

OBITUARY

V. C. Asmous (1891-1960)

Vladimir C. Asmous was a contributor to the Arctic Bibliography from 1948 until his death February 19, 1960. He had an extensive knowledge of the literature of the natural sciences and he selected and abstracted for this Bibliography nearly eight thousand papers mainly by Russian and north European botanists, entomologists, etc. He was fluent in four languages and understood half-a-dozen others. His linguistic capabilities, a capacity for assiduous work and a fine innate sense of discrimination enabled him to direct his energies to literature research after his physical health was shattered in the first World War. Mr. Asmous was born on April 25, 1891 in St. Petersburg, Russia, son of Lieut.-General Constantine Asmous. He was graduated from the Military Engineering College in St. Petersburg in 1912 as second lieutenant in the Engineer Corps. In the war of 1914 he was wounded, shell-shocked and developed TB while he was prisoner of war for 3 years. From 1919 to 1920 he served in the White Russian army under Generals Deniken and Wrangel, after their defeat he lived for 2 years in Turkey and came to the United States in 1923. He worked at first in the library of the New York Botanical Garden, became assistant librarian of the Arnold Arboretum, Harvard University in 1939; and in 1947 transferred to the Slavic Section of the Harvard College (Widener) Library, from which he retired in July 1957. During these years he published numerous articles on the history of science, lives of scientists and contributed to a succession of works that are standard in their field: Merrill and Walker's Bibliography of eastern Asiatic Botany, 1938; Merrill's Botanical bibliography of the islands of the Pacific, 1947; to the Encyclopaedia Britannica: bibliographies of prominent botanists, etc. Nearly every month for almost 12 years he sent a packet of abstracts to the Arctic Bibliography, the last one, in meticulous order, he left on his desk. He was a man of great industry, who loved his work and fiercely fought the interference of ill-health, rather tall and spare of figure, a constant worrier, yet with a dry humour. He was shrewd in appraisal of work as contribution to knowledge, but he did not recognize his own as such.

MARIE TREMAINE