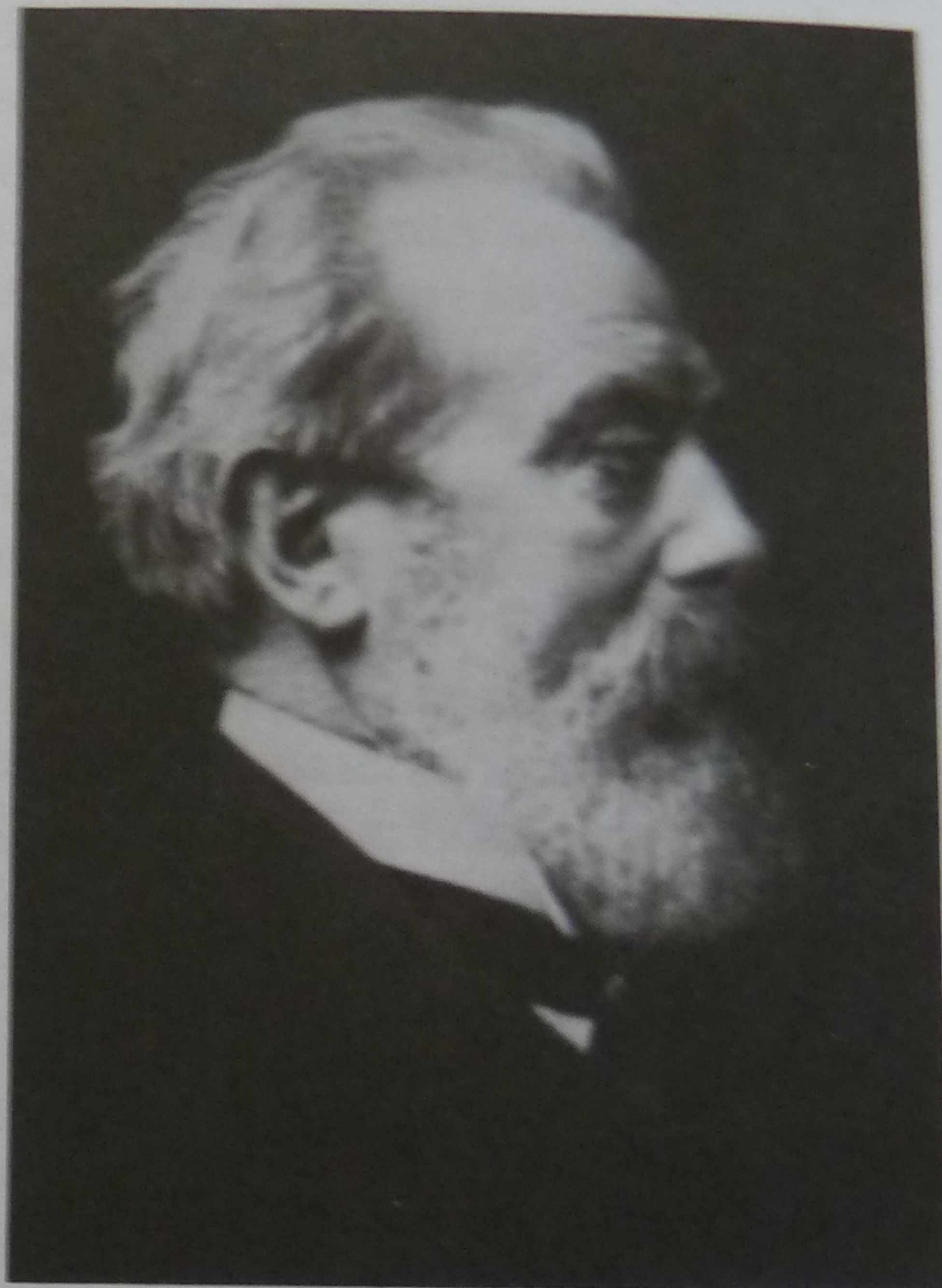


Henry Frederick Conrad Sander (1847-1920)



IN HORTICULTURE, AND PARTICULARLY IN THE SPECIALIZED FIELD OF ORCHID growing, the name of Sander stands as a hallmark. The renown of that name is attributed largely to Henry F. C. Sander, of whom it is said that "no man contributed more to the forcefulness of high-class horticulture in Europe than he did."

