



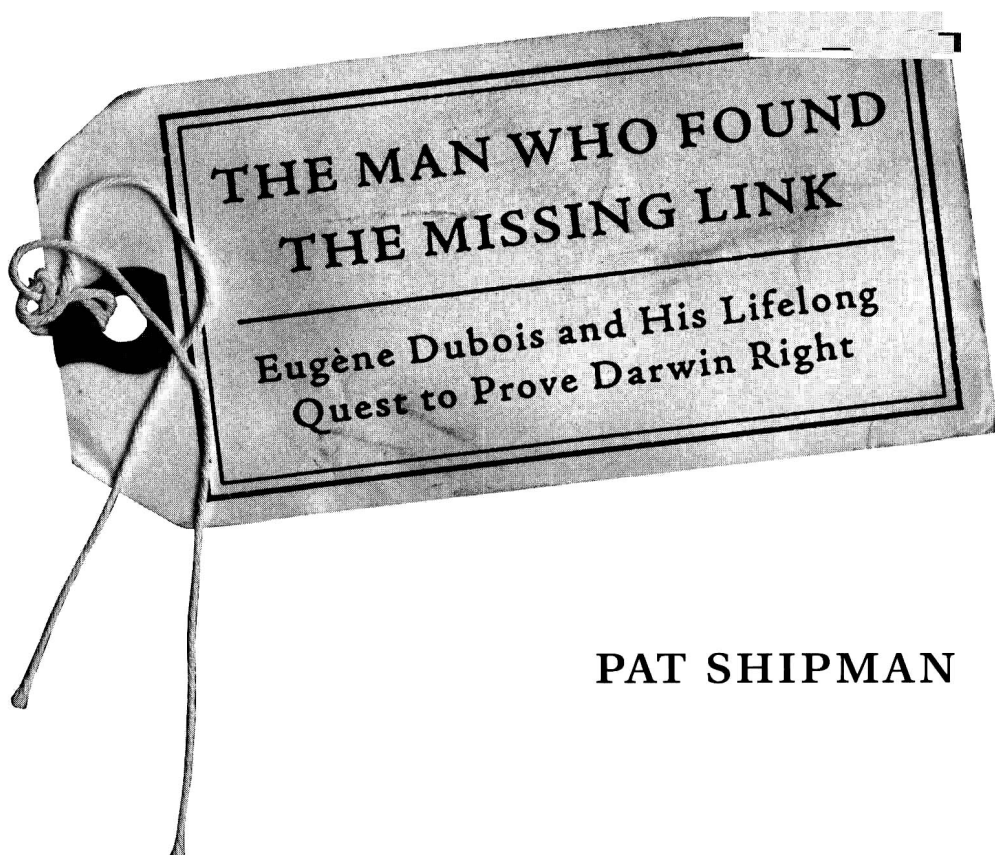
The Man Who Found the Missing Link

Eugene Dubois and

His Lifelong Quest to Prove Darwin Right

PAT SHIPMAN





PAT SHIPMAN

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Copyright © 2001 by Pat Shipman
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

Originally published by Simon & Schuster, Inc., New York, New York

First Harvard University Press paperback edition, 2002

Book design by Christopher Kuntze and Claire Van Vliet

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Shipman, Pat, date.

The man who found the missing link : Eugène Dubois and his lifelong quest to
prove Darwin right / Pat Shipman.

p. cm.

1. Java man. 2. Dubois, Eugène, 1858–1940. 3. Physical anthropologists—
Netherlands—Biography. 4. Physical anthropologists—Indonesia—Java—Biography.
I. Title.

