



*Theo J. Stomps*

THEO J. STOMPS was born in Amsterdam the 26th of april 1885, as the eldest son of a teacher. His father was befriended with his colleagues H. V. S. Jaspers, E. Heimans and Jac. P. Thijssse, who around the turn of the century successfully started a movement for the study and preservation of nature. The influence of their personalities, their writings and activities is still felt in our days.

As a schoolboy Theo got acquainted with those inspiring naturalists and he became their devoted disciple. When Thijssse gave him a copy of the first edition of the well known Heimans and Thijssse flora as a present, the world of vegetation was disclosed to him and at a very young age, he became a passionate searcher of plants. So it is no wonder that after secondary school and matriculation examination, in 1903 he entered the University of Amsterdam as a student of botany.

In his first year at the University however, a heavy blow hit the family Stomps; the father died, leaving his widow with six young sons. Fortunately he was enabled to continue his studies, during which he took care of his mother and younger brothers. He became a father to them, later on a grandfather to their children; he never married.

In 1909 Stomps graduated, he took his doctors degree in 1910 on a thesis on: "Mitosis and Synapsis in *Spinacia oleracea*". In the same year he was nominated extraordinary professor in Cytology, for which he delivered an oration on: "The Theory of Lamarck before and after Darwin". In 1913 he was charged to teach Systematic Botany, in 1919 he was nominated ordinary professor of Botany, in 1924 director of the Botanical Institute and Gardens; the semester 1934/1935 he was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Amsterdam. In this quality he delivered a sensational speech on: "The Consequences of Mutation in human Society".

In the first period of his professorship he made several botanical journeys abroad; in 1912 to the Sahara and Algeria, to Armenia and the Causasus; in 1913 to the United States of America and in 1923 to Ceylon, Java and Sumatra. As an enthusiast and skilled mountaneer he conquered many high tops always observing vegetation. In Europe he regularly visited the Alps, where he made several trips with his old friend the popular professor C. Schröter and other Swiss botanists.

All his life and work however stands under the spell of his venerated and famous master and predecessor Hugo de Vries, whom he worships. With great enthusiasm, liveliness and eloquence Stomps lectured on: Plant anatomy, Cytology, Taxonomy and Genetics. In all his work and speeches he elaboratedly emphasised the pioneer significance of Hugo de Vries for those branches of science. Stomps' students, through him, therefore became also pupils of de Vries.

Continuing the life work of Hugo de Vries, in the experimental garden he attended to extensive plantations of different *Oenothera* types. This resulted in a long series of articles on the complicated problems around this genus.

Besides his scientific work and his teaching, he stayed the naturalist, the enthusiast of plants he had been in his youth, and he knew to transmit this love for nature and plantlife to his students. Every year several botanical excursions were organised, abroad as well in as the country. Especially the trips to the Alps or to the south of France are the highlights in the memories of his former Amsterdam students of Botany. As soon as the Central railway station was behind, the professor, ordinarily rather formal in his relations towards his staff and students, changed into a gay and fatherly friend, excited and full of fun. In those prewar days, when everybody was poor, he was an expert in finding cheap lodgings, also in providing funds for those who could not afford the expenses.

Those excursions contributed greatly to the botanical education of a generation of students and procured them with a sound basic knowledge of vegetation.

We owe professor Stomps great gratitude for this and we wish him still many years in happiness and good health!

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