Born in Hanover, Germany, in 1847, young Sander exhibited a love for plants that found fruitful expression throughout his life. At the age of twenty he entered the nurseries of James Carter and Company, seedsmen at Forest Hill. There it was that he met Benedict Roezl, the Bavarian explorer and plant collector with whom he decided to combine forces and interests. Roezl had been sending plants to England for years, but without a partner to receive and profitably dispose of the shipments, he had met with only small monetary success—just sufficient to enable him to continue his collecting and exploration.

Leaving Messrs. Carters, Sander commenced business as a seedsman in

George Street, St. Albans. Beginning modestly, the business soon took on great proportion, for Roezl's consignments of orchids and tropical plants became so extensive that a huge warehouse adjoining the seed shop was literally filled from floor to ceiling. Never before had orchids been received in England in such quantity, and Sander's systematic method of selling the plants was so profitable for both men that Roezl was able to retire comfortably in his native city, Prague.

Because of the number of plants hitherto received, Sander found it necessary to grow plants as well as import them. So, in 1873 he built his first greenhouse almost entirely with his own hands. This structure soon proved incapable of containing the growing collections and in 1881 a home and nursery covering four acres was built in the Camp district of St. Albans. The expanded facilities gave rise to Sander's business aptitude, and at one time as many as twenty-three paid collectors were searching the jungles and mountains of the earth for the firm of Sanders, St. Albans. The quantities of orchids received were enormous. Sixty greenhouses were stocked with thousands of plants and some of the finest species of orchids then known. Several of the houses were devoted to seed raising, and numerous hybrids were additionally tested and propagated.

For years orchid sales were held four days a week in London, with cattleyas selling in the greatest quantities. In February and March of 1886, 340 cases of this genus alone were received at the St. Albans nursery. With *Cattleya labiata*, *Dendrobium phalaenopsis*, *Cattleya schroderae*, and many other showy orchids, Sander did more to popularize orchids than nearly any other grower of the time, bringing them within financial reach of persons of modest means. Between one and two million plants were handled at the St. Albans establishment in the 1880s and 1890s, and some of the finest species changed hands for thousands of guineas. The firm became recognized as the showplace of horticulture in Europe, and kings and noblemen were frequent visitors.

As the orchid export business grew, it became obvious that far-reaching expansion would be necessary, so during the 1880s Sander established an orchid nursery at Summit, New Jersey, placing one of his collectors, Forsterman, in charge. As the nursery proved too distant from the home offices for convenient management, however, it was sold to John Lager and Henry Hurrell in 1896.

In 1894 Sander purchased a tract of land at St. André, just outside the city of Bruges, Belgium, where he established another orchid nursery. This establishment rapidly grew into an enormous firm with over 250 glasshouses devoted to orchids, azaleas, bay trees, palms, lilies, and begonias. The orchid section alone encompassed fifty houses, and great strides were made in growing and hybridizing odontoglossums. Meanwhile, Sander's collectors continued to penetrate all regions of the world.

When Sander decided on a thing, he was dauntless in his efforts to ac-

complete or obtain it. On one occasion he heard of a gigantic specimen of *Cattleya skinneri* and, determined to have it, he bargained with its native owner until it was finally acquired. The difficulties of packing and shipping were overcome, but on being unpacked the plant was found to be too large to pass through any of the doors of his greenhouses, and rather than divide or reduce it in any way, the doors and one end of a greenhouse were removed to facilitate entry. On another occasion the first consignment of *Dendrobium phalaenopsis* var. *schroderianum* collected by Micholitz was lost by the burning of the sampan carrying them. Upon notifying Mr. Sander of their sad fate, Micholitz at once received cabled instruction which stated simply, "Return, recollect."

