

Using the correspondence of Ferdinand von Mueller to revise publication dates of part-works by R.H. Beddome

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Introduction

Mueller (1862), the first and only volume of a planned Victorian flora written by Ferdinand Mueller (1826–1896) (von Mueller from 1869), Government Botanist of Victoria (Australia) from 1853, was published by the Government Printer. Mueller wrote to the Chief Secretary of Victoria, proposing that some of the 500 copies in the edition be “supplied to certain public institutions and to the principle (*sic*) contributors towards our bot Museum”, citing several other Governments that made a “limited distribution of works, issued under their auspices”. “Madras”¹ was among the 19 Botanic Gardens included in the suggested list of recipients of 80 copies (Mueller to John O’Shanassy, 31 March 1862).² O’Shanassy minuted his approval on Mueller’s letter. H. F. C. Cleghorn (1820–1895), professor of botany and materia medica at Madras Medical College before his appointment as Forest Conservator in 1856, was an active

Abstract

Between 1863 and 1874 the Presidency of Madras sent to the Government of Victoria the parts of four major works by R. H. Beddome, forest botanist during the British Raj in India. The parts were transferred by the office of the Chief Secretary of Victoria to Ferdinand von Mueller, Government Botanist. Correspondence between the Chief Secretary’s office and Mueller, together with shipping reports of the dates of voyages of the contract mail service from Pointe de Galle, Sri Lanka, clarify the publication dates of the parts. Previously published dates were imprecise or, in some cases, fell after the part in question arrived in Melbourne.

Keywords: colonial Indian botany, inter-colonial exchanges, official correspondence, mail transit times

1 Madras, the former name of Chennai, is used throughout, consistent with the sources of this period.

2 W62/2289, unit 749, VPRS 1189/P inward registered correspondence, VA 475 Chief Secretary’s Department, Public Record Office, Victoria. All citations to letters between Mueller and the Chief Secretary’s department come from the series VPRS 1189/P, (outward registered correspondence) or VPRS 3991/P (inward registered correspondence). Citations to other letters are to the archival source. Those to or from Mueller are transcribed in Home *et al.* 2023+, and in letters contributed by the Correspondence of Ferdinand von Mueller Project to *epsilon* (< <https://epsilon.ac.uk> >), the set of 19th century scientific correspondence being developed by Cambridge University’s Digital Library.

member of the Madras Agri-Horticultural Society (Das 2005), which had established a horticultural garden in 1835 (Desmond 2004). It is probably to this garden that Mueller's volume was sent, either directly, or more likely in terms of inter-colonial government protocol, via the government of the Presidency of Madras.

Richard Henry Beddome (1830–1910) was assistant to Cleghorn until he succeeded him in 1865 (Anonymous 1911). Late in 1863 and early in 1864, Mueller received parts of *Ferns of Southern India* (Beddome 1863) that had been sent to the Victorian Government (see Table 1). It is not clear whether these were in reciprocation for Mueller (1862). According to Mueller they were sent “on the order of Sir Will. Denison” (Mueller to John Moore, 17 November 1863). William Denison (1804–1871) was Governor of Madras 1861–1866, so it could easily have been a formal governmental reciprocation. However, Denison was included as a personal recipient of Mueller (1862) in the proposed distribution list, presumably in recognition of the aid he provided Mueller, (see Mueller to Richard MacDonnell, 2 March 1861). When he was Governor of NSW Denison met Mueller in Sydney in 1855 before, and in 1857 after, the North Australia Exploring Expedition of 1855–1856 on which Mueller served as botanist while on leave from his post in Victoria (William Denison to William Hooker, 8 April 1856, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Archives, DC/74/52; William Denison to William Hooker, 12 January 1857, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Archives, DC/74/56). After returning to his role in Melbourne in May 1857, Mueller remained in contact with Denison during the rest of Denison's colonial service in NSW, his time as Governor in Madras, and after he retired to England in 1866: see for examples the undated report from Muller to John O'Shanassy registered in the Chief Secretary's office on 4 July 1859; Mueller to John O'Shanassy, 1 May 1862; Mueller to Carl von Martius, 25 July 1864 and William Denison to Mueller, 19 November 1870. Further parts of this and three other works, (Beddome 1866–1868, 1869–1874, 1874) continued to be sent to the Victorian Government from the Presidency of Madras and passed to Mueller as Government Botanist. While there is a complete set of each work in the library of Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, transmission details are incomplete. However, the surviving letters clarify the publication history of individual parts of these works.

