

I. EDITORIAL

The frontispiece selected for this number is a photograph made during a visit by Leyden botanists to the nestor of Malaysian botany, Dr C.A.Backer, at Heemstede, who celebrated his 85th birthday, September 18, 1959. Though now almost confined to his room and his eyesight unfortunately no longer sufficient to dissect plants under the microscope, he is still busy as a bee pursuing literary subjects of study, connected with the use of Latin in botany, of which he has an almost unrivalled knowledge. It is a blessing to him that his mind is as sharp and clever and his memory as good as before. During visits of his juniors he cannot leave out teaching, in which Latin is the main theme, especially the proper pronun-

ciation of plant names; we always wonder what the Romans would have thought in hearing our ignorance of their language. When the photograph was taken by Dr Ding Hou he was just cracking one of his jokes, of the usual sharp kind. We are happy to have him still with us, humbly remembering the very large amount of exemplary and critical work he performed on the Javanese flora from which we daily profit.

The main activities of the Flora Malesiana since the last Bulletin were concerned with the printing and preparation of two instalments, viz the first of the fern series by Dr Holttum, which was published in December 1959, and the first of volume 6 of the Phanerogams, which was nearly ready for the press at that date.

The first part of the fern series covers 88 printed pages and contains various important general chapters (morphology, keys, bibliography) and a revision in Flora Malesiana style of the Gleicheniaceae, Schizaeaceae, and Isoetaceae. All matter, except the Isoetaceae, which are by the late Dr Alston, has been written by Dr R.E.Holttum, whom we congratulate on this magnificent initiation of what will be his magnum opus.

The first part of vol.6 will contain revisions of the Thymelaeaceae (Ding Hou), Capparidaceae, Juglandaceae (Jacobs), Staphyleaceae (van der Linden), and Campanulaceae (Moeliono and Tuyn).

Four further instalments appeared of the series "Identification Lists", about which we received several letters of appreciation.

The first set of "Pacific Plant Areas" is nearing completion and Mrs van Steenis was proceeding well with her index of published maps. The MS and plates were offered for publication June 1960.

The Flora Malesiana publication is now entirely in the hands of the firm Erven P.Noordhoff, P.O.Box 39, Groningen, Holland, which has taken this over from the affiliated firm Noordhoff-Kolff, Djakarta, Indonesia. The printing is no longer by J.Enschedé & Zonen, Haarlem, but by Dijkstra's Drukkerij N.V., Groningen, but is guaranteed to maintain the same high quality. A new folder has been printed and distributed. Flora Malesiana was exhibited at the book-stand of the International Botanical Congress, Montreal.

Though the number of subscribers increases slowly the price of printing also steadily increases which makes it difficult to keep it a + self-supporting issue. Names of potential buyers of the Flora Malesiana for series I or II or both will be extremely welcome.

The two highlights of the year 1959 were the kind invitation to attend the bicentenary of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and the visit to the 9th International Botanical Congress, Montreal, with two preceding excursions to the Rockies in Alberta and Vancouver Island and the western Rockies in British Columbia.

The privilege of attending the Kew Bicentenary brought us again at close quarters under the spell of that magnificent world centre of botany with its history of unsurpassed achievement, bristling with activity and full of plans for further development under its energetic director, Dr George Taylor. We arrived on the last day of an interesting exhibition arranged in the three wings of the Herbarium in which each staff member had participated and which reflected all facets of work, past and present, together with an exhibit of beautiful flower paintings. It was a good thing to see also living plants with instructive legends which had attracted visits by school-children, in some of whom thoughts might have been stirred to devote their later career to botany. The meeting of many old friends and colleagues, some of whom we had corresponded with but never met in the flesh, prevented us from taking full advantage of going over the whole of the exhibition (the guide mentioned 56 separate sections!), but we were interested to see Mr Milne Redhead's selection of curious requests made to Kew by British subjects, and the marvellous way in which in matter-of-fact terms meticulous routine service was given to the public in even trifling matters. By the way, this must be a costly affair, for the identification of some of these items will have taken a day's salary to find the proper botanic origin of the object submitted. Another interesting item for us was the distribution map of *Utricularia* by Mr P.G. Taylor, in which the astonishing variability of the corolla size appeared to be more or less geographically defined. In the afternoon of that glorious, sunny day, June 2nd, there was a garden party in the Gardens for invited persons; of the public only certain selected persons from the village of Kew had been admitted to attend the visit of Her Majesty, the Queen, and His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh. A limited number of guests, mostly foreign, was invited to have tea with the Royal couple inside the emptied old Museum, now a stately, white-washed hall, which will in future regain its dignified position as Orangerie; afterwards some selected few were presented to Her Majesty by Dr Taylor. After that most of us had a stroll in the Gardens with the magnificent newly repaired tropical greenhouse, and foreign guests were invited to an informal buffet supper in the Orangerie with the staff-members of the Gardens. Finally we divided up in parties going to several sections of the Gardens,

museums, and library. Personally I visited the Jodrell Laboratory, where Dr Metcalfe showed us his collections and methodologies, and revealed his future plans.

Two books have been published dedicated to the Bicentenary, both by or under editorship of Dr Turrill, viz "The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, past and present" and "Vistas in Botany", a most interesting work of high standing in which various prime specialists have reviewed various fields of taxonomy and morphology; in many aspects it is complementary to "The New Systematics"; it deserves to be in the hands of every taxonomist.

Our prolonged visit to Canada in July and August started with a beautiful, crystal-clear night with daylight over Iceland, over the polar cap on Greenland (coming down one hour at Sondrestrom), the magnificent glaciers of Baffin Island, and the endless forests and lakes of North Canada, on to Edmonton. The joining of the fortnight-excursion in the immense Canadian National parks in the Rockies of Alberta under the able leadership of Dr Porsild and his charming wife was a great pleasure indeed. The same could be said of the fortnight-excursion in British Columbia, which proved, from the vegetatiographical point of view, extremely instructive. The eminent leaders, Dr T.M.C.Taylor, Dr A.F.Szczawinski, and Prof.Dr V.J.Krajina who, assisted by Miss K.Beamish, took charge in succession, made this series of instructive, well-timed trips, in which only one day the weather slightly interfered, very pleasant indeed. The Congress in Montreal was well organized and in spite of the sticky-tropical August heat we enjoyed our stay very much. There were magnificent receptions in the spacious buildings of the MacGill and Montréal Universities and pleasant one-day excursions. Having in the past few years attended several congresses I was again confronted with the question of the value of the very numerous short contributions which were sometimes so crowded that discussions were seldom. This is partly caused by the fact that no congress has as yet reached that desirable stage when the participants receive abstracts at least three months in advance enabling them to study these at leisure beforehand and prepare salient points for discussion. It has been suggested that many young colleagues can obtain a grant to attend the Congress only on the strength of reading a paper, but this would create a ridiculous situation and a waste of time as everybody can later read at leisure the published papers. The Congress, aware of the need of a new policy, has recommended symposia as the main remedy for keeping future congresses useful.

The one-day Congress excursions were excellently planned and a great pleasure. To find in the close vicinity of a large

city raised bogs with Sarracenia and so much other wild vegetation was a revelation to many. The Congress was particularly attractive because so many participants had been invited to Canadian houses and enjoyed their hospitality.

Our Canadian colleagues deserve high credit for this successful undertaking: they made a jolly good job of it.

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