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NORTH QUEENSLAND NATURALISTS' CLUB

Meets at Girls' and Infants' School, Abbott Street, Cairns,
usually on second Monday in each month, at 8 p.m.

BUSINESS FOR NEXT MEETING, MONDAY 11th DECEMBER, 1939:—

Address by Mr. Noel M. Ferguson, "Man's Use of Natural Deposits."

11th September, 1939:

Annual General Meeting.

New Member Elected:

Mr. F. Zimmermann, Bungalow.

Election of Officers.

Presidential Address: "Collection, Treatment and Arrangement of Herbarium Specimens."

9th October, 1939:

Illustrated Lecture by Mr. Ian Grabowsky on Hagen Valley.

13th November, 1939:

Paper by Mr. W. R. Holloway on "Palms."

SARCOCHILUS OLIVACEUS, Lindley

An interesting variety from North Queensland

By W. H. NICHOLLS.

S. olivaceus, Ldl., var. *borealis* n. var.

The following description is taken from a plant received from Dr. H. Flecker, of Cairns, North Queensland, on June 1, 1939. When received, this plant had two racemes of buds in healthy condition, flowers were fully expanded towards the end of July and lasted in good condition over August. The specimen was collected by Mrs. B. Sparvell, at Millaa Millaa, 2nd May, 1939.

Planta similis formae typicae, Flores flavo-virides, fusco-rubri, Labellum album, conspicue maculis fusco-rubris.

Plant similar in all respects to the typical form, which is abundant in the bush-forests (jungles) of Southern Queensland, and in New South Wales, "Southward to Mt. Dromedary."

Racemes two, exceeding the leaves.

Flowers 2 c.m. diameter, in a loose raceme, six to each; sepals and petals green, a darker hue than in the typical form, suffused with yellow towards the centre, and markedly blotched towards the base with deep red-brown—these blotches much more intense on the reverse side. Sepals rather wider than in typical flowers; the dorsal sepal similar in shape to that present in *S. dilatatus*, F.v.M.—"dilated into a rhomb." Petals only half as wide as sepals. Labellum, with a white ground and generously blotched and otherwise marked with dark red brown flowers very fragrant.

The whole appearance of the plant of this new variety is strongly suggestive of *S. dilatatus*, and it may have been—by some—confounded with that

species. In fact, Bentham's remarks, and the fact that he considered *S. dilatatus* synonymous with *S. olivaceus* supports this view. He writes—in regard to specimens of *S. dilatatus* from Sydney and from Brisbane, "does not appear to me to differ from *S. olivaceus*." *

In the dried state this new form might very easily be mistaken for *S. dilatatus*. In fact the present writer thought Mrs. Sparvell's specimen to be that species when first the flowers opened out—this in spite of the differences in the structure of the lip. The somewhat "heavy colour scheme"—almost wholly green (a distinct green) and the heavy brown blotchings were responsible for the deception.

From a brief distance both species appear to be identical even to a careful observer.

The typical *S. olivaceus* could hardly be mistaken for *S. dilatatus* for the characteristic "old gold" flowers of the former are unmistakable—in fact may be regarded as "unique" among Australian species of *Sarcochilus*. Habitat: Millaa Millaa, North Queensland (spec. No. 6025). Collected by Mrs. B. Sparvell, 2-5-1939.

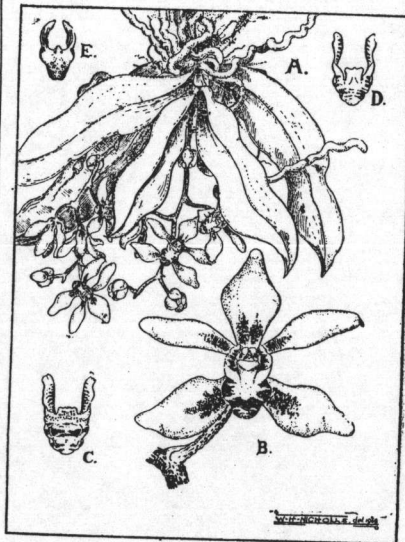
The varietal name is in allusion to its Northern habitat.

*Flora Australiensis VI., 294.

DIPODIUM STENOACHEILUM Schwartz

By The Rev. H. M. R. RUPP.

