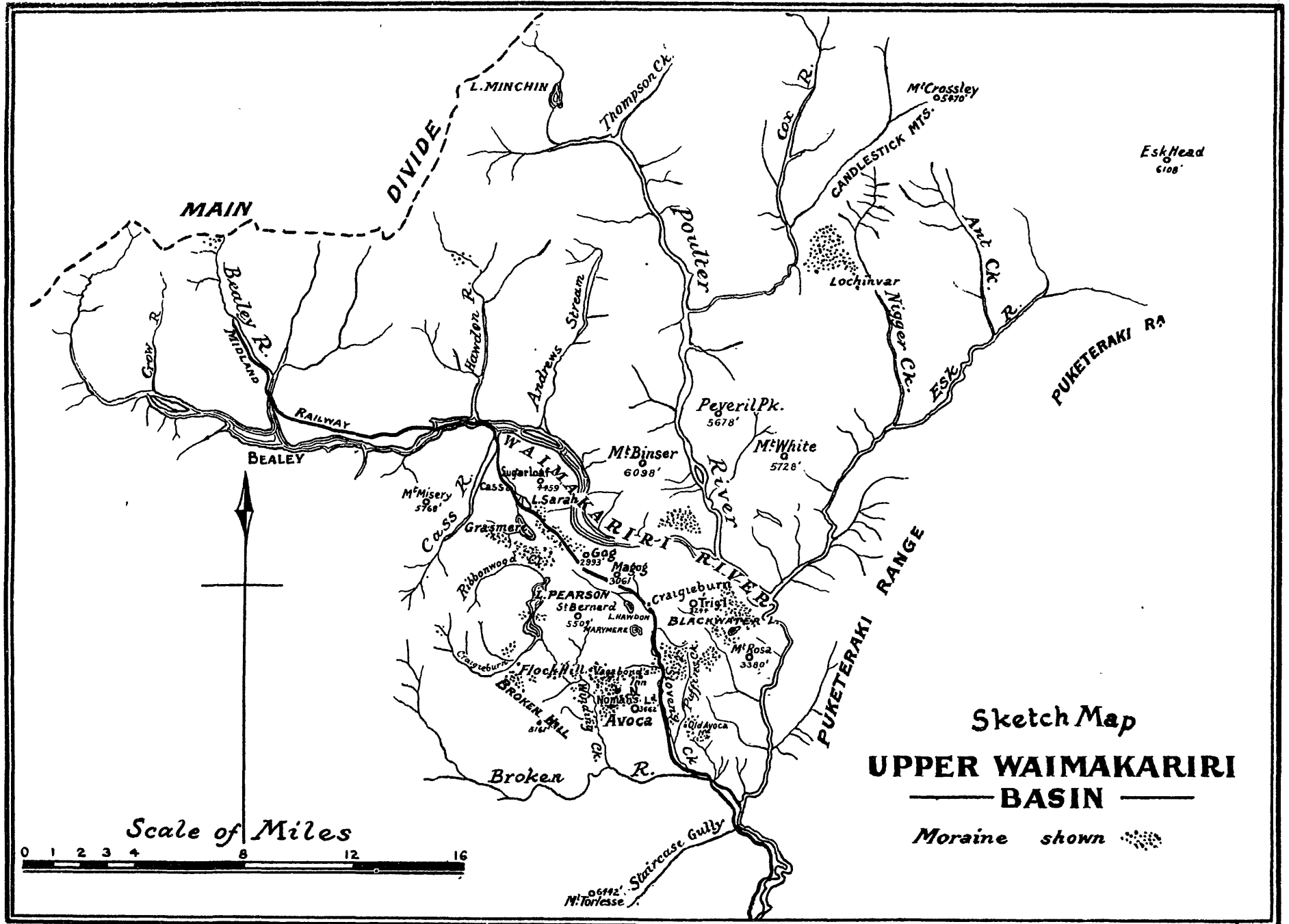
Edward Meyrick was actively at work until a few days before his death. He made a regular daily practice of working until an hour after midnight. His collection contained such a large proportion of the known Microlepidoptera of the world that he rarely needed to visit the British Museum (Natural History); the collection, of inestimable value, was bequeathed to that institution, where it is now safely housed.

In dealing with his brother naturalists, Mr. Meyrick followed the highest ethical principles. As examples of this it may be mentioned that he always gave the fullest credit to other workers; all questions referred to him were invariably answered with the greatest possible promptitude, and he exercised the greatest care in returning entomological postal boxes to their owners immediately after the contents had been disposed of. He was a staunch Darwinian, as indicated in the following advice given in 1889: "For a general guide to the principles of classification, biologically, read Darwin, who is, and probably will long remain, unequalled for a combination of special knowledge and general theory; and for an example of classification most ably carried out, his monograph of Cirripedes." It can, I think, be safely said that subsequent developments have in no way detracted from the value of this advice.

Whilst agreeing that "associations, congresses, codes of rules to be enforced, and the like, are very well in the conduct of affairs of every day life, where the prevalence of the will of the strong majority affords a practicable base for agreement, they are altogether mischievous in science, which is concerned with eternal truths and principles, which cannot be altered or suppressed by a majority of votes. Every scientific worker of independent mind should therefore continue to maintain his own views, confident that if they are true, the majority will one day be on his side, whatever they may be now."

It is manifest to one who has had the privilege of a life-long association that Meyrick was no cynic, or pessimist, but was confident of the ultimate triumph of right. This can be inferred from a remark he once made about a proposal for human betterment, whose real authorship was not recognised as it should have been. In directing attention to this Meyrick said: "Rest assured that it is more blessed to have done well than to have the credit of it." Thus in every way Meyrick was a worthy follower of the great nineteenth-century scientists who immediately preceded him.

G. V. H.



Sketch Map
UPPER WAIMAKARIRI
BASIN

Moraine shown 

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