

SIXTH INTERNATIONAL BOTANICAL CONGRESS,  
AMSTERDAM.

A CONGRESS which is supported by delegates from more than fifty countries, the majority extra-European, may fairly claim to be international—860 members had registered. A busy week was spent at Amsterdam, from September 1 to 7, and the votes of thanks at the final plenary meeting to those responsible for the organization, especially to the energetic senior secretary, Dr. M. J. Sirks, were generally felt to have been well earned.

It was a hard fate that removed Prof. Went, the directing spirit of the Executive Committee, a few weeks before the meeting, but his place was ably taken by Prof. J. C. Schoute, of Gröningen, who in his address of welcome to the delegates and members referred feelingly to the loss sustained by botany and the Congress.

The headquarters of the Congress was at the Kolonial Institut, pleasantly situated facing a tree-lined canal, a short walk along which brought one to the Amstel, the broadest of the many water-ways that intersect the town. The ten sections were accommodated for their meetings at the Institut and at the botanical and other laboratories in the neighbourhood. An excellent tram-service provided connection and also means of transport from the hotels at which the members stayed. A programme, which was a marvel of condensation, in three languages, English, French, and German (the educated Dutch seem at home in any one) gave information as to meetings, excursions, social events, exhibitions, etc. Volume II. of the 'Proceedings,' containing abstracts of sectional papers, edited by Dr. Sirks, was ready for the use of the members. Volume I., to be published after the Congress, will contain the Report of the Congress's activities. Two other handbooks had been prepared for the use and edification of the members: 'Botany in the Netherlands,' a sketch of the history and present position of botanical science in the Netherlands and their overseas territories, edited by Dr. Sirks from accounts supplied by those in authority at the various laboratories, institutions, or societies, and a descriptive account of the Netherlands as an environment for plant-life, admirably illustrated by maps, sections, and tables, compiled by Prof. W. C. de Leeuw, and presented to the members by the Netherlands Botanical Society.

Each section had its bureau ready appointed, with president, vice-presidents, recorder, and secretaries. The work of each was the consideration of a number of themes, suggested by the executive committee and supported by papers submitted on invitation. In many cases the theme was of interest to more than one section, and combined meetings were arranged. Nomenclature formed a subsection of Taxonomy, and was ably presided over by Dr. E. D. Merrill. The preparation of a "Synopsis of

Proposals" and a collated series of preliminary opinions, by Dr. T. A. Sprague, simplified the work. A few textual emendations were made to the recent edition of the "Rules" and some points involving differences of opinion were discussed. An important feature was the appointment of various committees which should act in the interval between this and the next Congress. Dr. Sprague was appointed secretary of the executive committee, and Miss M. L. Green acted as English recorder. We may expect the appearance of the results of the deliberations at no long interval.

Several days were devoted to excursions, full particulars of which were given in a special programme. These included visits to the botanical laboratories and gardens at Utrecht, Leyden, and Baarn. The professors and directors of the different institutions had been at great pains to make the visits instructive and interesting. One recalls, for instance, Prof. Koningsberger's laboratories at Utrecht, where members were initiated into the details of investigations on growth-substance, the National Herbarium at Leyden under Prof. H. J. Lam, and of special interest the adjoining Hortus Botanicus founded in 1587. It contains several very old trees, a Laburnum, planted 1601, a Liriodendron, 1657, and a replica of the garden as arranged under Clusius's supervision in 1594 and based on the original plan and inventory. At Baarn Dr. Joha. Westerdijk did the honours of the Phytopathological Laboratory and the Central Bureau for Fungus Cultures: an interesting exhibit was a collection of species or varieties of elm which have proved immune to the Dutch elm-disease. Other members visited a flower-growing centre and the bulb-research laboratories at Lisse under Prof. E. van Slogteren; and a geobotanical excursion to the Veluwe, a preglacial sand and gravel tract of country, was of special interest to the ecologists and field-botanists.

On the long drives through towns and villages, often old and quaint, and large tracts of polderland, one became familiar with the characteristics of that large portion of the country which, lying below sea-level, is kept free from water by dykes and draining—wide green expanses intersected by canals and ditches, and affording grazing to herds of black and white cattle (with a brown one to each herd, for luck (?)). A final excursion, labelled sight-seeing (not botanical), was a long day's drive along the old Zuyder See, now the Ysel Meer, and on to the great dam which now keeps back the North Sea—an object-lesson in land reclamation. Much still remains to be done before the ancient See is reduced to a mere outlet for the rivers from the interior, the passage of which to the sea is controlled by huge sluices, but different stages in the development of polderland were seen, including an area, now supporting two villages and various crops, that five years ago was submerged. The field-

botanists regretted that the drive back within the coastal sand-dunes did not allow time for their inspection.

Evening receptions by the Netherlands Botanical Society and the Government—the latter at the Rijksmuseum, allowing a visit to the famous picture galleries,—and sectional and official dinners, gave ample opportunity for social intercourse.

An interesting exhibit of Linneana—books, manuscripts, sketches, etc.—arranged in one of the rooms of the Zoological Society, the spacious gardens of which near the Kolonial Institut, were open to members of Congress, commemorated the bicentenary of the publication of Linnæus's 'Systema Naturæ' (Leyden, 1735). Linnæus lived in Holland from 1735–38; he was a student at Leyden, and some of his earliest works were published in Leyden or Amsterdam.

It may seem ungenerous to find fault when so much had been done for the comfort and enjoyment of the members, but the statement "Evening dress is not necessary and its use at official functions is optional" caused embarrassment to some members who had interpreted it literally; when one's hosts are in "tails" one may feel a longing for at least a dinner jacket. And would it not be appropriate to maintain, when possible, liaison with the preceding Congress by allowing some part in the opening ceremony to the past president? Perhaps our Swedish colleagues, whose invitation for the next meeting in 1940 was accepted, would consider these minutiae?—A. B. RENDLE.

---