A dried specimen of a terrestrial orchid received from Herberton in 1938 was forwarded to me by Dr. Flecker. A somewhat hurried inspection gave me the impression that it was a form of *Dipodium punctatum*, but it was put away for further examination. Recently I have subjected the specimen to a critical investigation. It appears to me to differ considerably from any species hitherto described in Australian publications, nor does it agree with any Malayan form. Inquiries at the National Herbarium in Sydney revealed that a Darwin plant had been named *D. stenocheilum* by Schwartz many years ago, and that it was described in Feddes Repert. XXIV, 1936. The Government Botanist of Victoria kindly furnished me with a copy of this



S. olivaceus, Ldl., variety *borealis*, n. var.

Figures (A) Mrs. Sparvell's plant; (B) A flower greatly enlarged; (C) Labellum of typical *S. olivaceus* from front (Tambourine North, Sth. Queensland); (D) Labellum of *S. olivaceus* from front (N.S.W.); (E) Labellum from front, of *S. dilatatus* (Boonah, South Queensland).

description, partly in Latin and partly in German. The German portion was translated for me by Mr. E. Nubling, of Sydney. Three localities are given: Port Darwin, Koolpinyah, and Budge Creek. Bentham (Fl. Austr. v. p. 301) includes Schwartz's Darwin plant in *D. punctatum*. I have no doubt at all that the Herberton plant is identical, and I am of the opinion that it is specifically distinct from *D. punctatum*. But it is difficult to form a reliable judgment on this point from a solitary dry specimen. Further material, either fresh or dry, is very desirable. Mr. W. H. Nicholls, of Melbourne, informs me that a Queensland clergyman, whose name he does not give, has recorded the species *D. stenocheilum* and has promised specimens. For the pre-

sent I consider it wise to leave the matter of specific rank an open question, until further material is available. In my specimen, the main points of difference from *D. punctatum* are: Long narrow labellum with a gibbous base and the sides of the mid-lobe prominently deflexed; long column; perianth segments narrow but obtuse at the apex; stem flattened, basal bracts few and short. The flower is not spotted, but forms of *D. punctatum* with unspotted flowers have been found. Colour dull-purplish.

As far as I am aware, no description of this tropical Australian orchid has hitherto appeared in any Australian publication. A specimen, apparently of a *Dipodium*, collected over 60 miles from Cairns, was sent to me in 1938 by Dr. H. Flecker. Unaware of any other species in Australia except *D. punctatum* R.Br., *D. hamiltonianum* (Bail.) Cheel, and *D. ensifolium* F.v.M., I supposed this specimen to be rather an unusual form of the first-named; but I was unable at the time to make a critical examination. Upon doing so more recently, I discovered several features exhibiting marked distinction from any form of *D. punctatum* known to me. Inquiries at the National Herbarium in Sydney revealed that a species had been described under the name *D. stenocheilum* in Feddes Repert. sp. nov. XXIV 4-13, Dec., 1927. By the kind courtesy of the Government Botanist at the Melbourne National Herbarium, I received a copy of the description, in Latin and German. I have not found it easy to arrive at the exact import of one portion of the Latin: and Mr. E. Nubling, who kindly translated the German for me, found a somewhat similar difficulty there. But I have no doubt at all that Dr. Flecker's specimen is *D. stenocheilum*. Though it is a "new" species, described as lately as 1927, the

plant itself is actually alluded to by Bentham in Fl. Austr. VI. p. 301, where he includes in *D. punctatum* specimens collected by Schultz at Port Darwin. Schwartz says that "Bleeser's material," from which presumably he made his description, tallies perfectly with that long before collected by Schultz. He considers the plant decidedly distinct from *D. punctatum*, and I venture to think that few will disagree. He adds that the differences "consist first in narrower and obtuse perigon-tips, a narrower lip which at the base is distinctly sac-shaped, with hairy margins extending right to the base; and absence of dotting; otherwise also in a slenderer habit, in smaller flowers, slenderer and relatively larger gynostemium with broader calypoid end; and is also perhaps distinguished by a greater height of the plant. The species stands definitely nearer *D. squamatum* of New Caledonia, and also clearly shows the scales (squamae) concentrated at the stem-base: these, however, are of quite a different form, for which reason a specific separation is here also necessary."

It must be remarked that the absence of spots on the flowers is not an adequate point of distinction from *D. punctatum*, since unspotted forms of the latter are quite well known. And it appears to me that the alleged smallness of the flowers is only relative to the height of the plant; actually I have seen much smaller flowers on many plants of *D. punctatum*. Nor can I see much force in the remarks about basal scales: whatever may be the case with *D. squamatum*, in *D. punctatum* these are very variable, and sometimes agree pretty closely with those of the new species. Nevertheless, there remains a residue of important distinctions which seem to me to justify the elevation of this interesting *Dipodium* to specific rank.

