

refer to original works, particularly so as reference has not been made to the "Flora of British India" when the combinations there used have not been retained; for example, unless one has access to Mez's monograph of the Myrsinaceæ there is nothing to indicate that the genus *Sadira* was treated as *Pimelandra* in the older work. Again (p. ix) it is stated that Mez "calls *Embelia Nagushia* Don, *E. undulata* as he identified *E. Nagushia* Don with *E. vestita* Roxb. In this work Brandis has been followed." But a reference to Mez shows that it is *E. Nagushia* Clarke not Don that is termed *E. undulata* (Wall.) Mez and that *E. Nagushia* Don is sunk in *E. vestita* Roxb. The error is of Brandis but only detectable by a reference to Mez.

Descriptions of families, genera and species are given, but the tendency is to pay greater attention to plants of importance in forestry. There is no key to the families (this may be deferred to the final volume), but keys are provided for genera and species when there are more than one of either, and these in general are satisfactory.

There has been a steady improvement in the several parts, but there are still shortcomings in the present volume, especially in the matter of misprints.

It is not clear why certain species are treated differently from the rest in the same genus; for example, under *Agapetes* sixteen species are included in the key and are serially numbered, but seven further species appear without numbers and with shorter descriptions and in smaller type.

Despite the difficulties encountered, the authors are carrying out a task the fruits of which will prove of great assistance to all concerned with the phanerogamic flora of Assam.

The Comity of Spiders

By Dr. William Syer Bristowe. Vol. I. (Ray Society, Vol. 126, for the Year 1938.) Pp. x+228+19 plates. (London: Bernard Quaritch, Ltd., 1939.) 25s.

THE first volume of Dr. Bristowe's "Comity of Spiders" deals mainly with the distribution of spiders in Britain. Some seventy-five years have passed since the publication of Blackwall's fine work, "A History of the Spiders of Great Britain and Ireland", and meanwhile our knowledge of the British fauna has been much enriched, notably by the researches of the Rev. O. Pickard Cambridge and Dr. A. R. Jackson. Dr. Bristowe, himself an able and enthusiastic collector, has also made many interesting additions and these advances are incorporated in the most useful section of his book, a list of the 556 known British species under their presently accepted names. For each species the distribution within Britain is given by counties from records largely made by the author himself, and the distribution outside Britain, so far as known, is indicated in general terms. One or two nomenclatorial changes are made, but synonyms are not otherwise listed.

The second half of the book examines the effect of environment on distribution and, besides more general considerations of climate, soil, and flora, it summarizes the results of collecting in a wide variety

of habitats, natural and artificial, from sewage works to Buckingham Palace gardens. Dr. Bristowe has already published much of the matter in this section during recent years in the form of short papers, but the repetition is justified in a general treatise of this nature.

The monograph includes a discussion of dispersal in which the author stresses the importance of transport by aerial currents, and the book ends with a short chapter on the relative abundance of the spider population in the few localities which have been investigated.

The plates are well reproduced from excellent photographs and, although photography is not the ideal method of illustration, they will be a useful supplement in the identification of British spiders. Printing and production reach the high standard expected of Ray Society monographs, and Dr. Bristowe is to be complimented on a clear and readable style which is all too rare in scientific writings.

R. J. W.

An Account of the Genus *Dioscorea* in the East Part 2: The Species which twine to the Right; with Addenda to Part 1, and a Summary. By D. Prain and I. H. Burkill. (Annals of the Royal Botanic Garden, Calcutta, Vol. 14, Part 2.) Pp. 425-528. (Alipore: Bengal Government Press, 1939.)

PART I of this monograph, reviewed in NATURE of January 29, 1938, dealt with the species of *Dioscorea* which twine to the left. The distribution of Part 2, treating of those that twine to the right, has been delayed, and under existing conditions this delay is indefinite. The portion of it now under review contains only the final summary and no systematy. In view of the delay in publication, advance separates of this summary have been obtained by the authors for presentation to institutions specially interested in biogeography. It presents thirty-five tables analysing in detail the distribution of the species described (147 in all) over the oriental range of the genus. A short but necessary discussion on "the meaning of the word species" defines the position adopted by the authors towards this vexed subject. It is followed by an exhaustive 'retrospect' in which is expounded an account of the systematic study and exploratory research devoted to the genus in the past, with particulars of the authors and collectors who have contributed to knowledge of the group. That there is still much to be elucidated is evident from thorough investigations under the title "Estimate of the Imperfection of Present Knowledge".

Finally, we have a dissertation on the biology of the species concerned, concluding with an exposition of the phytogeographic scheme adopted. To many botanists, especially on the ecological side, and to biologists generally, this part will prove more interesting and valuable than the mere systematy. It contains ample evidence in its pages of the enormous amount of labour and research put into the work.

It is to be hoped that workers in the group and area will not be for long deprived of the remaining portion.