



Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation
5th Floor, Hunt Library
Carnegie Mellon University
4909 Frew Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3890
Telephone: 412-268-2434
Email: huntinst@andrew.cmu.edu
Web site: www.huntbotanical.org

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About the Institute

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library.

Portrait of Fiji And of a Personality

NATURALIST'S SOUTH PACIFIC EXPEDITION. FIJI. Otto Degener. 303 pages, illustrations, maps, index. Published by the author, P.O. Box 187, Wailua, Oahu, T.H. 1949. \$5. Also available from the New York Botanical Garden, Bronx Park, New York 58, N.Y.

Otto Degener has a niche in botanical history for giving his name to the Degeneriaceae, the genus *Degeneria*, and numerous little "degeneri's" as specific names. He now has another niche: as the author of this volume, which recounts his explorations while with the Anne Archbold expedition on the motorized junk *Cheng-Ho*.^{*} Here is a book to take its place beside the classics of the 19th century traveling naturalists, thoroughly modern, yet in an established style and tradition that has a parallel in such compositions as Prokofiev's "Classical Symphony."

The author has a rare trait of choosing his native friends with discernment, and of gaining their affection with their confidence—a task difficult in a land where the race problem is no better (or worse) than in our own lynch-conscious southern towns. As a result, this delightful account of his wanderings about the islands, filled with the human side of his experiences yet presented with the impartiality of a scientist (even to a minutely detailed description of yangona drinking, with clocked notations, some at one-half minute intervals during the ceremony), all

give us an exciting picture of the islands of today.

The book is written with a complete lack of that "diplomacy" that often colors the words of professional lecturers and travelers and others seeking to climb success's ladder, and the narrative is backed by supporting chapters on the history of Fiji and its customs. When today has gone, the volume will serve the ethnologists of the future for its basic data of this age.

"Portrait of Otto Degener" might well be the subtitle of this unusual book, which is all the more pleasing since the picture appears unplanned and unconsciously drawn. A hundred little anecdotes, some uncomplimentary to himself, and the absence of such stories as many authors use to prime their pompousness, all have their cumulative effect. As one closes the book, one knows not only Fiji, but also Otto Degener the man—so sage and kindly that one wishes more of his kind would tread the earth.

FRANK E. EGLEK,
Aton Forest, Norfolk, Conn.

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^{*}Parts of the book appeared originally in the *Journal of the New York Botanical Garden* for September and October 1943.