Previous dating of the parts

The *Taxonomic Literature* entries for Beddome's works (Stafleu and Cowan 1976: 162–164) date the parts of the works considered here only to year but for *Ferns of Southern India* (Beddome 1863) they comment “last parts perhaps 1865”.

For Beddome's angiosperms, Turner (2012: 303–304) addressed the publication dates of *Flora sylvatica* (Beddome 1869–1874), and *Icones plantarum* (Beddome 1874). Turner used annotations on the wrappers of the parts at Kew and the acknowledgement of receipt of the parts in the *Proceedings of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*. For one part of *Flora sylvatica*, he used the date given in the Report of the Conservator of Forests from 1868 to 1869 (Beddome 1869). However, some of the parts were received in Melbourne earlier than the publication date provided in his tables.

Melbourne arrival data

In the relevant period, the Peninsular and Orient shipping line had a contract for monthly delivery of mail between London and Melbourne. Mail was sent from London via Pointe de Galle, Ceylon (now Galle, Sri Lanka), where mail from eastern India and other ports was also loaded. There was no direct mail service to Australia from Madras or other east-coast Indian ports. The Melbourne press published reports of shipping arrivals and departures, almost always including the date of departure. When no departure date from Galle was given in the notice of arrival, it was found in other press reports of the vessel's itinerary.

For two of the parts, the date of despatch from Madras to Galle is known and is hence the latest possible date of publication of those parts. The shortest explicit time between posting at Madras and leaving Galle was eight days: part 17 of Beddome (1866–1868) was mailed on 13 December 1867 and was carried to Melbourne on RMSS *Bombay*, departing Galle on 21 December and arriving in Melbourne on 13 January 1868. The longest was fifteen days: part 2 of Beddome (1874) was mailed on 9 February 1869, left Galle on RMSS *Malta* on 24 February and arrived in Melbourne on 19 March. Shorter transit times between Madras and Galle are known: Bhuwalka (2025), a postal history analysis, shows a letter postmarked Calcutta (now Kolkata) 9 August 1864,

routed to Suez via Madras then Galle with a transit time from Madras to Galle of three days. Other similar sources have transit times of four or five days.

Allowing for the time for initial processing in the Presidency offices and transit to Galle, the latest possible date of publication is around one week before the mail service departed Galle. Assuming despatch as soon as issued, the earliest would be just under a week before the preceding Australian mail departed Galle. More precise dating than this would require access to out-letter registers of the government of the Madras Presidency. The available indexes for the Tamil Nadu Archives (2026), which holds the records of that government, do not show Presidency out-letter registers or administrative records of the Forest Conservancy. The British Library

(2026) interim version of the Archives and Manuscripts Catalogue of India Office records and private papers also has no relevant record.

Although many of the parts were sent to Mueller on the day of arrival of the Galle mail in Melbourne, or a few days afterwards, there are instances where the delay is longer. However, unless otherwise noted in the tables, these are always between arrivals of successive mails.

The ferns of Southern India

Table 1 summarises the available data. For parts 1 and 13 the attribution is inferred since the correspondence between Mueller and the Chief Secretary's Department does not specify the number of the part transmitted, and parts 2–4 and 7–8 were transmitted together, this

Table 1. Dates of transfer of parts of *Ferns of Southern India* (Beddome 1866–68) from Chief Secretary's office to Government Botanist, and probable dates of transit from Madras via Galle to Melbourne compared to previously published sources. The letter code gives the dates of the letters cited, in the format yy-mm-dd, all in the nineteenth century. Suffixes to the date code precisely identify the letter cited when there is more than one letter of that date in the corpus. Letters with full supporting apparatus are or will be available in Home *et al.* (2023+), and as annotated transcripts from *epsilon* (< <https://epsilon.ac.uk> >). Month of despatch from Madras, hence the latest possible month of publication, is inferred by allowing one week before the mail left Galle.