GN284.6 .S55 2001

569.9—dc21

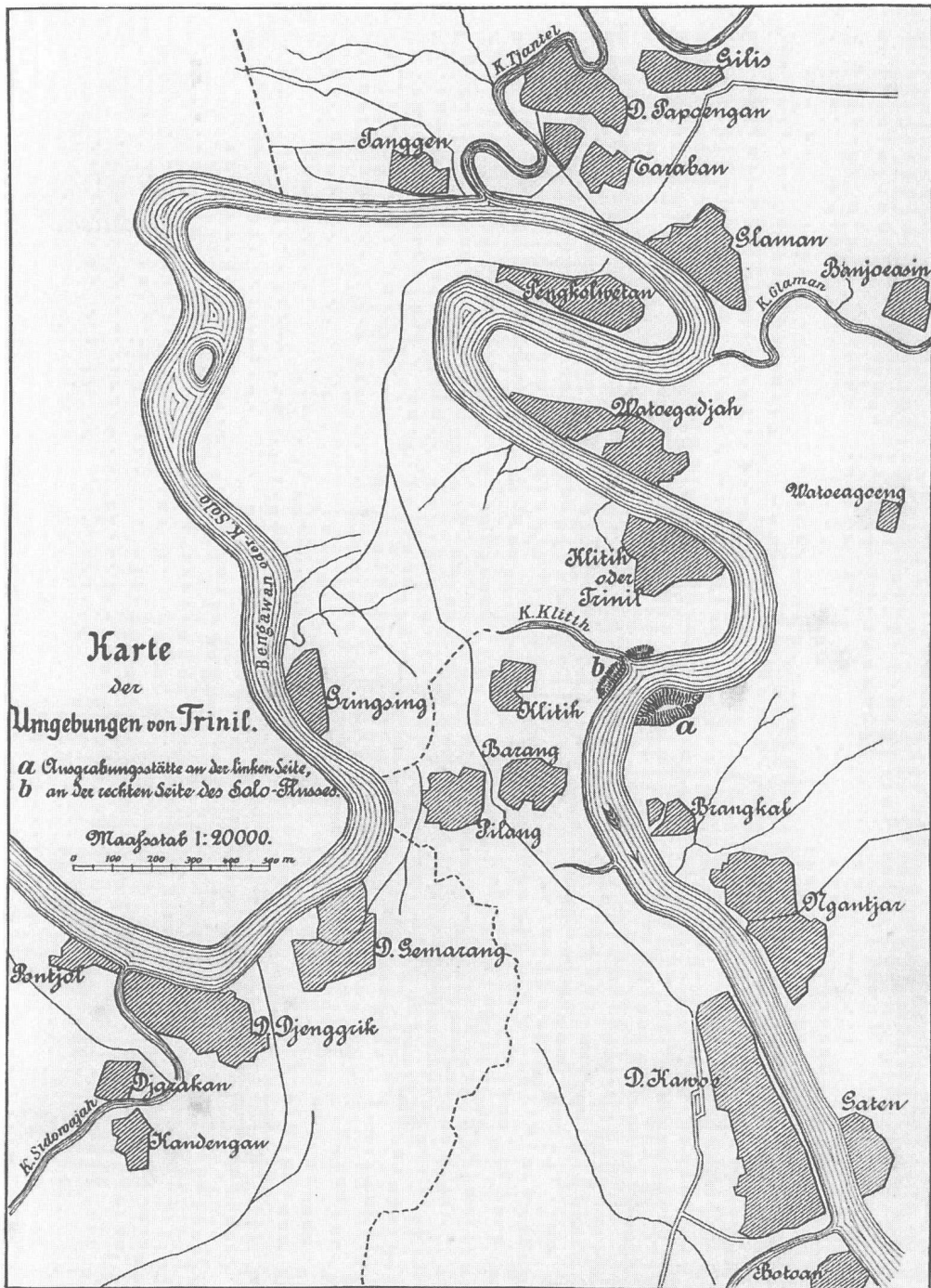
00-044049

ISBN 0-674-00866-9 (pbk.)

