

OBITUARY

KAREL WILLEM DAMMERMAN (1885-1951)

It is once again our sad duty to announce in this issue of "Treubia" the death of a well-known zoologist who made his career in Indonesia. He is KAREL WILLEM DAMMERMAN, during his lifetime a prominent student of the zoogeography of Indonesia and for many years the editor of our Journal.

DAMMERMAN was born at Arnhem, Holland, on July 4, 1885. He attended the local grammar school and matriculated in 1905. Ever since his boyhood he has been a true Nature-lover and in his early school days already went out into the country whenever possible. Being the enthusiastic collector he was, he and a school-fellow soon started a collection of beetles. It was his dearest wish to study natural sciences and thus he entered the University at Utrecht in the autumn of 1905. In 1908 he sat for his degree of doctor, and for a short time he was an assistant to Professor HUBRECHT who later presented DAMMERMAN for his doctorate. From May 1908 to May 1910 the young zoologist having obtained the consent of JENTINK, director of the Museum of Natural History at Leiden, prepared his thesis there. This work was completed under the supervision of Professor J. BOEKE. In June 1910 DAMMERMAN took his degree at Utrecht on a dissertation entitled "Der saccus vasculosus der Fische ein Tieforgan", when he received the distinction *cum laude*. The same year DAMMERMAN left for the East Indies where in November 1910 he was appointed assistant to C. J. J. VAN HALL at the Division for Plant Diseases, Department of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce. Two years later VAN HALL set up the Laboratory for Plant Diseases (Laboratorium voor Plantenziekten) at Buitenzorg (now Bogor), which became a division of the General Agricultural Research Station where DAMMERMAN worked as an assistant until April 1917. Needless to say, this period was of great value to him in gaining experience and in making himself thoroughly acquainted with problems relating to the diseases and pests of native crops and their control. It was about this time that DAMMERMAN's collaboration and comradeship with S. LEEFMANS started.

Early in March 1917 DAMMERMAN went on home leave, and he received permission to travel to Holland via Japan, Hawaii and the United States. In these countries he visited various institutions concerned with

applied zoology and on these occasions he devoted special attention to the plant quarantine service. It was not surprising then that VAN HALL requested DAMMERMAN — being such a competent and particularly painstaking worker — to compile a handbook on the agricultural zoology of the Indonesian Archipelago. As is well known, this work, which appeared in 1919 under the title "Landbouwdierkunde van Oost-Indië", has for a great number of years been the reference book or vademecum of the many — professional workers as well as planters and amateur entomologists — who have been studying this subject in Indonesia. In 1929 a somewhat modified English issue of this book was completed, entitled "The Agricultural Zoology of the Malay Archipelago".

Soon after returning from home leave and having completed his reports, DAMMERMAN, whose heart was really much more in the realm of pure science, joined the Zoological Museum and Laboratory of the Botanical Gardens. Notwithstanding the efforts of the retired Major P. A. OUWENS, who had been in charge of the Museum since 1905, about twelve years later it was still not much more than a curiosity cabinet. It was typical of that time that OUWENS took the view that all animals smaller than a squirrel did not really belong in his panopticon. Moreover, since 1910 the post as head of this Museum was coupled with that of director of the Botanical Gardens, with the result that by force of circumstances far too little attention was paid to the more essential needs of a scientific Museum, i.e. on the work of building up comprehensive collections for systematical research studies and of establishing more or less representative reference collections for practical purposes. Not only were these absolutely indispensable to get a proper insight into the composition of the fauna of the Archipelago, but for applied zoology too they had to be regarded as important desiderata. It was a matter for DAMMERMAN to end the existing state of affairs.

