

## FLORA MALESIANA

This promises to be the greatest undertaking of its kind ever achieved. The number of species of higher plants to be described in the whole Malaysian region is estimated at 25,000 to 30,000. The largest comparable work previously accomplished was the Flora of British India, which included about 14,000 species.

The sample part already published gives indications of the scope of the whole. First we have the beginning of the essay on general considerations which is to introduce Vol. 4. This is headed with the remark "we should endeavour to determine how few, not how many species are comprised in the Malaysian Flora". Copious quotations are given from Hooker's introductory essay to his *Flora Indica*, as Dr. van Steenis believes that the considerations there presented by Hooker still largely hold good today. In particular, Dr. van Steenis emphasizes the great need for monographic treatment of all groups, without which no proper judgement of individual species can be made. He goes on to survey variation among Malaysian plants, its many causes and manifestations; first variations induced by the environment and then those bound to the genotype are discussed. He is strongly of opinion that a narrow concept of species is neither in accordance with the modern genetic viewpoint nor with the best practical interests of taxonomy.

Next come the first 39 pages of taxonomic revisions, beginning the text of Volume 4. The two-column arrangement for the individual descriptions of species, in smaller type than the main family and generic headings which cross the whole page, is convenient and excellently set up. The details of the arrangement are to be standardized for all families, and provide necessary information compactly and adequately. One would like to see some more brief notes on the probable affinities of small families to larger ones, such as that given by Dr. van Steenis himself for *Ancistrocladaceae*; also notes on the basis of classification within the larger families. The illustrations are good and excellently reproduced, but in a few cases details of flowers are not given. It is most desirable that small drawings to show floral structure should be given in at least one species in each genus. Drawings to show details of floral parts would for example be a helpful supplement to the excellent line drawings showing external form of plants in *Burmanniaceae*.