

## OBITUARY

F. C. DRESCHER (1874—1957)

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We have to announce the sad news of the death of FRIEDERICH CARL DRESCHER, curator in the Entomology department of the Museum Zoologicum Bogoriense, who passed away in the Carolus hospital at Djakarta, on December 19th, 1957, in his 83rd year. He was born at Amsterdam on May 6th, 1874 and came from a protestant German family. Only few of the younger generation will have known Mr. DRESCHER personally as he had not left Indonesia since 1938, but his name is linked forever with the study of the Malaysian insect world and his death recalls memories of a past full of activity and interesting experiences in this field — the loss of him therefore being felt as a blow to our little community.

After having completed his preliminary education, including high school at Amsterdam, DRESCHER in 1894 started his career as an employee of a trade company and was first sent to Manchester, then to Batavia (Djakarta), Surabaya and Semarang. He arrived in the East Indies on August 16th, 1896 and worked for various companies in Java until 1909, when he accepted the partnership in a well-known merchantile firm with establishments all over the Malay Archipelago. In 1920 he retired from business and became sleeping partner in his company, spending most of his life at Bandung and Tjilatjap, and devoting himself assiduously to Entomology. DRESCHER loved the hot climate of the tropics and never had any desire to return to Europe. This period lasted for almost twelve years, when the crisis of the thirties suddenly put an end to a busy and prosperous time. Earlier he had made the acquaintance of the late Dr. EDWARD JACOBSON, the well-known naturalist of Fort de Kock (Sumatra), and when this gentleman finally settled in Bandung, DRESCHER and he commenced a friendship which lasted till the death of the latter. JACOBSON aided largely in supporting him both mentally and materially during the commercial slump preceding World War II, to the certain advantage of both. DRESCHER then settled in South Java, where he lived in a bungalow adjacent to the large palm-oil factory at Karanggandul (Banjumas), run by his son;

and when in 1938 he was asked to arrange business affairs in Europe, DRESCHER reluctantly consented but took the opportunity of meeting some friends and consulting his collections at the Zoological Museum of Amsterdam. He stayed in Holland only during the summer months and returned to Java on the 25th September, 1938.

One year after the invasion of Java, Japanese army officers found him at his home in Purwokerto. DRESCHER calmly went to meet the difficulties by inviting both men to inspect his beetle collections. Much impressed by his unexpected exhibit the army men at once remembered their visit to the scientific institutes at Bogor earlier the same year. Delightedly, they decided forthwith to take possession of the whole collection in behalf of the Zoological Museum at Bogor, at the same time expressing their desire to carry off its heedful tenant to a P.O.W. camp. Inseparable from his collections, DRESCHER strongly resisted ....., negotiations finally resulting in the simultaneous transportation to Bogor of both! This happened on 10th January, 1943. By a happy coincidence DRESCHER, on the 12th May, 1943, thus managed to get attached to the Museum as a custodian of Entomology, a post which he was enabled by the Indonesian Government to hold until his death.

From early childhood, Mr. DRESCHER was passionately devoted to Entomology, and as an entomologist he was widely known as the possessor of the finest and most complete collection of Javan Coleoptera extant, and this he treated with the utmost possible care, devoting much time and money to enrich and complete his series, a hobby which gave him much satisfaction. His enormous beetle collection accumulated prior to 1928 DRESCHER presented to the Zoological Museum at Amsterdam, this being entrusted to the care of his good friend J.B. CORPORAAL, the late keeper of Entomology at that institute. After his return to Java, DRESCHER diligently built up a new Java collection, this time from other parts of the island, replenished with material from South Sumatra and Central Celebes, mostly collected by himself. This second collection, as valuable as the first one, was purchased by the writer for the Zoological Museum at Bogor, in August 1946. These two fauna collections are unique and would undoubtedly furnish a wonderful basis for a future "Coleoptera javanica".

As has been mentioned already, DRESCHER was essentially a coleopterist, though for a long time he was also interested in Odonata and Hemiptera. His extensive collections, more especially of Dragonflies, have been of considerable importance for our knowledge of the Javan fauna. DRESCHER's love of Coleoptera lasted all his life, and wherever he lived there always was a special room in which to keep his many drawers and

utensils. The beetle collections comprise many uniques and great rarities as well as splendid series of the commoner forms, from as many different localities as possible. Just like the late EDWARDS JACOBSON, DRESCHER always worked independently and was amazingly precise — almost fastidious — as to mounting and labelling of his specimens. He delighted in assisting other entomologists whose opportunities for outdoor work were not equal to his, but who had greater facilities from a literary point of view. DRESCHER never published on the subject and systematic entomology was congenial to him only in respect of comparative studies and arranging of his material according to the 'Catalogus coleopterorum', which was performed with great care and patience. He had no particular interest in habits or life-histories, but possessed a keen eye for differences. His collections were (and still are) worked out and reported upon with the assistance of numerous specialists from all over the world, countless novelties already having been introduced in many publications written by his correspondents and innumerable species have been named in his honour. DRESCHER was an industrious and conscientious correspondent, widely known and highly valued by his many connections in foreign countries. He was respected everywhere and being a quiet and helpful person, much beloved by his Sundanese assistants. It was in November, 1926, that the writer first corresponded with DRESCHER. Since that time several hundreds of letters, including colour-notes, keys and lists of species, passed between us. Some years later in Java the writer paid regular visits to Bandung, mostly en route in going to or returning from elsewhere, these visits invariably culminating in a display of the most notorious captures of beetles, heightened by occasional sallies of dry humour from his host.

Physically he was thin, wiry and strong, and a keen pedestrian as I experienced during several visits with him to Mt. Tangkuban Prahū, the hot plains of Banjumas, or the bat-caves at Palabuan Ratu, on which occasions he forced me — although much his junior — to "walk-about" very considerably. DRESCHER travelled much, having been nearly all over Java, exploring several parts of it intensively during years in succession, always making huge collections. He also sent out intelligent collectors to various localities outside Java and thus further increased his stores of Malaysian Coleoptera. Indonesian peasants and estate labourers alike were instructed to collect beetles; I well remember him distributing scores of collecting vials among tea-picking women on Mt. Tangkuban Prahū, many a hilarious incident happening when DRESCHER — twice in a month at "pay-day" — would scrutinize and accumulate the rich harvest beside some forest path.

Mr. DRESCHER was in many respects a remarkable man — polite, naively scrupulous and retiring, yet generous and sensitive. Possibly there was noticeable an occasional tendency to exaggerate the urgency of his collecting activities; but all his work was purely honorary in its nature and we will always remember the readiness and devotion with which he offered his experiences to anyone who asked for his help. These memories will be most poignant to those who came to understand his modesty and reticence, and above all, to experience his impartial generosity.

Leiden.

M. A. LIEFTINCK

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