In July 1919 he succeeded OUWENS as curator of the Zoological Museum. By this appointment a long felt need was met: — this was to entrust the scientific study of zoology in the Indonesian Archipelago to a university-trained zoologist. DAMMERMAN had acquired sufficient knowledge at the 'Rijksmuseum' in Leiden to appreciate the needs as well as the shortcomings of a museum. He had observed that museum systematists in the home country were far from being in a position to cope with the numerous enquiries for information relating to distribution, assistance in identification work, study of literature and so forth. DAMMERMAN realized fully that in starting a comprehensive survey of the inexhaustibly rich

and varied fauna of the Malay Archipelago he would continue to be largely dependent on assistance from other countries, but like W. M. DOCTERS VAN LEEUWEN, his ideal was to engage in this country the services of the greatest possible number of zoologists for scientific research, to each of whom could be entrusted the task of studying one particular group or aspect of the fauna.

Even before his predecessor left in 1920 he secured the services of two assistant zoologists, one for the division of vertebrates and the other for the entomological department. Testimony to wise judgment on the part of DAMMERMAN was evident by the fact that, in addition to building up systematic collections for purely scientific purposes, he engaged a taxidermist with a view to making zoological science more popular. The time had come for renovating the exhibition galleries and for the presentation in attractive and well arranged form of the principal types of animals found in Indonesia. DAMMERMAN gave the incentive for the construction of the well-known habitat groups, that is to say animals of all kinds, arranged in a series of large glass-sided cases, so as to give an idea of their natural surroundings.

Until about 1929, when the world crisis started, the Museum enjoyed a period of prosperity which was largely due to DAMMERMAN's perseverance and which secured for the Museum a place of honour in other countries as well. It is astonishing how level-headed and determined he used to carry out his work; and while in official circles he was at times stiff and not exactly communicative, we may be grateful for his quiet constructive work and for laying a solid foundation which even in the troublesome times that lay ahead did not suffer. He was however unable to prevent the severe cuts in expenditure necessarily enforced from having an adverse affect on the results of research work undertaken by himself and others. In August 1932, in addition to his function as curator of the Museum, DAMMERMAN was called upon to act as director of the whole Botanical Gardens — a task which he accepted reluctantly and yet carried out with serious attention. During this period he experienced many disappointments and had to offer steady resistance to opposition from the side of the Government. In this connection we need only mention the emergency fund he started in 1933 in aid of "s Lands Plantentuin" at Bogor. This relief fund, to which many leading people and private bodies gave financial support solely as a token of their sympathy with his efforts, was known as the "Treüb Fund" (later Treub Foundation). The object in mind was to provide for continued scientific research in Indonesia,

in the widest sense of the word. The need had indeed reached a high level in those thoroughly materialistic days! For the sake of a ridiculously small financial gain an attempt had been made to destroy with one stroke a scientific centre that had been gradually built up with great care. The shortsightedness and jealousy of his principals however never deterred him from continuing to fight for a good cause, his sole aim being the future of his institution.

When in May 1935 he lost his devoted wife JANTINA CATHARINA REINDERS it was a heavy blow for DAMMERMAN, from which he only recovered many years later. In the summer of 1935 DAMMERMAN went to Holland on leave and, although he never quite regained his former energy, he resumed his work with much determination. During this period he devoted particular attention to matters relating to nature protection and wild life management.

In February 1939 DAMMERMAN relinquished his appointment as director of the Botanical Gardens, at which time also ended a seven-year period during which the Botanical Gardens and the Zoological Museum had been under the management of one person. After a short rest, during which period he made preparations to work out whatever information he had been able to collect in Indonesia, he proceeded to compile a comprehensive work dealing with the fauna of Krakatau. The object was to give a general outline of the results of an investigation which he had begun way back in 1919, carrying on the work of earlier zoologists and cooperating with his fellow scientists in Bogor. For a great number of years this subject constituted his main interest, and it is therefore not surprising that he was anxious to arrange the provisional results and to conclude the study as a whole. His long awaited Krakatau work, which was published in the Proceedings of the Royal Academy of Sciences, Amsterdam, appeared in 1948 and aroused great interest, especially in other countries. Not only had numerous specialists throughout the whole world assisted him in identifying the material collected on the Krakatau Islands, but, having regard to problems associated with zoogeography and animal ecology in a tropical country, the phenomenon of the re-population of the volcanic Krakatau group had for a long time attracted the attention of the scientific world.

