

The Station News

Vol. XVII, No. 15

September 30, 1931

Geneva, N.Y.

1859

LUCIUS LINCOLN VAN SLYKE

1931

With the death of Dr. Van Slyke at his home on Washington Street this morning, there came to a close one of the outstanding careers in the field of science as applied to agriculture. Few scientific workers have been privileged to contribute as much to scientific knowledge as has Dr. Van Slyke, and few have enjoyed as high a degree of respect and appreciation among their professional colleagues and acquaintances as he.

This Station will always take pride in the fact that his most productive years were spent in its laboratories, and will enshrine his name with that of Dr. Jordan as honored and distinguished members of this Staff, who, by virtue of ability and character, won renown and prestige for this Station at home and abroad.

Dr. Van Slyke came to the Station in 1890 and served as head of the Division of Chemistry until his retirement in 1928, a period of 38 years that saw many important changes wrought in agriculture thru the advances in chemical knowledge, some of which were wholly his own doing. They were years of turmoil at first, particularly with respect to the administration of the chemical inspection of fertilizers and feeding stuffs which then formed one of the chief functions of the Station. His energy and ability in organizing and executing this work did much to win the support of New York farmers at a time when the Station had few friends even among those whom it was striving most especially to aid.

In the field of chemistry, however, Dr. Van Slyke attained his greatest fame by his researches in dairy chemistry, and it was due largely to the contributions that he made in this direction that the Station early attained the position that it enjoys today in the dairy world.

No other member of the Staff was so productive of published material as was Dr. Van Slyke. Aside from numerous papers in scientific journals, popular articles, and books on "Testing Milk Products", "The Science and Practice of Cheese Making", "The Chemistry of Milk and Milk Products", and "Fertilizers and Crops", he was author or joint author of 130 bulletins and circulars issued by this Station, representing over 5,000 pages of printed matter. Many of his Station publications, of course, had to do with the chemical inspection work, but among this number are also to be found some of his outstanding scientific contributions.

Dr. Van Slyke severed his official relations with the Station in the fall of 1928, but at heart he was always one of us, and he found much pleasure after his retirement in participating in the Station life and in utilizing the library facilities here in the revision of his books, which occupied much of his time the past two years.

Of his personal qualities, we would say again what we said at the time of his retirement, "Courteous, patient, and kindly, with a highly developed sense of humor, his keen wit has often brought relief to tense situations. Always generous of his time and effort in the social life of the Station, his place will never quite be filled in the hearts of those who have known the man."