Part	Letter code	TL2 date ¹	Despatch from Madras	Depart Galle	Vessel	Arrive Melbourne	Source of shipping details <i>Argus</i> (Melbourne)
1 ²	63-11-17	1863	Oct. 1863	24 Oct.	<i>Northam</i>	14 Nov.	16 Nov. 1863, p. 4, col. a
2 ³	64-01-27d	1863	Dec. 1863	02 Jan. ⁴	<i>Madras</i>	26 Jan.	26 Jan. 1863, p. 4, col. a
3	64-01-27d	1863	Dec. 1863	02 Jan.	<i>Madras</i>	26 Jan.	26 Jan. 1863, p. 4, col. a
4	64-01-27d	1863	Dec. 1863	02 Jan.	<i>Madras</i>	26 Jan.	26 Jan. 1863, p. 4, col. a
7	64-01-27d	1863	Dec. 1863	02 Jan.	<i>Madras</i>	26 Jan.	26 Jan. 1863, p. 4, col. a
8	64-01-27d	1863	Dec. 1863	02 Jan.	<i>Madras</i>	26 Jan.	26 Jan. 1863, p. 4, col. a
9	64-03-15a	1863	Feb. 1864	21 Feb.	<i>Bombay</i>	12 Mar.	14 Mar. 1864, p. 4, col. a
10	64-04-18b	1863	Mar. 1864	25 Mar.	<i>Madras</i>	14 Apr.	15 Apr. 1864, p. 4, col. a
11 ⁵	64-05-14a	1864	Apr. 1864	21 Apr.	<i>Northam</i>	12 May	13 May 1864, p. 4, col. a
12	64-05-14a	1864	Apr. 1864	21 Apr.	<i>Northam</i>	12 May	13 May 1864, p. 4, col. a
13 ⁶	64-06-14	1864	May 1864	22 May	<i>Bombay</i>	12 June	13 June 1864, p. 4, col. a
14	64-07-18	1864	June 1864	22 June	<i>Madras</i>	13 July	14 July 1864, p. 4, col. a
15	64-08-16b	1864	July 1864	21 July	<i>Northam</i>	11 Aug.	12 Aug. 1864, p. 4, col. a
16	64-09-13	1864	Aug. 1864	20 Aug.	<i>Bombay</i>	8 Sept.	09 Sept. 1864, p. 4, col. a
17 ⁷	66-01-18	1865?	Dec. 1865	27 Dec. 1865	<i>Bombay</i>	17 Jan. 1866	18 Jan. 1866 p. 4, col. a
18	65-01-12	1865?	Nov. 1864	22 Nov.	<i>Bombay</i>	11 Dec.	12 Dec. 1864, p. 4, col. a
19	65-02-07	1865?	Dec. 1864	27 Dec.	<i>Madras</i>	17 Jan. 1865	18 Jan. 1865, p. 4, col. a
20	65-02-13	1865?	Jan. 1865	22 Jan.	<i>Northam</i>	11 Feb.	13 Feb. 1866, p. 4, col. a

1 Stafleu and Cowan (1976), p. 162.

2 Part 1 inferred; the correspondence does not specify the part.

3 Parts 2, 3, 4, 7, 8 were transmitted from the Chief Secretary's office in one parcel, and information does not allow dates of publication of individual parts to be inferred. It is possible that the items were accumulated in the Chief Secretary's Office, but the departure of the Madras mail indicates the latest they could have been issued.

4 Date of departure from Galle from "Summary for Europe" *Argus* (Melbourne) 25 January 1863, p. 5, col. c.

5 The transmission letter from the Chief Secretary's office, letter 65-04-14, describes the package as "Parts No. 2 and 12", but Mueller's acknowledgement, the letter cited here, describes them as "fasc. 11. & 12", consistent with the overall publication pattern.

6 Part 13 inferred; the correspondence does not specify the part.

7 Arrived out of sequence; not useful for dating; see text.

providing little useful information to date individual parts, the first of which was briefly noticed by Hooker (1863). The surviving correspondence does not mention parts 5 and 6. The arrival dates of parts 9 and later give a useful guide to the issue dates. Parts 17–20, described by Beddome (1863: 71) as “Supplementary Numbers to “The Ferns of Southern India” [and containing] the Ceylon ferns not as yet detected in Southern India” are presumably the “last parts perhaps 1865” mentioned by Stafleu and Cowan (1976: 163). Parts 18 and 19 arrived in Melbourne in 1864, and must therefore have been issued in that year. Part 20 must have been published by January 1865. Parts were also sent to NSW – and announced as presented to the Australian Museum,

Sydney – on dates consistent with arrivals in Sydney on the same vessel as those sent to Melbourne. See, for example, Anonymous (1864) for the simultaneous presentation of parts 11 and 12 in May 1864.

The information for part 17 is anomalous, as Mueller received it a year later than the other three supplementary parts. The publication pattern of parts 16–20 suggests it would have been published in September 1864. The most likely explanation is that the Chief Secretary's office noticed that it had not arrived, and then requested a copy, as is known to have happened with part 10 of *Icones plantarum Indiae orientalis* (Beddome 1874) as detailed here under a separate heading.

