

FREEDOM REGAINED.

We always have thoroughly detested the mentality of those scientific periodicals which deemed it proper to introduce politics into their columns. During the war we have repeatedly been offended by the unworthy attitude of the editorial staffs of certain botanical journals of "Greater Germany" who admitted — or possibly even deliberately furthered — perorations stating not only the marvellous achievements of nazi-methods and their amazing usefulness towards the particular field of science covered by the periodical in question, but the faith and the devotion of their persons towards the sacred cause of the nazi-system.

We have, as I say, not exactly admired this mentality in a scientific paper and we will not follow the example. However, too much has happened in the five long and hard years of bloody oppression by ruthless and barbarian enemies, both in Holland and in Indonesia, that this crucial moment in our national history could be passed without any comment even by a stolid and, allegedly, unemotional Hollander. For never more distinctly than in the past five years have we been enabled to state — or state again, as the case may be — how utterly different the Germans are from us, how fundamentally their mentality and their ideals differ from ours.

The older among us remember with some sadness the glorious days before 1914 when Germany had still something to give to the world; the days when German science was leading, if not, perhaps, by its originality and sparkling genius, yet by its tremendous thoroughness and assiduity; the days of Engler, Graebner, Schimper, Wettstein and so many others who contrived to produce splendid and admirable works. Engler and Prantl's "Die Natürlichen Pflanzenfamilien", Engler's "Das Pflanzenreich", Graebner's and Schimper's works on Ecology, Wettstein's "Handbuch der Systematischen Botanik", Engler and Drude's "Die Vegetation der Erde", Karsten and Schenck's "Vegetationsbilder" are characteristic and unrivalled products of that quiet and fruitful period; a period when Germany, her evil qualities still slumbering — though already discernable to a keen observer — still had colonies and a fair chance

to increase her international influence in many fields of human life. That chance has been shattered ever more completely since August 1914. The lamentable downfall of the German nation, the very causes of which seem to lie in the German mentality rather than in the dominance of a certain limited group, has been crowned during the second world war. By their brutal and undignified conduct the Germans have greatly fallen in our esteem. We cannot help feeling that we cannot possibly deal with them, however affable they may be — or seem to be — individually, until they are “speaking our language” — and mean it. I am afraid this will not be effectuated unless their youth have enjoyed a thorough education on sound and human principles — if thereto receptive —, have been taught to understand and to respect the mentality, opinions, ideals and vital necessities of other peoples, have learned to develop their personalities and have abandoned their attitude of contemptuous superiority, so heroically displayed as soon as they are in some way dominating, a feature which really is nothing but a symptom of their moral inferiority. Such is the character of the people under whose humiliating yoke we have sighed well-nigh five years.

Is it to be wondered at that, under these circumstances, even the editor of a purely scientific journal cannot resume his regular duties without having unloaded his mind!

We are free now to do as we like, but we are obliged to like only what is good and righteous. Times of self-sacrifice and restrictions, of unrealisable desires and plans, of want of most of the amenities of life, still lie before us. But we have passed the lowest point in our economic life and, though perhaps at first unpleasantly slow, progress is on the march. A deep and wide breach, however, has been made in part of the bonds of international friendship and relations. The leading generation of to-day will not be able to forget and it will need the rise of a new one to re-establish them. Rules and standards for life in a new world will be resolved on by the conquering nations and it seems probable that for the Germans the question of “to be or not to be” depends upon whether or not they are willing and able to accept these rules. Only if they do and do it willingly and heartily, is there a chance for them to retake the place in the scientific world they occupied before 1914. For, in future still more than in the past, it will not be sufficient to be equivalent in a scientific sense; as well as any other man, the scientist too will be judged as to his human and moral standards, his character, his demeanour and his attitude towards representatives of other peoples, both individually and as a representative of his nation. Let us hope that some time the German intellect, thoroughness and laboriousness will

be wedded to a higher developed personality, modesty, world-mindedness and self-knowledge.

All this applies to Europe and more particularly to Holland. But there is more. There is Indonesia to be liberated from the Japanese. What our compatriots have suffered out there, is still unknown, but it is to be feared that their fate has even been more cruel and hard than ours. Yet, their hardships too will come to an end. We may hope and expect that Holland will do her duty and help to bring about a speedy end to these hardships. We may expect that Holland will duly take part in the liberation and in the reconstruction of economic and cultural life in that part of our empire. As far as Systematic Botany is concerned we will, then, eagerly resume our former relations. More particularly we will, together with our friends in Indonesia, have to mould into a more concrete and definite form the plans for the edition of a modern and complete "Flora of Malaysia", which were drafted just before the war started. To such a work Backer's "Flora van Java" forms a satisfactory introduction. But with the publication of this Flora, which is written in Dutch and is, therefore, mainly intended for "home use", only a simple beginning is made to the payment of an old debt of honour, due to scientists of neighbouring countries, which are, as far as this is concerned, in a more advanced position. Let us hope that Dutch botanists in collaboration with many friends from abroad will be able to accomplish this extensive work, to which the fundamentals have been laid in Buitenzorg and in Holland during the last twenty-five years, in a reasonably short time. Meanwhile our heartfelt wishes are extended for the salvation of our Indonesian compatriots. May we soon be reunited for the sake of our joint task, under the wise reign of our beloved Queen.

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