Heikki Järnefelt
Heikki Järnefelt

In Memoriam

by

K. J. Purasjoki

On October 22, 1963, Professor Heikki Arvid Järnefelt passed away in Helsinki. He was one of the internationally best known limnologists of the older generation. An ardent scientist, right up to the end he had been engaged in active scientific work.

Heikki Järnefelt was born in the commune of Muuruvesi, in Central Finland on June 23, 1891. His father was a skilful portrait and landscape painter and the family has become famous because of its gifted representatives in different fields not only of art, but also of science. During his youth and also later, Heikki Järnefelt spent his summers in southern Finland, at the family’s summer home on the shore of Lake Tuusulanjärvi. Here, by the water, his interest in water organisms developed early, and Lake Tuusulanjärvi itself later formed one of the main objects of his research. On finishing school in 1909, Järnefelt began to study biological subjects at the University of Helsinki. His chief subject was zoology. In 1914 Heikki Järnefelt took the degree of Master of Arts. Among his teachers the most important was Professor K. M. Levander, the well-known hydrobiologist and plankton investigator who, with his advice and instruction, encouraged the young scientist. In this context we must not forget the fishe ry biologist Dr. Nils Hagman, who seems greatly to have influenced his younger colleague.

Järnefelt’s interest in hydrobiology is clearly evident from his very first publications (1—8), which appeared one after another in rapid succession after he had received his first academic degree. He then began to work on his dissertation. However, this work was for some time interrupted by the War of Independence in Finland, which was contemporary with the Great War. When peace returned, Järnefelt still served as an active officer but at the same time he also continued his research work. His doctoral thesis (15) was published at the end of 1921 and in the following summer he became Lic. phil.

Received April 21, 1964.