**THE MAN
WHO FOUND THE
MISSING LINK**



*For M. E. F. T. D.,
of course*



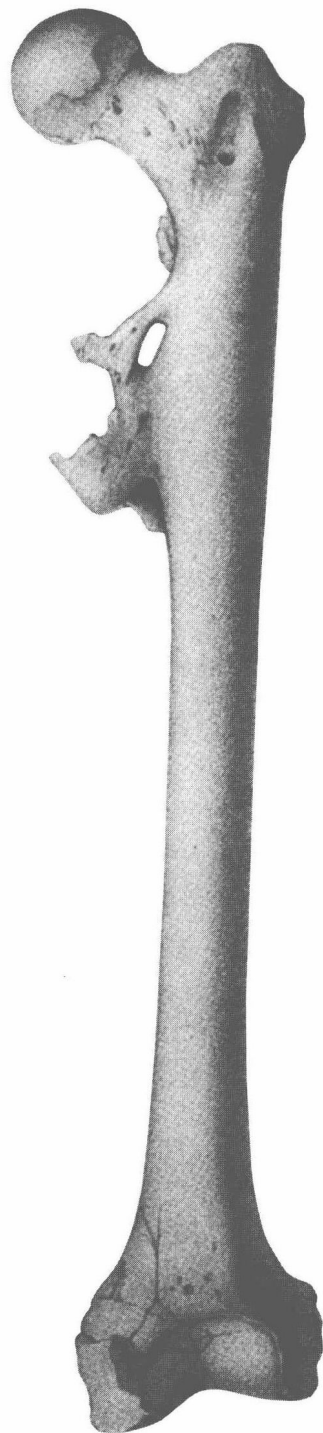
AUTHOR'S NOTE

After Dubois' death, his daughter Eugénie spent days burning materials that she did not want to go to the Dubois Archives (letter, Eugénie to Brongersma, January 21, 1941). Extensive documentary evidence remains intact and is cited in the endnotes; sources have been edited lightly for clarity, if at all. Translations from the Dutch and German are almost all the work of my invaluable research assistant, Dr. Paul Storm. The endnotes also indicate where I have filled in intriguing omissions resulting from Eugénie's actions. I have followed the Dutch conventions in capitalization of names.

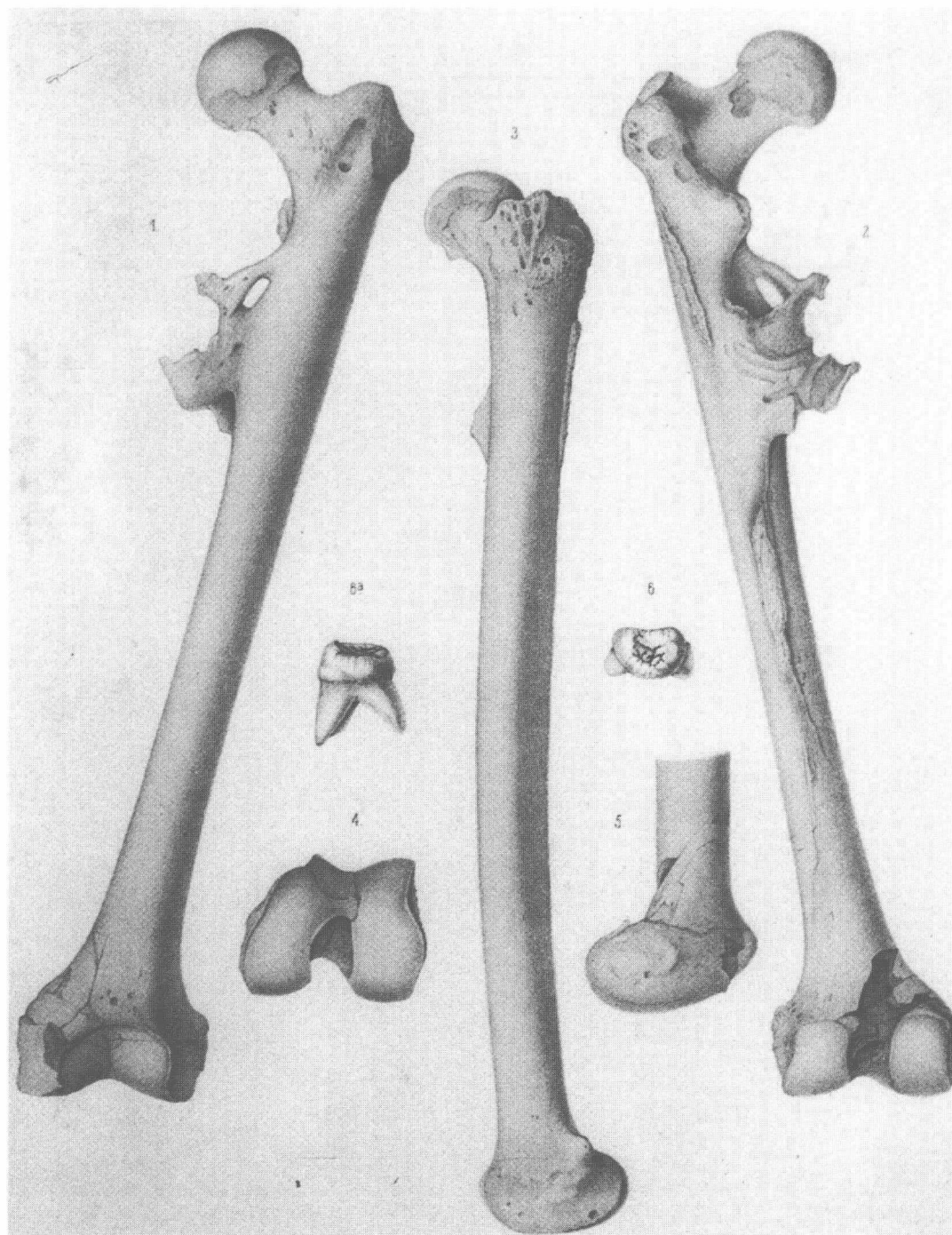
We live by admiration, love, and hope.

