

Linnaeus correspondence

Linnean Society, London

446 microfiche (positive silver halide)

Order no.: L-6490/2

Including a paper reprint of Ewald Aehrling's catalogue *Carl von Linné's Brefvexling*. Stockholm, 1885. (The catalogue is available separately at Dfl 44. Order no.: RP-39)

This collection of Linnaeus' correspondence comprises more than 3,000 letters that provide a survey of the state of Natural History in his time. The value of this collection for students of history of knowledge and science can hardly be overestimated.

The letters written by Linnaeus convey the same artless charm as his travel books, which makes him a pleasure to read, quite apart from the special interest of their contents.

In the manuscript, kept at Upsala University Library, which served as the basis for the *Handwritten notes of Carolus Linnaeus on himself, with comments and addenda by Adam Afzelius* (Upsala, 1823), Linnaeus himself touches on this subject on page 63: "Linnaeus had correspondence of considerable extent not only with all the learned men in the Kingdom, but with countless foreigners: especially the most learned and knowledgeable men in Europe, whereby he not only received immediate word of all new discoveries in Europe, but was also able to study them closely since most of the books which were published were sent to him as gifts. Besides this, he annually received seeds for his gardens from all parts, although many were ruined on the way, but for which there would not have been room in three Upsala gardens for so many plants, of which between one and two thousand varieties were sown each year. Letters and other consignments from Doctor Gronovius in

Leyden, Professor Sauvages in Montpellier and Professor Gmelin, first in Petersburg and later in Tübingen, were for him the most frequent and the most loved, always bringing him something new".



The valuable collection of letters comprises many hundreds of letters discussing everything of importance which took place between 1733 and his death. It is only a pity that Linnaeus was

always too busy to make copies of his own letters.

In view of his extraordinary productivity it is astonishing that he found time for such voluminous correspondence, which he himself says was greater than that of all his contemporaries in Upsala together. As he won world fame, many who could not visit him personally wrote him to obtain information or recognition and support. During the later years of his life, when his strength began to fail, he complained that he would need ten hands just to answer all the letters he received.

Linnaeus started early to keep, sort and file all letters he received which were of purely scientific contents. The oldest list of those who corresponded with him is in his own hand and contains 41 names. The list probably dates from 1748. A later list, also written by himself and printed in *Handwritten notes* (pages 82-86) contains the names of 70 correspondents and can be dated 1758.

This collection was transferred to England along with the remainder of his writings after his son's death. In 1821,

after James Edward Smith became owner of Linnaeus' estate, *A Selection of the Correspondence of Linnaeus, etc. in Two Volumes* was published in London. Among Smith's many mistakes, he had the letters he wanted to publish translated into English, instead of reproducing them in Latin or the language in which they had been written. After Smith's death in 1828, the Linnean Society of London, which he

had established in 1788, acquired the collection by purchase.

Among the letters there are a few addressed to his son, who was used as an intermediary by leading codisciples. The contents of these form an important link in the correspondence of the father.

In 1885, Aehrling published his catalogue of letters written to and by

Linnaeus. Since he made use of the collection kept by the Linnean Society, his catalogue may be considered a fairly complete list of the letters now available in a microfiche edition, although the catalogue does not include a number of letters added after 1855. A paper reprint of this catalogue is supplied with each copy of the microfiche edition.

Related IDC project

THUNBERG CORRESPONDENCE

Letters received by the famous Swedish botanist Carl Peter Thunberg (1743-1828) in the collection of the Uppsala University Library.

A-HJO available on microfiche

440 microfiche

Order no.: L-7646/2