In January 1943 DAMMERMAN was attached to the Museum in Leiden as a research associate, and this position he held until the time of his death. Thus he was in Holland during the German occupation and managed to continue his work despite all the upheaval of war. In the

light of "The Problem of Krakatao" it is easily understood that DAMMERMAN continued to be interested in the changing faunal picture in an entirely different part of the world. So it came that he started an investigation into the establishment of a fauna in the Northeast polder, a piece of land reclaimed from the Zuiderzee in Holland. Yet, although he himself had visited the area on several occasions (1939-1943) and was also able to get the assistance from university students in collecting material and data, the work had to be abandoned on account of the war.

On the return to peace-time conditions in Europe and contact with the outside world again being possible for the Leiden scientific circle, DAMMERMAN felt an urge to pursue his activities. In 1945 he was elected vice-president of the Netherlands Entomological Society, and from 1947 to 1950 he was a president of this Society. In the last years of his life, strange to say, DAMMERMAN developed an interest in matters pertaining to nomenclature, and he held very definite views on the subject; these were not, however, in harmony with present-day conceptions and therefore not popular. During this period his health was rapidly declining, but he was privileged to find renewed happiness in marriage when in 1951 he took as his second wife Mrs A. MERTENS - PAUL. One of the last occasions when he appeared in public was the opening day of the 9th International Congress of Entomology held at Amsterdam in August 1951.

DAMMERMAN died of angina pectoris at Voorburg on November 19, 1951.

It is essentially the study of the composition and geographical distribution of the Malaysian fauna which DAMMERMAN was active in promoting so assiduously during the greater part of his life. He had a fond interest for this subject — witness his pioneering work on the zoogeography of Java and his constant willingness to make publications written by others on this subject universally known. This was particularly the case during the period 1919-1932, when he was able to devote his full attention to research, the development and extension of his museum and the exchange of ideas and material with foreign institutes. Here mention should be made of the fact that already in 1915 a special zoological journal entitled "Contributions à la faune des Indes Néerlandaises" was published (editor J. C. KONINGSBERGER) under the auspices of the Botanical Gardens. In 1919 this journal was substituted by "Treubia", a journal which as an organ of the two existing institutes concerned with zoology (marine and terrestrial — in Djakarta and Bogor, respectively), soon acquired a good reputation throughout the world. From 1919 to 1938 DAMMERMAN was one of the editors of "Treubia", and

it was a public secret that for the first ten years he was more or less the sole editor. He never had any reason to complain about a lack of manuscript, for most research workers in other countries preferred to have their contributions published in this journal, which even now is still the only one in Indonesia which does full justice to systematic zoology in general and in which, moreover, life-history studies, insular faunal surveys and discoveries in the field of zoogeography are made known to the world.

DAMMERMAN maintained close relations with the sister institute in Singapore, the Raffles Museum and Library, where first C. BODEN KLOSS (1877-1949) and later particularly F. N. CHASEN (1897-1942) were his contemporaries and associates. A great many publications written by our British friends appeared in "Treubia" under his editorship, and many were the instances of close co-operation between the museums at Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Bogor, where it concerned the inventory of terrestrial island faunas in Malaysia. A satisfactory distribution of the work was achieved when the investigation of the marine fauna and oceanography were entrusted to the Laboratory for the Investigation of the Sea in Djakarta.

DAMMERMAN was neither a laboratory scholar nor a systematist *pur sang*. Apart from having a sound knowledge of the indigenous mammal fauna, he was well-informed about all branches of zoology. During several years he occupied himself with various aspects of animal ecology and his studies on the tropical soil and surface fauna can without hesitation be termed pioneer work in this field. At one time he also took a special interest in cave-dwelling animals, and the fauna of bat caves formed a subject for investigation on which he supplied useful information. His old interest in entomology never faltered during all his life, and in gratitude we recall that he was always ready to grant his co-workers in the field a great measure of freedom. He was convinced that systematic zoology as a whole had been neglected too long and that expert entomologists in particular were urgently needed to investigate systematically the overwhelmingly abundant insect fauna of Indonesia.

