



Dr. Hsien-Wen Li

## IN COMMEMORATION OF DR. HSIEN-WEN LI'S RETIREMENT

Dr. Hsien-Wen Li, the Director of the Institute of Botany, Academia Sinica, and concurrently the Director of Biology Research Center, National Science Council, retired on May 1, 1972. This issue of the Botanical Bulletin is dedicated to him with our highest regard in recognition of his contribution to the studies of millet, sugarcane, wheat and rice plant and his inestimable service rendered to these institutions.

Dr. Li was born on Oct. 10, 1902, and was grown up in a farming family in Tsiang-King, Szechuan. Encouraged by his uncle, he left Szechuan for Peiping at the age of twelve to attend the famous Tsing-Hua Preparatory School. Eight years later he graduated from Tsing-Hua and was sent abroad to pursue his higher education in the United States. He obtained his bachelor degree in horticulture from Purdue University in 1926. Immediately after graduation, he went to Cornell University for his graduate work. At Cornell University, he worked with Dr. R.A. Emerson on the genetics of corn and obtained his Ph. D. in 1930.

He returned to China immediately after completion of his graduate work to begin his long and productive teaching and research careers in several universities. He joined the National Central University, Nanking in 1930; North-East University at Mukden, in 1931; Honan University, Kaifeng, Honan in 1933; and National Wuhan University, Wuhan, Hupeh in 1935. He was appointed the head of the Department of Agronomy at Wuhan University just before the Sino-Japanese War.

During the Second World War (1937-1946) when Japan invaded China, he withdrew with the government to Szechuan and joined the Rice and Wheat Improvement Station, Szechuan Provincial Agricultural Experimental Station, in Chengtu. First he was the head of Agronomy Section, then, he served in many other positions. During these difficult years, he helped the government to solve the enormous food problems of the Country.

After the Second World War (1945) he joined the Institute of Botany, Academia Sinica, at Shanghai and was elected as Academician of the Academia Sinica in 1948. In 1949, when communists occupied the mainland China he came to Taiwan and became an advisor of Taiwan Sugar Corporation to help the breeding of sugarcane. At that time the sugarcane was seriously attacked by downy mildew and leaf scorch. Destruction by the diseases was so severe that the sugar industry was at the edge of jeopardy. He decidedly extended a resistant variety, NCO 310, to replace the susceptible ones which were widely

cultivated at that time. Taiwan sugar industry was thus back to bright prospect.

In 1945 he was appointed by the Government to reorganize the Institute of Botany, Academia Sinica in Taiwan. At that time the scientific condition in this Island was very indigent, so he had to start training qualified young scientists, building up well equipped laboratories and setting up excellent library, in addition, the scientific atmosphere was strongly emphasized. When the institute was formally established in 1962, he became the Director of the Institute. In 1965 he was also appointed the director the Biology Research Center in charge of the development of biological science in this island. In 1968, when the Eleventh International Congress of Genetics was held in Tokyo, Japan, he was elected as one of the ten vice presidents of the congress.

To accelerate the biological research and education, especially the introduction of modern biological sciences in this island, he organized several summer seminars in this field during the year of 1964-1969 (except 1966). In these seminars many outstanding scholars from abroad were invited and gave eight-week lectures. He also organized the Colloquium on Some Recent Development in Biochemistry in 1967 and the Colloquium on Some Recent Development in genetics in 1968.

Although he has retired from the Institute and is dedicating to writing now, Dr. Li still remains in our hearts as an outstanding scientist and is regarded as a great leader in the field of the biological sciences here and abroad. Taking this opportunity, the members of the Institute and his friends like to express their good wishes to Dr. Li.