Table 2. Dates of transfer of parts of *Ferns of British India* (Beddome 1866–68) from Chief Secretary's office to Government Botanist, and probable dates of transit from Madras via Galle to Melbourne. For other details see caption to Table 1.

Part	Letter code	TL2 date ¹	Despatch from Madras	Depart Galle	Vessel	Arrive Melbourne	Source of shipping details
							<i>Argus</i> (Melbourne) unless otherwise indicated
1	65-06-30a	1865	May 1865	02 June	<i>Salsette</i>	26 June	<i>Age</i> (Melbourne) 27 June 1865, p. 4, col. a
2	65-09-22a	1865	Aug. 1865	25 Aug.	<i>Madras</i>	19 Sept.	20 Sept. 1865, p. 4, col. a
3	65-09-22a	1865	Aug. 1865	25 Aug.	<i>Madras</i>	19 Sept.	20 Sept. 1865, p. 4, col. a
4	65-10-21	1865	Sept. 1865	21 Sept.	<i>Bombay</i>	11 Oct.	12 Oct. 1865, p. 4, col. a
5	65-11-22	1865	Oct. 1865	26 Oct. ²	<i>Ellora</i>	19 Nov.	20 Nov. 1865, p. 4, col. a
6	65-12-21	1865	Nov. 1865	25 Nov.	<i>Madras</i>	17 Dec.	18 Dec. 1865, p. 4, col. a
7	66-01-31	1865	Dec. 1865	27 Dec.	<i>Bombay</i>	17 Jan.	18 Jan. 1866, p. 4, col. a
8	66-02-27	1865	Jan. 1866	22 Jan.	<i>Ellora</i>	13 Feb.	14 Feb. 1866, p. 4, col. a
9	66-03-26b	1866	Feb. 1866	24 Feb.	<i>Madras</i>	17 Mar.	19 Mar. 1865, p. 4, col. a
10	66-05-30	1866	Apr. 1866	22 Apr.	<i>Ellora</i>	13 May	14 May 1866, p. 4, col. a
11	66-07-18	1866	June 1866	21 June	<i>Bombay</i>	12 July	13 July 1866, p. 4, col. a
12	66-08-20c	1866	July 1866	23 July	<i>Ellora</i>	13 Aug.	14 Aug. 1866, p. 4, col. a
13	66-10-15	1866	Sept. 1866	20 Sept.	<i>Bombay</i>	10 Oct.	11 Oct. 1866, p. 4, col. a
14	66-12-19b	1866	Nov. 1866	23 Nov.	<i>Avoca</i>	15 Dec.	17 Dec. 1866, p. 4, col. a
15	67-05-21	1867	Apr. 1867	20 Apr.	<i>Geelong</i>	11 May	13 May 1867, p. 4, col. a
16	67-12-17	1867	Nov. 1867	25 Nov.	<i>Avoca</i>	16 Dec.	17 Dec. 1867, p. 4, col. a
17	68-01-15	1867	Dec. 1867 ³	21 Dec.	<i>Bombay</i>	13 Jan.	14 Jan. 1868, p. 4, col. a
18	68-03-23	1868	Feb. 1868	26 Feb.	<i>Avoca</i>	18 Mar.	19 Mar. 1868, p. 4, col. a
19	68-05-18a	1868	Apr. 1868	23 Apr.	<i>Geelong</i>	14 May	15 May 1868, p. 4, col. a
20	68-08-08a	1868	July 1868	15 July	<i>Geelong</i>	4 Aug.	<i>Age</i> (Melbourne) 06 Aug. 1868, p. 2, col. a
23	70-05-27e	1870	Apr. 1870	20 Apr.	<i>Malta</i>	11 May	12 May 1870, p. 4, col. a

¹ Stafleu and Cowan (1976), p. 163.

² Departure date from *South Australian Register*, 17 November 1865, p. 2. col. a.

³ On 13 December 1867, the Government of Madras sent two copies of Beddome (1866–68), fascicle 17, for the “Colonial Secretary” of Victoria. These reached the Chief Secretary's office in Melbourne in mid-January 1868 and were forwarded to Mueller by Charles Moore, apparently without a standard transmission letter but enclosing the form of receipt required by the Government of Madras. Mueller acknowledged the transmission in Mueller to James McCulloch, 15 January 1868, and returned the Madras form of receipt. Moore annotated the file on 17 January: “Forward receipt with thanks”.

