

# A POSTHUMOUS WORK BY JESSE E. HYDE<sup>1</sup>

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The golden age of paleontological description has long since passed. No longer can private individuals afford to publish numerous quarto volumes, illustrated by splendid lithographs, such as those by Joachim Barrande on the Paleozoic of Bohemia. Nor can the geological surveys, wealthy as some of them may be, devote a considerable portion of their budgets to the publication of works describing the fossils of their states. Therefore, when a notable exception to the general rule appears, it should receive more than passing notice. Such is the publication here reviewed, a substantial volume of 355 pages and 54 plates.

It is not to be supposed that the Ohio Division of Geological Survey was allotted special funds (would that it had been!) to issue this major contribution to the paleontology and stratigraphy of the state. It was only by the exercise of considerable ingenuity and the choice of an unusual method of printing, that the Survey was able to undertake such a project on its modest publication budget. The entire book, with the exception of the plates, is reproduced by an offset process that yields remarkably clear letter-press and all the appearance of printing except for alignment of the right-hand margin.

Before appraising the contents of this work, perhaps some account of the reason for its late publication, eighteen years after the author's death, may be in order. Jesse Earl Hyde was a perfectionist who was constantly revising his work to attain greater accuracy and effectiveness in presentation. As early as 1909, he had written much of the text and prepared illustrations to accompany it. There is evidence, in the manuscript and in his correspondence, that he was re-writing portions of it until shortly before his death. He did not think of it as his *magnum opus* but it did have associations going back to his childhood and he was reluctant to write *finis* to his work until he considered it as good as he could make it. Death came before he had attained his goal.

The manuscript had been prepared for the Ohio Survey and after his death it was placed in that institution's hands together with the numerous drawings and plates. The Survey was never a wealthy institution and the cost of issuing such a large work proved to be beyond its means for a long time. It was only when the present director of the Survey acquired the machinery for the offset printing that publication of Hyde's work could be even thought of. In the meantime, some fourteen years had passed and much work had been done on Mississippian invertebrates and on Ohio stratigraphy. Moreover, the manuscript needed considerable editing; in some cases, there were as many as three different versions of a particular section which had to be collated and reduced to one. The Survey was particularly fortunate in having the services of Mildred Fisher Marple for the huge task of editing, proof-reading, and comparing descriptions with the type specimens, when they were still in existence. She has wisely decided to make as few alterations as possible in the work of Hyde and to leave it as much as possible a presentation of Hyde's views when the manuscript left his hands.

The problem which Hyde undertook to solve is far from small. The Mississippian formations of Ohio are deceptively simple in aspect for the beginner; it is only after he attempts to map any one of them that he finds himself

<sup>1</sup>"The Mississippian Formations of Central and Southern Ohio" by Jesse Earl Hyde, edited by Mildred Fisher Marple—Ohio, Division of Geological Survey, Bulletin 51, 355 pp., 54 pls., 1953 (\$2.50).

involved in a bewildering array of facies changes which neither lithology nor faunas will unravel with ease for him. In addition, the worker on the Mississippian of Ohio is hampered by the scarcity of well-exposed sections; most of them seldom extend far enough downward or upward to give him a satisfactory datum plane. He must therefore work with as many fragmentary sections as the nature of the terrain will afford and content himself with approximations when a well-exposed section would yield certainty. Hyde did not flinch at the mountain of work which this involved; the selected sections given in his work are but a small proportion of those he measured.

Other difficulties arose from the previous work on the subject. A glance at the "Notes on the Classifications" (p. 7-14) will show how the boundaries of the formations varied from one author to another and what a chaos of conflicting opinions Hyde had to reduce to order.

The paleontology was in no better state. Loose interpretation of the value of species had multiplied names for the same form to an almost ridiculous extent; to make matters worse, many of the supposed species were ill-defined and the material on which they were based had been lost. Hyde created very few new species and varieties, exercising commendable restraint in this respect, and studied intensively those species which had been described. The result was a reduction rather than an increase in the number of Mississippian species in Ohio and critical notes justifying the relegation of rejected species to synonymy.

Hyde's work, both in stratigraphy and in paleontology, forms a basis for further investigations of the Mississippian of Ohio, a sure guide whose absence was sorely missed during the course of many mapping and paleontological projects undertaken by the students of the Department of Geology of the Ohio State University for the Ohio Division of Geological Survey. Their results may amplify those of Hyde but his work remains as the fundamental authority on the subject. Its publication forms a lasting monument to the memory of a great Ohioan and a sound geologist.

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