

I. EDITORIAL

"It is with books as with men: a very small number play a great part, the rest is lost in the multitude."

(Voltaire)

On 14 May 1986 the Dean of the Flora Malesiana and founder of this Bulletin, Professor Dr. Cornelis Gijsbert Gerrit Jan van Steenis, died at the age of 84½ years in a hospital in Leiden. He had been there for some abdominal complaints and a slight fever: an abscess on the appendix, perhaps. It was therefore a shock to all of us when he so suddenly and unexpectedly died. A small ceremony was held at the Rijksherbarium on 26 May. In line with his scientific and agnostic attitude he has bequeathed his body to Science. Our sincere condolences are extended to his wife, the famous Mrs. M.J. van Steenis-Kruseman, his son and daughter and all others of his family.

An extensive biography was published on the occasion of his 70th anniversary and consequent retirement as Director of the Rijksherbarium in *Blumea* 20 (1972) 1—6, 514, by his wife and another one by Jacobs (l.c., p. 7—24, while Dr. M.M.J. van Balgooy collected a number of anecdotes from various sources humorously highlighting his foibles.

Since then he unflinchingly continued with his work, in fact being just as busy as he was before his retirement, if not more so, and, chiding us, certainly more productive than most of us, the regular staff members. The numerous publications in various journals are proof of his continued and various interests (see the Bibliography in the present and previous issues of this Bulletin, and the three contributions included here).

He was especially pleased when his beautifully illustrated Mountain Flora of Java was finally published in 1972, and with his work on the rheophytes in 1981. Characteristically, he placed the names of the artists Amir Hamzah and Moehamad Toha in such prominence on the title page of the Mountain Flora, that several reviewers actually have cited them as the authors. Not that modesty was one of the stronger points of his character, but he felt that honour should be given where it was due. Similarly, he caused many studies made by his students to be published under their own names, although he rewrote their manuscripts more or less completely (without asking for any consent, of course), increasing the papers' quality from his great experience. He was satisfied with a note in the acknowledgements that he had 'polished the manuscript'. He was of the opinion that he had enough titles to his bibliography but that starting scientists could well use some when they applied for jobs. One of the requirements when doing a subject under his supervision was that a publication ought to come out of the efforts, and that, as a good educational experience, one should at least once attend the whole process from manuscript to printed page.

All his students and colleagues owe him a lot, for taxonomy is not learnt from books alone, but especially from the ambiance of intellectually seminating surroundings. This Van Steenis certainly provided for us. When he was still Director we had such daily contact through the Flora Malesiana afternoon tea in his room. Usually he had something for our attention there: a new locality of some species, whose peculiarities were explained at length with anecdotes on (botanical) relatives, authors, their publications, its way of distribution; publications he had just received and which we all should study (or not at all); gossip from letters; interesting handwritings; and so on, every day of the week. His memory was formidable for little things, as one could see when he pre-

identified the thousands of Malesian specimens that come here each year: names were spouted so fast that one acting as his secretary had hardly time to finish one label before the next.

His interest in evolution and distribution remained evident. His suggestion of the existence of a 'patio ludens' (the \pm neutral evolutionary playground between positive and negative influences in which characters can vary at will) ought to be known better. In 1979 he published an extensive analysis of the plant geography of East Malesia in which he again returned to his 'land-bridge theory', a name he deplored to have chosen because of its wrong semantics: 'stepping stone' would have been better.

In his younger years he and some other botanists gave each other botanical nicknames: Corner was 'tualang' (*Koompassia excelsa*), Airy Shaw 'Psychostixis', and Purseglove 'baobab' (*Adansonia digitata*), Van Steenis was 'rasamala' (*Altingia excelsa*). Although then not very modest, the comparison with the 'king of the mountain forest', as it was called by Junghuhn, proved to be apt: just as this tree towers high above all others dominating them, and with its bole already higher than any tree of more temperate areas, just so did he excel above his contemporary botanists, tropical and temperate alike.

The Flora Malesiana, with which he ambitiously started as soon as he arrived in the then Dutch East Indies in 1927 and just as gigantic an endeavour, for ever will be a monument to his name. The present Bulletin is just one of the many spin-offs of this project.

It is a pity that the last instalment of the Flora (I, 10/2) was published 3 weeks after his death. How proudly would he have shown it around at coffee break, no doubt treating us all on cookies.

He thought himself to be something of a poet: the doggerels on the frontispieces of the Identification lists are a good proof of this. He left me one as a fitting epitaph, which, not being of his calibre I will literally translate:

'Zonder SEM en zonder computer
Maar met hard werk en geploeter
Overdag en 's avonds laat
Smaakte mij de wetenschap zoeter.
En al werd er op zn tijd geluierd
En in de bergen en de bush-bush gekuierd,
Het kopje werkte altijd door
En werden natuurgeheimen één voor één ontsluiert.'

Without SEM and without computer
But with hard work and toil
By day and late at night
Science tasted sweeter to me.
And although loafing occasionally
And strolling through the mountains and bush-bush,
The little brain always kept on working
And secrets of nature were unveiled one by one.

An era in research on the flora of Malesia has now come to an end. It is to be seen how well we, his successors, will be able to follow his trail. The many

jobs he did so enthusiastically at the Rijksherbarium will be divided over our various staff members and in the course of this a major overhaul of their various duties will take place. As said above a new instalment of the Flora Malesiana appeared in June. It contains revisions of the Alseuosmiaceae (C.G.G.J. VAN STEENIS, 1 genus / 1 species), Chloranthaceae (B. VERDCOURT, 4/9), Elaeagnaceae (J.F. VELDKAMP, 1/2), Menispermaceae (L.L. FORMAN, 25/82), Monimiaceae (W.R. PHILIPSON, 11/76), Sphenostemonaceae (C.G.G.J. VAN STEENIS, 1/3), and Trimeniaceae (W.R. PHILIPSON, 1/3).

Part 10/3 was also under his hands and is expected to appear in 1987. This issue will include a dedication to C.L. BLUME (C.G.G.J. VAN STEENIS) and (hopefully) treatments of the Chrysobalanaceae (G.T. PRANCE), Cruciferae (B. JONSELL), Ctenolophonaceae (A.M.N. VAN HOOREN & H.P. NOOTEBOOM), Ixonanthaceae (R. KOOL), Linaceae (A.M.N. VAN HOOREN & H.P. NOOTEBOOM), Mimosaceae (I. NIELSEN), Polygalaceae (R. VAN DER MEIJDEN), and Sabiaceae (C.F. VAN BEUSEKOM & Th.P.M. VAN DE WATER).

In this issue we will experiment with a new chapter: 'New records'. This chapter will be of a floristic nature. How often does it not happen that in (pre) identifying material one meets a specimen that is new for its provenance? In general such information is lost except for a casual remark at the coffee table, or in a letter, or as a note on the label, such as 'New for Java!!', 'Not known from Malaya!', etc. Yet such items may be of interest to others, not in the least their collectors, who will be able to show around some success of their efforts, for phytogeographers, for specialists, local florists, etc.

We will therefore here include unrecorded (or recorded in hard-to-get publications) and significant extensions of distributional ranges, interesting new localities within the know area, Malesian taxa newly found outside or area, or non-Malesian ones new for it.

— J.F. Veldkamp