Book Review

Iohannes Stirling: Lexicon Nominvm Herbarvm, Arborvm Frvcticvmqve Lingvae Latinae. Ex aedibvs Domvs Editoriae "Encyclopaedia". Budapestini. Volvmen I: A–B 1995, i–lxxi, 148 pp. Volvmen II: C–H, 1997, 346 pp.

It is more than a pleasure to take in hand the first two volumes of the epochal handbooks of J. Stirling. The title of the book series is clear, but to be more precise a subtitle is figured on the title page giving the reader more information as to the origin of the material compiled since it explicitely states that sources prior to the 17th century had only been considered. In other words, all those works which are especially important from cultural historical point of view. And only those who had ever consulted these sources do know, how difficult it is to correctly interpret the names referred to. In these volumes they are all identified and illustrated with botanical excerpts printed in the text in italics.

The structure of the first volume is as follows: pages vii–xlviii are occupied by an introduction in four languages (Latin, English, German and French). The subsequent pages xlix–lxxi with Roman numerals list the abbreviation of the sources with the full bibliography. The book proper begins with the Pars Lexicon comprising 148 pages.

The text is presented in two columns according to the nature of this kind of work. Each entry carries a store-house of information precisely indicating the source(s), and where appropriate Greek characters make the origin more lucid. Names, at times, perhaps of common usage may startle the reader or leave him confounded but the compiler's ingenuity and sound competence put one back on the right track by simply referring by vide to the name of modern times. For example, abellina vide avellana; bidellio vide ptelea.

The second volume is dedicated to Zsigmond Ritoók and István Borzsák, members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Then letter C begins on page 1. The volume comprises the subsequent letters to letter I, since it closes with the entry word hyusidero.

The material of the third and fourth volumes is already compiled running up to some 50 and 47 sheets, respectively.

These beautifully designed volumes will come useful primarily to botanists, cultural historians and any students in fact interested in the history of plant names.

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