

IN MEMORIAM : DR. JOHN HUTCHINSON F. R. S. (1884-1972)

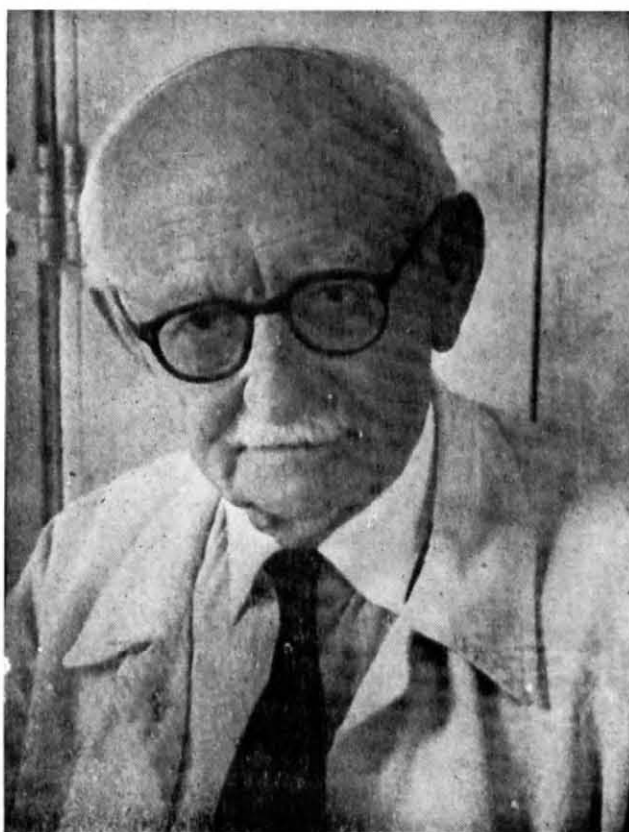
Dr. John Hutchinson, a great Systematic Botanist passed away at the age of eightyeight after a fruitful and commendable service to the cause of Phylogeny, Systematics and classification of Flowering Plants. He lived and worked at a time when the great traditions of Taxonomy is in a state of ferment and with his demise the botanical world has sustained an irreparable loss.

He was born on 7th April 1884 at Blindburn, Wark-on-Tyne, Northumberland, United Kingdom. He had his early education at Wark and later at Rutherford College, Newcastle. The native wild flora of Tyneside attracted the young Hutchinson. As a boy he collected plants and dreamed of far off places and strange plants. At this stage fortune favoured him with a job in the Garden Section of the well-known Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew where there is a large assemblage of living and preserved plants of the world. He married Lilian Florence Cook of Richmond in 1910 and had two sons and three daughters.

During a span of about four decades of official connection with Kew, he held important assignments at the Royal Botanic Gardens. He was Assistant for India during the years 1907-1909 and 1916-1919, Assistant for Africa 1909-1916 and Assistant in Charge of African Section from 1919-1936. Later, he rose to the position of the Keeper of the Museums (1936-48). During these years, taking advantage of the rich collections at Kew, he studied the flowering plants from the angle of their phylogeny and classification. The work of Hallier in Germany, Bessey in America and, Arber and Parkin in Britain strongly influenced his mind which was already surcharged with the concepts of phylogeny. These studies resulted in a new system of classification which were subsequently published in the *Kew Bulletin* (1923-65 et seq.) and in *Families of Flowering Plants* (Vol. I, 1926 ; Vol. II, 1934, ed 2, 1959). He arranged the families of Dicotyledons into two main phyla, the Lignosae and the Herbaceae. Though this classification evoked sharp comments from leading botanists of the day, it is still a great landmark in the history of classification of plant. The University of St. Andrews conferred on him the LL.D. degree in 1934 and the Royal Society, London elected him a Fellow in 1947.

Besides the herbarium studies, he undertook extensive botanical tours in South Africa during the years 1928-29. In 1930 he accompanied Field Marshal Smuts on a botanical expedition from Pretoria through Rhodesia to the heart of Central Africa which lead to the discovery of many new and interesting taxa. A comprehensive illustrated account of this journey with the botanical results was published in 1946, titled, *A Botanist in Southern Africa*. He also wrote with the help of Dr. J. M. Dalziel the *Flora of West Tropical Africa*. He conducted a voyage to the Cameroons in a German banana boat and climbed to the top of Cameroon mountains.

The Botanical world welcomed with great appreciation his classical contribution "*The Genera of Flowering Plants*", a modern Genera Plantarum, based on Hutchinson's classification. So far two volumes are published, the first in 1964. This classical work dealt not merely with descriptive accounts



of genera but more on their classification, based on phylogeny. He undertook this assignment with great enthusiasm at an age when most of the professional botanists would spend their time in retirement. To the senior author of this note, this outstanding botanist once casually mentioned, that he had completed the rough manuscript of this work but some editing in the light of modern concepts were needed. The stalwarts in British Taxonomy like Bentham and Hooker awed and inspired Hutchinson and in his preface of *The Genera of Flowering Plants* (1964) he writes "Although I arrived in the world too late to see George Bentham (I was actually born the very year he died in 1884), I was fortunate to meet Sir Joseph Hooker in 1906 when he visited Kew for the last time. I was detained to procure for him from the herbarium cabinets specimens of the genus *Impatiens* which he was still revising, although in his ninetieth year. Having provided him the covers he required, I stood by his side hoping to be of further assistance but was brought down to earth by being told to get on with your work". Little did he or I imagine that one day the young man, he so curtly dismissed would attempt to revise and bring up-to-date his and Bentham's classical *Genera Plantarum*. A few years before his death he brought out another massive publication entitled, *Evolution and Phylogeny of Flowering plants* in 1969.

He was not an ivory tower botanist, though he published classical works of lasting nature. He published a number of popular books, Penguin paper backs such as *Common Wild Flowers*, *More Common Wild Flowers*, *Uncommon Wild Flowers*, *British Wild Flowers* (2 Vols.) and *Wild Flowers in colour*. He had numerous papers to his credit on the Botany of Africa, Canary Islands and Phylogeny of Families of Flowering Plants. It is interesting to note that his hobby and recreation were drawing of plants. The botanical world is already familiar with the initials J. H. in several drawings, illustrated in his books *Families of Flowering Plants* and *Evolution and Phylogeny of Flowering Plants*.

The academic and scientific world showered on him honours in recognition of his outstanding contributions in the study of phylogeny and classification of flowering plants. He was a corresponding Member of Philadelphia Academy of Sciences and the Botanical Society of America, Honorary Fellow and Herbert Medallist of American Amaryllis Society, Veitch Memorial Medallist of the Linnean Society of London in 1946 and Honorary Fellow of the Botanical Society, Edinburgh. He received the Loder cup for his critical work on *Rhododendron* in 1941, Darwin-Wallace Centenary Medal in 1958 and Linnean Gold Medal in 1965.

As a person he had a genial temperament, very friendly with younger botanists. The senior author remembers with gratitude the friendly help and advice, Dr. John Hutchinson gave when he worked at Kew and had the good fortune to learn at the feet of this great master, who was a class by himself.

"Requiescat in pace"

Botanical Survey of India
14 Madan Street, Calcutta-13.

M. P. NAYAR AND K. THOTHATHRI