

Eva Lucretia Gordon

June 26, 1891 — October 27, 1962

Eva Lucretia Gordon, Professor Emeritus of Nature, Science, and Conservation Education, died October 27, 1962, following a long illness. Her death ended a notable career of teaching, writing, and friendly professional counseling.

Professor Gordon was born in Austin, Minnesota, June 26, 1891. She began her teaching career in 1910 in a rural school in Barron County, Wisconsin. After graduation from the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, State Normal School in 1913, she taught for seven years in Iron Mountain, Michigan, and Racine, Wisconsin. She came to Cornell in 1927 from the public schools of Minneapolis, where she had been a primary grade teacher for seven years. She obtained the Bachelor of Science degree at Cornell University in 1929.

Professor Gordon became associated with the New York State College of Agriculture as an assistant in 1929. During her years as an assistant she completed a Master of Science degree (in 1931) and began work on the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree, which she completed in 1947 while she was serving as an instructor. She served in the Children's School of Science at Woods Hole for two successive summers in 1933 and 1934. Since 1929 most of her summers and all the academic years were devoted to assisting and teaching in the University. Miss Gordon served as an Assistant Professor from 1947 to 1951, and as an Associate Professor from 1951 to 1956. She was advanced to a full Professor in 1956. During the 1952-1953 academic year, she served as the chairman of the Section on Nature, Science and Conservation Education. From 1952 to 1956 she prepared the Cornell Rural School Leaflet and produced a notable series of publications, in addition to her regular teaching and graduate student advising. Eva Lucretia Gordon retired from the Faculty of the New York State College of Agriculture September 1, 1956.

As a teacher, Miss Gordon attained a unique and enviable stature. Her students recognized her superb teaching, and they encouraged their friends to enroll in her courses. There they came to know science and they also became ardent enthusiasts for the nature-study approach, long a tradition at Cornell University. Many of the teachers in her classes discovered that science studies could be the basis for most of the regular elementary school work and that idea has over the years continued to be evident in their teaching. For many years, as a service to teachers in the elementary schools of the area, she taught off-campus courses. Going directly to the schools, applying the principles of excellent teaching in the schoolrooms, she was responsible for creating an interest and enthusiasm for science in many elementary schools. Many of these teachers and many other friends came to her home in Brooktondale

to study and enjoy both nature and nature literature. She continued some of this extramural teaching with an increasing number of visits with friends in her home, following her retirement.

Her own research, and the research of graduate students working under her direction, have added much knowledge to the field of nature study and elementary school science as well as to effective ways of teaching science. Her research studies were concerned with the Ephemeropter Genus *Leptophebia*. That was the subject of her Master's thesis in 1931, and it brought her membership in the Society of the Sigma Xi. Her studies at Cornell also brought her the Phi Kappa Phi and Sigma Delta Epsilon honors. But Miss Gordon was always very modest in the midst of her expertness and among her students and friends. She provided immeasurable understanding, guidance, and encouragement to the students who sought her help. Nevertheless, very few persons knew about the honors that had come her way.

Her special interest grew to be in children's science books. The problem of reviewing and evaluating such books served as the subject for her doctoral study. Her competence in this area brought national recognition. She co-authored two supplementary nature readers for children in 1926 and 1927 before she came to Cornell. When she started her assistantship at Cornell, she began to help with the preparation of the Cornell Rural School Leaflet. Soon she was accepting as her unselfish task the rewriting and editing of rough manuscripts prepared in preliminary form by others. Many of these manuscripts became outstanding leaflets through such unselfish efforts. She became sole author and producer of several Leaflets; the most notable of her earlier efforts were *Fruits of Woody Plants* (1934), *The Elementary Science Library* (1938), *Wild Foods* (1943), and *The Elementary Science Library* (1949). During this time she also prepared a bibliography of nature study for the 1939 edition of Mrs. Comstock's *Handbook of Nature Study*. She prepared other bibliographies of nature and science books for periodicals and participated in conferences where the selecting, reviewing, and writing of science materials for children were under discussion. Her final contribution was to prepare in 1961-1962 a number of sections, mostly in the area of botany, for the *Encyclopedia Britannica Junior*.

Her more recent writings were confined almost entirely to the preparation of the Cornell Rural School Leaflet. Since 1952, when she became the author and editor for the Leaflet, she brought together in convenient form many ideas that had, over the years, been greatly appreciated by teachers. Some of the titles are *Outdoor Nature Studies* (1953), *Indoor Nature Studies* (1954), *The Schoolroom Science Center* (1955). The teacher's number for the fall of 1956 entitled *Cornell Nature Study Leaflets 1896-1956* brought together a concise history of sixty years of nature study publishing by the New York State College of Agriculture. Recent Leaflets for children include such titles

as *Sky Laboratories* (1953), *Insect Homes* (1954), *Science With Toys* (1954), *Woodlands in Spring* (1954), *Summer Nature Explorations* (1955), and *Green Factories* (1956). These titles give a vivid picture of the broad competence and unusual versatility of Professor Gordon.

Professor Gordon was an active member of such science teaching societies as the American Nature Study Society, the National Council on Elementary School Science, and the National Science Teachers Association. She had also been a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Her official duties were most often in the American Nature Study Society, which she served as vice president and as member of the Board of Directors. The Society honored her by a Life Membership.

In the passing of Eva Lucretia Gordon the University has lost a distinguished teacher and educational leader. Her friends have lost a valued adviser and appreciated co-worker who, with quiet humor and astute counsel, gave the best of herself to all who came to know her. This friendliness combined with a depth of scholarship will continue to influence many elementary education leaders in their striving for constructive educational developments.

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