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Table 2 summarises the available data. Parts 21 and 22 are the only parts for which dates of forwarding to Mueller's office are missing. There is a possible discrepancy with the *Taxonomic Literature* data for part 8: if it had been distributed as soon as it was issued, it would have a date of January 1866, rather than the year 1865.

Flora sylvatica for Southern India

Table 3 summarises the data for the ten parts for which Melbourne arrival data is available. Using a mix of sources, Turner (2012) provides "earliest confirmed dates" for all 28 parts. His date for part 1, April 1869, is six months earlier than it arrived in Melbourne. Beddome (1869: 28–29, dated 1 April 1869) states "part one has been issued and part two is in the press". Foreshadowed in Clegghorn (1867: 4) as being of great value for "Forest Officers throughout India and Burmah", for which "Captain Beddome's intimate acquaintance with the forests of Southern India will enable him to furnish in a complete form the necessary material for this Presidency", it was perhaps initially issued only locally. It was not noted in the UK as a recent publication until January 1870 (Anonymous 1870).

Of the other nine parts which have data on arrival in Melbourne and transfer to Mueller's office, one is

consistent with Turner's date, five arrived before Turner's date, and three must have been published earlier than his date to have arrived in Melbourne when they did.

While there is no definitive evidence available, it seems likely that at least some parts for which no Melbourne data are available were issued before Turner's dates. Although based on the best evidence available, for critical nomenclatural priority the pattern here suggests his dates are potentially up to five or six weeks later than issued.

Icones plantarum Indiae orientalis

Table 4 summarises the available data. The *Correspondence* includes details for only eight of the 15 parts, and the information on receipt of part 10 is not relevant for dating as the Victorian Government requested it from Madras when it had not been received by the time part 11 arrived; it was eventually received some months later. Turner's dates for this title are also later than those derived from the Melbourne correspondence. Of the seven parts with relevant data, five arrived in Melbourne before Turner's date, and the other two must have left Madras in the month before his date. The caveat of using Turner's dates for *Flora sylvatica* also applies to the other seven parts of *Icones*.

Table 3. Dates of transfer of parts of *Flora sylvatica for Southern India* (Beddome 1869–74) from Chief Secretary's office to Government Botanist, and probable dates of transit from Madras via Galle to Melbourne. For other details see caption to Table 1. Where a transmitting letter from the Chief Secretary's office has not been found, the letter cited is Mueller's acknowledgement of receipt.

Part	Letter code	Turner (2012) ¹	Despatch from Madras	Depart Galle	Vessel	Arrive Melbourne	Source of shipping details
							<i>Argus</i> (Melbourne)
1 ²	69-07-09a	Apr. 1869	June 1869	16 June	<i>Geelong</i>	06 July	07 July 1869, p. 4, col. a
2	69-11-30	Oct. 1869	Oct. 1869	04 Nov.	<i>Malta</i>	25 Nov.	26 Nov. 1869, p. 4, col. a
3	70-04-02b	Apr. 1870	Feb. 1870	23 Feb.	<i>Geelong</i>	16 Mar.	17 Mar. 1870, p. 4, col. a
4	70-08-18a	Aug. 1870	July 1870	15 July	<i>Avoca</i>	06 Aug.	06 Aug. 1870, p. 4, col. a
5	70-10-28	Nov. 1870	Sept. 1870	04 Oct.	<i>Avoca</i>	25 Oct.	26 Oct. 1870, p. 4, col. a
7	71-05-23	May 1871	Apr. 1871	19 Apr.	<i>Geelong</i>	13 May	13 May 1871, p. 4, col. a
13 ³	71-12-13a	Dec. 1871	Nov. 1871	08 Nov.	<i>Behar</i>	28 Nov.	29 Nov. 1871, p. 6, col. a
14	71-12-29	Jan. 1872	Nov. 1871	29 Nov.	<i>Nubia</i>	23 Dec.	25 Dec. 1871, p. 4, col. a
27	73-09-29	Oct. 1873	Aug. 1873	31 Aug.	<i>China</i>	20 Sept.	22 Sept. 1873, p. 4, col. a
28	74-03-26a	Mar. 1874	Feb. 1874	18 Feb.	<i>Nubia</i>	12 Mar.	13 Mar. 1874, p. 4, col. a

1 Turner (2012) p. 303, "earliest confirmed date".

2 Turners' date comes from Beddome (1869), dated 1 April 1869 (see text).

3 The *Behar* also carried some Indian mails recovered from the sinking *Rangoon*, wrecked just after leaving Galle on 1 November. If this part was included in the rescued material, it may have been issued in October.