FITZGERALD'S "AUSTRALIAN ORCHIDS"

By The Rev. H. M. R. RUPP, Sydney.

Since it was at my request that recently the Chief Botanist of the N.S.W. National Herbarium, Mr. R. H. Anderson, sent to Dr. H. Flecker five lithographs of unpublished plates by

the late R. D. Fitzgerald, and since I understand that Dr. Flecker wishes these to become the property of the North Queensland Naturalists' Club, I thought that it might interest mem-

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bers if I contributed a brief article on the man whose name is so honoured in orchidological circles all over the world, by reason of his magnificent contribution to Orchid literature and art.

Robert David Fitzgerald was born at Tralee, in Ireland, in 1830, the son of a prominent banker. From his early years he was a lover of nature: ornithology was his first hobby, and he became no mean authority on the subject. In 1856 the family emigrated to Australia, and settled at Balmain, then quite a fashionable suburb of the growing town of Sydney. Young Robert in that year joined the Lands Department of N.S.W. Ornithology still had attractions for him; so too had geology: he was also a very keen fisherman. After his marriage he settled down on the Parramatta River side of Hunter's Hill. His work up country brought him into contact with our wonderful Australian flora, and at last he was led to concentrate his spare energies on our Orchids. He was a man of most versatile accomplishments. It is not given to many men to be at the same time a capable surveyor, civil engineer, geologist, botanist, and artist; yet R. D. Fitzgerald was all these. In 1873 he was appointed Deputy-Surveyor General of N.S.W. To him we owe the preservation for the public of some of the most beautiful forest reserves in N.S.W., particularly in the Blue Mountains.

It was in 1882 that the Government began the publication, on a somewhat lavish scale, of Fitzgerald's great work on "Australian Orchids." After his retirement from the Public Service in 1887, the next five years of his life were largely devoted to the carrying out of this enterprise. With matchless skill he depicted each species, life-size, in colour; and added, on a magnified scale, the essential details of every important part of the flower. Alas, he was not destined to complete his undertaking. In August, 1892, he died, leaving a great part unfinished. Some of the plates which were then ready were subsequently published under the collaboration of Messrs. Henry Deane and A. J. Stopps, the latter of whom had been Fitzgerald's lithographer. But there is a residue which has never

been published. Most of these plates were happily secured a few years ago by the trustees of the Mitchell Library in Sydney. The recent bringing to light of five unpublished plates at the National Herbarium is of no little interest; because only one of these is identical with any plate in the collection secured by the Mitchell Library.

The largest, and perhaps the most important, is an uncoloured drawing of a *Cymbidium* obviously allied to *C. suave* but distinct from it. The narrow, almost terete seed-capsules indicate that this can be no other than Fitzgerald's "mysterious" species *C. gomphocarpum*, about which we have all been in the dark for years. He described this very briefly, giving no clue to locality, in "Journal of Botany," XXI, p. 203, and that is all we have known. No one now living, as far as I know, has ever recorded it. The discovery of this plate, however, at least shows us what the plant is like, and it is to be hoped that all orchid-lovers will keep a good lookout for it.

Of the four other plates, one—a colour-plate of *Diuris palustris* and *D. brevissima*, is in the Mitchell collection alluded to. Fitzgerald, being human, made mistakes occasionally; and there can be no doubt that he has incorrectly depicted *D. palustris*, a little species well-known in the Southern States. The plant to which he gives the name appears to be a form of *D. maculata*. *D. brevissima* is presumably one of his own species, but it has never been described and is not known. The locality is Woodford, N.S.W.

The remaining plates are: (1) *Diuris carinata* (W.A.), and two forms of *D. lonifolia* (southern States and W.A.). This is a beautiful colour-plate, as is (2) *Prasophyllum Frenchii* and *P. Fitzgeraldii*. The former is a highland species of southern Australia (the latter is a South Australian plant. (3) is uncoloured. It depicts *Microtis alba* (W.A.), and *M. atrata* (Southern States).

I should have liked to explain something of Fitzgerald's methods of work, and how it comes about that some of the plates, even among those in circulation, are not coloured. But this article is already longer than it was intended to be.