—Wordsworth

Words copied by Dubois onto the frontispiece of the field notebook he used starting September 1893.



**THE MAN
WHO FOUND THE
MISSING LINK**



CONTENTS

Author's Note	ix
Chapter 1 An Echo of the Past	1
Chapter 2 The Beginning	9
Chapter 3 The Game	21
Chapter 4 Ambition	25
Chapter 5 Lightning Rod	31
Chapter 6 Love and Conflict	41
Chapter 7 Turning Point	49
Chapter 8 To Find the Missing Link	59
Chapter 9 Logistics	66
Chapter 10 Padang	80
Chapter 11 Pajakombo	95
Chapter 12 Fossils	99
Chapter 13 Garuda	107
Chapter 14 Fevers and Spells	110
Chapter 15 To Java	118
Chapter 16 Java Fossils	128
Chapter 17 Coolies	132
Chapter 18 Discoveries at Trinil	138
Chapter 19 Gathering Resources	145
Chapter 20 Friendship	153
Chapter 21 Trinil	159
Chapter 22 The Birth of <i>Pithecanthropus</i>	165
Chapter 23 1893	171
Chapter 24 Disaster	182
Chapter 25 Letters from a Friend	186
Chapter 26 Aftermath	193
Chapter 27 Perseverance	196
Chapter 28 The Monograph	202
Chapter 29 Writing Up	207
Chapter 30 Separation and Loss	211
Chapter 31 Intermission	218

Chapter 32 To India	223
Chapter 33 Calcutta	227
Chapter 34 Sirmoor State	243
Chapter 35 Siwalik Adventures	249
Chapter 36 Leaving India	256
Chapter 37 Toeloeng Agoeng	261
Chapter 38 Departure	267
Chapter 39 Europe	271
Chapter 40 The Battlefield	277
Chapter 41 More Skirmishes	297
Chapter 42 Using His Brains	305
Chapter 43 Betrayal and Resurrection	316
Chapter 44 Family	322
Chapter 45 The New Century	327
Chapter 46 Diversions	335
Chapter 47 Tragedy	346
Chapter 48 Dangerous Times	354
Chapter 49 A New Skull	366
Chapter 50 Rumors and Isolation	373
Chapter 51 Brain Work	378
Chapter 52 The Diligent Assistant	386
Chapter 53 New Skulls from Java	408
Chapter 54 A Worthy Opponent	415
Chapter 55 To the Battlefront	422
Chapter 56 The Letter	428
Chapter 57 Pretender to the Throne	431
Chapter 58 Old Friends	441
Chapter 59 The Final Conflict	445
Epilogue	452
Notes	455
Glossary	476
Bibliography	479
Acknowledgments	497
Index	499

CHAPTER 1 AN ECHO OF THE PAST

The letter comes by the last post on a weakly sunny afternoon in February of 1937. Looking out the window, Dubois searches for the slightest hint of green that he knows will come first to the willow trees at De Bedelaar. It is still very brisk out, not yet warm. The promise of renewal seems cruel when any real hope of it is still far away.