Table 4. Dates of transfer of parts of *Icones plantarum Indiae orientalis* (Beddome 1874) from Chief Secretary's office to Government Botanist, and probable dates of transit from Madras via Galle to Melbourne. For other details see captions to Tables 1 and 3.

Part	Letter code	Turner (2012) ¹	Despatch from Madras	Depart Galle	Vessel	Arrive Melbourne	Source of shipping details
							<i>Argus</i> (Melbourne)
1	68-12-30	Jan. 1869	Nov. 1868	01 Dec.	<i>Bombay</i>	22 Dec.	23 Dec. 1868, p. 4, col. a
2	69-03-23a	Apr. 1869	Feb. 1869 ²	24 Feb.	<i>Malta</i>	19 Mar.	20 Mar. 1869, p. 4, col. a
3	69-07-09a	Aug. 1869	June 1869	16 June	<i>Geelong</i>	06 July	07 July 1869, p. 4, col. a
5	70-05-14a	May 1870	Apr. 1870	20 Apr.	<i>Malta</i>	11 May	12 May 1870, p. 4, col. a
6	70-10-28	Nov. 1870	Sept. 1870	04 Oct.	<i>Avoca</i>	25 Oct.	26 Oct. 1868, p. 4, col. a
7	71-03-18	Apr. 1871	Feb. 1871	22 Feb.	<i>Rangoon</i>	15 Mar.	16 Mar. 1871, p. 4, col. a
10 ³	74-10-23	Mar. 1874	Sept. 1874	25 Sept.	<i>Pera</i>	15 Oct.	15 Oct. 1874, p. 4, col. a
11	74-03-21a	Mar. 1874	Feb. 1874	18 Feb.	<i>Nubia</i>	12 Mar.	13 Mar. 1874, p. 4, col. a

1 Turner (2012) p. 303, “earliest confirmed date”.
2 Transmission letter accompanied by a memorandum from the Madras Presidency Revenue Department: “2 Copies of Rare plants of Southern India Part II forwarded by order of Government this 9th day of February 1869, to the Government of Victoria”.
3 Date of arrival is not relevant to publication date: Part 10 had not arrived in Melbourne when Part 11 was received in March 1874, and the Chief Secretary's office requested the missing part from Madras.

Discussion

Can the discrepancies between the Melbourne dates and those from *Taxonomic Literature* and Turner's analyses be accounted for by the time taken to get from Madras to Melbourne compared with that taken to get to the United Kingdom? The letter cited above from Bhuwalka (2025) was mailed at Calcutta in August 1864, routed via Madras, Galle, Aden, Suez, Alexandria, Malta and Gibraltar, arriving in Southampton in 37 days, 11 days longer from Galle than part 16 of *Ferns of Southern India* took to get from Madras to Melbourne. There were alternative routes that could have been used that were faster than the above route using overland from Suez to Alexandria and the remainder by sea. There was a route from Bombay to the Euphrates, overland across Syria, and then to Marseille, and onwards overland. Mail from Calcutta was taken by train to Bombay, and that from Madras would have gone to Calcutta either by mail steamer or by rail. A journey via that route is reported in *Homeward Mail from India, China and the East* (14 December 1868: 1): “By the arrival of the mail we have advices from Bombay to November 21, Calcutta, November 16, and Madras, November 10.” The newspaper was published on the arrival of each overland mail, and thus the report implies a journey time of 35 days from Madras to London. If this journey was typical, then the faster transit times from Madras to Melbourne (19 or 21 days for the 1864 voyages, 20

or 23 days for those in 1868) will account for the one-month discrepancies between Turner's data and that given here.

For the few mismatches between *Taxonomic Literature* (dated only to year) and Melbourne dates for *Ferns of Southern India*, note that the evidence used by Stafleu and Cowan to tentatively date parts 17–20 is based on a listing in an issue of *Flora* dated 29 November 1865. The text of that entry (p. 575), in the section “Botanische Neuigkeiten im Buchhandel” [Botanical news in bookstores], mentions “6 Lieferungen mit 23 Seiten Text und 72 lithographirten Tafeln”. [6 volumes with 23 pages of text and 72 lithographed plates]. That is, the citation includes two parts that Stafleu and Cowan had firmly dated to 1864. The Melbourne data has clarified their cautious dating of these parts, providing probable month of publication for those and the other parts issued. The one mismatch for *Ferns of British India*, part 8, is minor, and may be merely the result of mailing the work to Melbourne a little after publication.

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