Apart from the foregoing, he also fully realized that in addition to routine work and systematic museum duties, zoological exploration should not be neglected. Whenever possible he arranged collecting trips to unexplored or imperfectly known islands in the Archipelago for the purpose of obtaining a general picture of the local fauna. He always liked to participate in such work and joined many expeditions, not only to the

Krakatau Islands and little known parts of Java but elsewhere as well. Thus he explored the islands Durian (Riouw Archipelago), Bawean and Karimundjawa, and he also led a more prolonged expedition to Sumba. DAMMERMAN selected the small, isolated island Durian as an example of one where undisturbed conditions prevailed, as against the Krakatau group where, in the course of time, the fauna had undergone constant changes. The object of the trips to the islands in the Java Sea — Karimundjawa, Bawean and Kangean — was more especially for the purpose of determining the extent to which the fauna in this group of islands deviated from that of Java and Borneo, and also whether the remains of an ancient fauna might yet be discovered.

That DAMMERMAN's interests covered a wide range of subjects is evidenced by his warm interest in Nature Protection. He maintained regular contact with the international organizations engaged in this field, and his publications in the yearbooks of the Netherlands Indies Society, at congresses and for jubilees attracted considerable attention and contributed in no mean measure towards a better understanding of this subject. When in 1912 S. H. KOORDERS gave an impetus to the establishment of the Netherlands Indies Society for the Protection of Nature, DAMMERMAN became the second secretary. From 1913 to 1919 he served as first secretary and thereafter until 1932 he acted as its chairman. With anxiety he observed how as a result of inexperienced extension of cultivation the original condition of large tracts of land threatened to be lost for scientific research and recreation. Notwithstanding all the work involved — often thankless and disappointing — he continued to devote his efforts towards the establishment and maintenance of nature reserves and game sanctuaries. He was largely responsible for the enforcement of legislation for the protection of nature and the game act. Finally, he was successful in persuading the Government to appoint a special officer entrusted with Nature Protection and game management. The future was to prove how useful and necessary all these measures were.

In 1929 DAMMERMAN acted as secretary of the Division of Biological Sciences during the 4th Pacific Science Congress in Java. He was connected by membership or correspondence with numerous societies and associations both at home and abroad; among others, he was a corresponding member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences from May 1933 to April 1940, and for some time also held the chairmanship of the Netherlands Indies Science Council. As to the honours that were bestowed on him we may mention that he was a *Ridder in de Orde van de Nederlandse Leeuw* and a *Officier du Mérite agricole* of France.

DAMMERMAN was a peculiar man, with a determined and upright character. Everything he did was carefully prepared, and although even the objects he loved to work on occupied a great deal of his time and were a great strain, they were invariably carried out in a thorough and painstaking manner. He was not the type to publish provisional results, or to supply fragmentary information. Thus, he had an intense dislike of the foolish tendency of those who would describe the greatest possible number of new species in the shortest possible time. He was cautious, most level-headed and averse to all publicity. In official circles he seldom felt at ease, and his reticence and shyness in public were the reason why, in his dealings with the authorities, he was always extremely reserved. Although in his office DAMMERMAN was at times quite unapproachable and self-contained, he invariably showed a deep sense of justice and duty towards his staff. His taciturnity was proverbial: it will live on in scientific circles in the name of a new mollusc¹⁾ which was named in his honour. As soon as his official duties terminated and he felt a sense of freedom from the ties of convention DAMMERMAN became a different man with much personal magnetism. He could be very witty, and those who were privileged to get to know him in the family circle or on excursions, enjoyed his good-natured mockery, his great sense of humour and his extreme delight in experiencing awkward or perilous situations.

KAREL DAMMERMAN will live on in our memory as a loyal, honest and good man.

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M. A. LIEFTINCK