He is slow to realize what has come, it is so unexpected. His mind is not so quick as it once was, now that he is in his eightieth year, although he has not become so vague as his wife, Anna. The servant girl brings the letters in as usual; he sits down at the desk, puts on his glasses, and takes up his letter opener. He carefully inserts the blade into the corner of the flap and slits each envelope neatly. It is his habit to read his letters in order, placing them in a tidy pile before pausing to compose his answers. While he skims the letters, Anna prattles on, unaware that anything of significance is happening. Most of the post is ordinary—bills, a few letters of inquiry from colleagues or students. When he picks up the last letter, unsuspecting, he is momentarily confused by the two handwritings on the envelope. The hand that wrote his name is crabbed and somehow familiar, but he cannot place it immediately; the other, which wrote the address, is completely unknown to him. When he opens that envelope and sees the tissue-thin paper inside, something stirs in his memory. As soon as he reads the salutation, he *knows*, as if he has been expecting this letter for years.

He decides that he cannot read it in front of Anna and rings for the servant. "Take your mistress to sit in the back garden for a while," he says to her. He waits until they have left and the room is quiet to unfold the translucent, crinkling pages. He doesn't need to turn over the last page to look for the signature. There is only one person from whom it can have come, only one person in Kediri, in faraway Java, who would be writing him.

"My dear doctor," the letter begins. He always addressed Dubois so, even when they saw each other daily. How long has it been since Dubois heard from him? It must have been *forty* years. Forty years since his friend called him "My dear doctor." From anyone else, these words might be only a courtesy, an acknowledgment of his professorial status and medical degree. From Prentice they were a term of endearment, an evocation of the intimacy and friendship they shared so long ago.

Kediri February 7, 1936

*An echo of the Past!**"Dost thou recall?"**My dear doctor,**You will hardly expect a letter from me! It is long, so very long since last we saw each other.**The philosopher, Renan, in addressing the shade of his departed sister who while in life had accompanied him in his sojourn in the Holy Land, said:—**"Dost thou recall from the bosom of God where thou reposest"—**and I might say now:—**Dost thou recall from the quietness of your peaceful study in the homeland—the days now long, long flown which we passed together in the peaceful atmosphere of dear old Mr. Boyd's Koffeeland Mringin,—the good old man's dwelling Ngrodjo, Willisea the block house he put up for you at Jonojang, my own quiet abode at remote Tempoersarie?**Do you remember the many pleasant meetings we had at Ngrodjo when the old gentleman & I listened with so much interest to your enlightening & informative conversation? Indeed we learned much from you, and our minds ever reverted with satisfaction to the many agreeable meetings we three had together. Do you recall our excursion to Trinil the scene of your labors (where the famous *Pithecanthropus erectus* was found), when contrary to your wont you regaled us at dinner in the evening with a bottle of wine saying it "aided digestion." Do you remember our bathing next day in the river, our pleasant walk in the afternoon to the station along the country road where a snake swallowed a frog and you at once ran to the rescue forcing the snake to disgorge the frog which, still quite alive, first looked to the right & to the left, and then lightheartedly plunged into the stream by the roadside? Do you remember the beautiful flowers at the station which we looked at while waiting for the train? One had a delicate light blue tint and you said that was well nigh your favorite color!**Do you remember the long walks you & I had through the widespread coffee gardens at Mringin? . . .**Do you remember the two corporals of the engineers who looked after your team of convicts, at the excavation work? Their mode of life ever amused you—living like kings at the beginning of each month when*

money was plentiful, and ever on very short rations towards the end of the month when the money was all spent! Through your favorable report they got promoted in time to the rank of Sergeant. Then you photographed them & noticed how they were maneuvering to bring full into the picture their arm shewing the new sergeant's stripes! . . . And Mr. Mulder, P. T. Sanvraar, & Mr. Turner, controller, at Toeloeng Agoeng. Do you remember our age—you, Mr. Mulder & I—was 34 years. Ah, yes, the golden days of youth! Perhaps we had our troubles, too, but we had youth, health, home, and length of days before us! Dost thou recall?

