

REVIEW.

Flora Malesiana, vol. 4, part 1 — Noordhoff-Kolff, Groningen-Batavia 1948.

It is a pleasant duty to announce a work to which all students of the Malaysian Flora, and I am sure, many others, have been looking forward for some time; the first issue of, it is hoped, a very long and continuous series which will ultimately lead to a complete flora of the Malaysian region, including British Malaya, the Philippines and New Guinea which, floristically speaking, forms a natural unit.

The work, written in English under the auspices of the Royal Botanic Garden, Buitenzorg (now Bogor), Java, is the result of the painstaking efforts of its Editor-in-Chief, the well-known Buitenzorg botanist, Dr C. G. G. J. van Steenis. Generously supported by his wife in many respects, he has, and under the most difficult circumstances, indefatigably fought to get this extensive project started. Not only he, but the Indonesian Government as well, are to be congratulated on the result of their efforts. It deserves our sincere and warm appreciation that the Government of this young country has understood its responsibilities and is backing the work with considerable interest, both morally and financially.

This is, in the main time, not surprising, since it is a well-known fact that several neighbouring countries are, in this respect, far ahead. The latter statement, however, is neither entirely correct, nor fair. For since about 1920 much material for a flora, both raw and finished, has been collected by the staff of the Buitenzorg Herbarium, and in more recent years Dr van Steenis has been organising a world-wide collaboration; both these circumstances ensure a relatively smooth start of the work, the duration of which may provisionally be estimated at about 25 years.

The first instalment now published comprises, next to the first part of vol. 4, also 'sample treatments' of the Vols 1—3. It is, in this respect, taking the place of a prospectus and it will be sent free of charge to anyone who asks for it on applying to Messrs. Noordhoff-Kolff, Publishers, Groningen (Netherlands) or Batavia (now Djakarta) (Java), or to Dr Fr. Verdoorn, P. O. Box 151, Waltham (Mass.) U. S. A.

The whole work will be arranged as follows. Vols. 1—3, all of about 600 pages of print, will contain the general part and will be published independently from vol. 4 with which the special systematic part starts.

Vol. 1, Cyclopaedia of Malaysian botanical collectors and collections, is in the press. It has been compiled and written by Mrs. M. J. van Steenis, will deal with Pteridophytes and Phanerogams and contain upward of 3000 entries, names of collectors with short biographies, especially regarding their collecting trips, etc., including about 180 portraits. In addition, there are paragraphs on hints for collectors in tropical countries, literature and a subject-index. All this has been very carefully compiled and Mrs. van Steenis has completed a work for which many generations of students of Malaysian Botany will be grateful.

Vol. 2, of which the MS is expected to be completed in 1950, is being written by Dr van Steenis and will deal with "Malaysian Plant Life". It is a much enlarged and augmented edition of the author's 'Maleise Vegetatieschetsen' (cf. review in 'Blumea' II, 2, 1936, 111—115), and will be abundantly illustrated with photographs and maps.

Vol. 3, equally by Dr van Steenis, will be entitled: 'Malaysian Plant Geography'. Part I, which is nearing completion, will extensively deal with the areas of the approximately 2400 genera of Phanerogams; in addition, there will be paragraphs on the history of phytogeographical concepts, the phytogeographical subdivision of the area and the phytogeographical character of the separate islands or island groups. Part II, which is still in preparation, will contain the historical plant geography of the region in question and will therefore partly be a continuation of the author's 'Origin of the Malaysian Mountain Flora' (Bull. Jard. bot. Buitenzorg 1934—1936).

With Vol. 4, finally, the flora proper has started. There is a preface by the late director of the Buitenzorg Garden Prof. L. G. M. Baas Beeking, an historical introduction, and an interesting paragraph on 'General Considerations', the latter two again by Dr van Steenis. The last-named chapter which is partly published in the first issue, contains a valuable survey of ecological and morphological particulars of Malaysian plants, life forms, etc.

Future instalments of this volume are expected to contain a detailed history of the 'Descriptive Malaysian Botany' by Dr H. C. D. de Wit, instructions for collaborators (which, as a matter of course, have been separately distributed earlier as well) and keys for identification.

As to the systematic part, which will fill the remaining space of Vol. 4 and all of the next volumes, there will be five series, viz.

- I. Phanerogams, about 15 vols.
- II. Pteridophyta, about 3 vols.
- III. Bryophyta, about 5 vols.
- IV. Fungi (incl. Lichenes), about 3 vols.
- V. Algae, about 3 vols.

The entire work is therefore estimated to comprise some 32 volumes. In vol. 4 nr. 1 the following 10 minor families are dealt with according to a concise and standardised method, with adequate illustrations: *Aceraceae*, *Actinidiaceae*, *Anacardiaceae*, *Aponogonaceae*, *Burmanniaceae*, *Nyssaceae*, *Phyllodraceae*, *Sarcospermaceae*, *Sphenocleaceae*, *Stackhousiaceae*. Other families will follow as they are completed.

Our hearty congratulations may be repeated here to Dr van Steenis for his untiring efforts and the remarkable results they have thusfar brought about. We trust that he and his efficient organisation, in which botanists from many countries are involved, will stand any storms of the times to come and that the Indonesian Government will be able to present to the world of botany, forestry, agriculture, horticulture stock-breeding and amateurs, within a reasonable time, a complete and reliable work on the approximately 250 families, 2400 genera and 30,000 species of the area. May it grow to be outstanding in the world of tropical botany and may the editor live to see it completed.

It is expected that every year about 240 pages will be printed, the price being provisionally fixed at Hfl. 1.— for every 16 pages. Orders may be sent to Messrs. Noordhoff-Kolff, to Dr Verdoorn (addresses above) or to the Editor-in-Chief, c/o Royal Botanic Garden, Bogor (Buitenzorg) Java, or Rijksherbarium, Leiden; or to any bookseller's.

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The second instalment continues and concludes Van Steenis' 'General Considerations', dealing with variations induced by the environment such as life-forms (1st instalment) and genotypic variations (mostly in 2nd instalment). These are a great number (43 in 58 pages with 49 illustrations) of scattered remarks, gathered during a score of years of field work. Many of these paragraphs bear witness of a remarkable sense of observation and many prove to be useful for all students of tropical botany. The second part contains interesting data concerning the distributional types of Malaysian genera, with remarks on speciation, affinities, vicariism, etc.

Follows a 'Short History of the Phytography of Malaysian Vascular Plants' by Dr H. C. D. de Wit. This also is a remarkable piece of work, written in a lively style and based upon a very personal and original views on our botanical ancestors, covering a period of 20 or 30 centuries. It is not a mere compilation from the work of others; it gives (in almost 100 pages) the result of an unbiased study of several sources and it throws a new and interesting light on many outstanding personalities, 96 of which are deemed worthy of a portrait. In addition, several less known investigators are given the attention which was withheld from them thusfar. An index to personal names concludes this valuable contribution.

The instalment concludes with the systematic account of 14 families, viz. *Ceratophyllaceae*, *Hydrocaryaceae*, *Moringaceae*, *Saururaceae*, *Styracaceae*, *Juncaginaceae*, *Trigonaceae*, *Cochlospermaceae*, *Zygophyllaceae*, *Podostemaceae*, *Amaranthaceae*, *Chenopodiaceae*, *Plumbaginaceae*, *Umbelliferae*.

H. J. LAM.