Plant Life of South-West Asia.* During the last two decades, the botanical taxonomists at Edinburgh have switched their main interest from eastern Asia to southwest Asia mainly through the collections and impetus of P. H. Davis. It was an excellent idea to take the opportunity of the Tercentenary of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh to organize a symposium on the botany of southwest Asia, the first ever to be held.

The organizers and editors have succeeded in producing a volume which gives a very good survey of the activities of botanists in this area, of the problems met with and some of the conclusions. It is quite impossible in this review to do justice to all of the 21 articles, but I shall try to give an idea of the contents of the book. A first series of five articles concerns distribution patterns in southwest Asia from the Aegean islands (Runemark), Anatolia (Davis) and Flora Iranica area (Wendelbo) to the West Himalayas (Meusel) with a more general article by M. Zohary as a connecting link. Of course, there is a "cline" concerning the floristic knowledge of these countries with the now very well known flora of the Aegean islands at the one end and the Himalayas at the other, but characteristic distribution patterns which ask for explanation are emerging more and more frequently. The more distant floristic relationships between different floras of a "Mediterranean type" are reviewed by P. H. Raven stressing the point that these floras never had a direct connection. This is at least partly corroborated by the comparison of the flora of South Africa and the Mediterranean and southwest Asiatic flora (Burtt). Of greatest importance for the interpretation of plant distribution are sound paleobotanical and palynological investigations which are still deplorably rare in southwest Asia. So an article of Tumajanov on the changes of the Caucasian forest vegetation during the Pleistocene and Holocene is especially welcome although it can give only the outlines of the picture. Studies on the actual vegetation of southwest Asia are only represented by the contributions of Freitag and Breckle on the natural vegetation of Afghanistan. The next main theme is "biosystematics", a scientific approach which is in its infancy in southwest Asia; indeed two of the contributions concern the Aegean islands — a border area between Europe and Asia. Snogerup discusses in a stimulating article the evolutionary aspects of chasmophytic communities, while Strid gives a concise summary of his investigations on *Nigella*. C. C. Heyn records experiments concerning the great variability in *Medicago* species and *Poa bulbosa*, while Ehrendorfer provides a very interesting picture of evolutionary trends in southwest Asiatic Rubiaceae. Further chapters deal with the origin of crop plants and the problems of plant conservation. In a general paper on the importance of agroecotypes, E. Bennett makes a fervent plea for the investigation of cultivated plants by taxonomists and for the conservation of primitive strains of crop plants. D. Zohary gives a concise review of our present knowledge of the origin of our most important cereals, while Helbaek clears up the history of rye. In an article by Poore we are given a very clear picture of the purposes and problems of conservation of wildlife and the means available for it. Further articles on conservation are by Kayacik and Yaltirik (Turkish forests and their conservation) and Walters. The last chapter with a paper by Meikle concerns the co-ordination of floristic work. It provoked a lively discussion which (as in other cases) is given literally. It is to be hoped that the plan to hold another symposium on southwest Asian plant-life will really be executed and that it will be as successful as this one obviously was.

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