As oft as I look back, the recollection of that happy time is a green spot in my memory, and will endure as long as life lasts!

Good old Mr. Boyd died in 1902 at Kediri under Van Buren's care from cancer of the throat, aged 74, & was buried at Toeloeng Agoeng. We were all present, and the Asst. Resident, Regent & etc & etc attended also. It may be the kind old man smoked too heavily?

While he still lived we often spoke of you after your departure from Java, very, very, often, & always with esteem & affection. Yes, we both loved you, and never could forget you! Like a sun that had come into our orbit you brought us light and happiness—it was just a chance in life never likely to recur, for when does it happen that a man of learning ever comes to live on a coffee estate for any length of time?

Later on coffee prices fell by 50% and all profit was gone. After Mr. Boyd's death Mringin was sold. Eventually it was given back to government & is now Bosch Reserve, no Ngrodjo, Willisea, Tempoersarie are all forest now, with not a soul living there any more, and only you & I remain today to muse over the past! Who would have foretold that, 40 years ago, when you & I were young!

My own coffee place near Mringin (Djaean was the name) suffered from the crisis in coffee & after 5 years I left it to be manager of the tapioca fabriek—the plantation called Brangganan at Ngadiloewek, 8 miles from Kediri on the high road to Kras, which an intimate friend of mine had taken over. Djaean we kept on, & sold later to rubber tree people in Lombok, who still work the estate. So it is not closed like good old Mringin. There I remained about 20 years. Much money was made & eventually my friend sold it for a fancy price & my work there ended. I was then 60 years of age. Since that time I have been interested in other things. I made enough money, but owing to the terrible slump of the past 6 years (malaise) nearly everybody in Java is about bankrupt! Like the majority I

have lost cruelly. At least $\frac{2}{3}$ of what I had are gone. Today I have to live frugally to manage. I am still dependent on coffee for part of my income & coffee alas is down to f8–9.70 per picol—(formerly f55 to f60), simply ruinous; but there it is, & nothing can be done for no one is to blame—it is just a long spell of bad times with all values desperately low—no profit possible, and—

*“What can’t be cured
Must be endured!”*

One has just to make the best of things. The depression has been world-wide, & all have suffered. In Java those who had anything, have lost $\frac{1}{2}$, or $\frac{3}{4}$, or all. . . . Last year (1935) only $\pm 16\%$ of the sugar mills of Java worked. The rest were closed & the staff discharged. A terrible loss to the Treasury, & to the country. . . .

However nothing can be done save to live on quietly in hope, or wait on better days coming soon. So I shall leave this gloomy theme & not depress you with a tale of woe!

I saw in the papers that you retired when 70 years old in 1928. Of course Mr. Boyd & I fully expected you to become Professor; it could not have been otherwise for your whole mind was ever bent on the acquisition of knowledge. I hope your life at home has been agreeable & satisfactory—that you have but few regrets & have experienced no heavy losses of whatever sort.

I must now say goodbye. I trust you are in good health. With all good wishes to you & yours,

*Believe me as always,
Sincerely yours,
Adam Prentice*

P.S. My own health is fairly good. I never had any very serious sickness to speak about—a little dysentery once or twice, years ago; and I have still pleasure in existence. But we are getting up in years & haven’t the vigor of former days. I will be 78 years old in a few months. You will be about the same, and I fear not many of our friends remain today!

N.B. This letter will be forwarded to you by Mr. C. Van den Koppel, a state official of Batavia now traveling to Holland via Australia & America. He will find out your address at present in Holland.

Again goodbye—“Fare thee well!”