Two plants he held in esteem above all others: *Sophronitis grandiflora* and the bay tree. The *sophronitis* color particularly appealed to him, and he often remarked that it was a shame to sell such plants for mere shillings, as their beauty entitled them to the guinea rank. At St. André he pointed with pride at the glossy-leaved bay trees, all personally selected and trimmed by his hand when he first built the nursery.

He enjoyed a wide circle of friends and was known for his pleasant manner in dealing with men. In business his reputation was built on adroitness and honesty. Tremendous energy was another outstanding characteristic. In building the St. André nursery he worked throughout the day, sleeping only while commuting by train or boat. Sander's reputation was further enhanced by his successes at the leading European and American horticultural exhibitions. The horticultural world never failed to look forward with the keenest interest to his exhibits of new plants at the Ghent Quinquennial exhibitions. Many Gold Medals and awards were won at the international exhibitions—at London, Edinburgh, Brussels, Antwerp, Paris, Petrograd, Moscow, Florence, Milan, New York, Chicago, and St. Louis. Besides the large numbers of hybrid orchids he exhibited, many new species were first shown by the House of Sander. *Vanda sanderiana*, *Aerides sanderiana*, *Cymbidium sanderi*, *Dendrobium sanderiae*, *Paphiopedilum sanderiana*, *Anoectochilus sanderianus*, *Coelogyne sanderiae*, *Macodes sanderiana*, *Maxillaria sanderiana*, *Odontoglossum sanderianum*, *Oncidium sanderiae*, *Phalaenopsis sanderiana*, and *Sobralia sanderiana* were just a few of the admirable species that served to perpetuate the Sander name and fame.

Perhaps the greatest monument to Sander was the authoritative work, *Reichenbachia*, illustrated with life-sized colored paintings executed by the well-known painter, H. C. Moon, whom Sander hired for the work. Commenced in 1886, *Reichenbachia* became a treasured and valued series, and Sander personally supervised much of the work therein.

In recognition of his services to orchidology Sander gained numerous honors and distinctions. He was one of the original holders of the Royal Horticultural Society's Victoria Medal of Honour and held several foreign orders, including the Belgian Order of the Crown. As head

of his firm, he was awarded the French President's Prix d'Honneur in Paris, the Veitchian Cup in 1906, the Coronation Challenge Cup in 1913, forty-one gold medals, twenty-four silver cups, and hundreds of trophies and diplomas. In addition, he was made a baron of the Russian Empire.

When World War I broke out in 1914 Sander and his family, as British subjects, fled to England from Bruges, retreating from the Germans at the last moment. The St. André nursery was held by the enemy, which caused the owner no end of concern and fear for both the firm and the employees. Compounded on his anxiety over the Belgian firm were other worries: the safety of his son and other members of the family in the British army, coal and labor shortages at St. Albans, and, above all, the grief caused by the impaired health of his wife. As a result, his own health suffered, bringing on the recurrence of an old illness.

He visited the Belgian nursery once after the war, in 1918, and went once again to that country for an operation advised by his physician. But a relapse occurred, and on 23 December 1920 he died at the age of seventy-four. His remains were interred at St. Albans.

A testimony by his dear friend, W. Watson, may perhaps give an idea of the esteem and admiration in which he was held:

... those who knew him intimately, as I did, will agree with me that he was indeed a noble fellow. Shrewd man of business as he was, he worked and schemed as few men are able to for success, which, when it comes, too often breeds ill will. In all his dealings Sander was an upright man. His generosity to Kew was quite exceptional. During his more prosperous times, say from 1880 to 1910, he freely gave plants of all kinds, many of them of considerable commercial value, to what he used to call "our great national garden." When he received a big importation of orchids or other plants from his collectors abroad, he would invite me to go to St. Albans and select a share for Kew. His knowledge of the habitats of plants was exceptional, and he was a skilled cultivator. As for enthusiasm, he was as full of it as a great schoolboy. I used to tell him he could turn a blacksmith into an orchid grower. The Bruges nurseries were his great pride. And how he did work there. He supervised the most trivial operations in the spirit of the Yorkshire farmer whose man said "The master's eyes do make the crops grow!" . . .

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