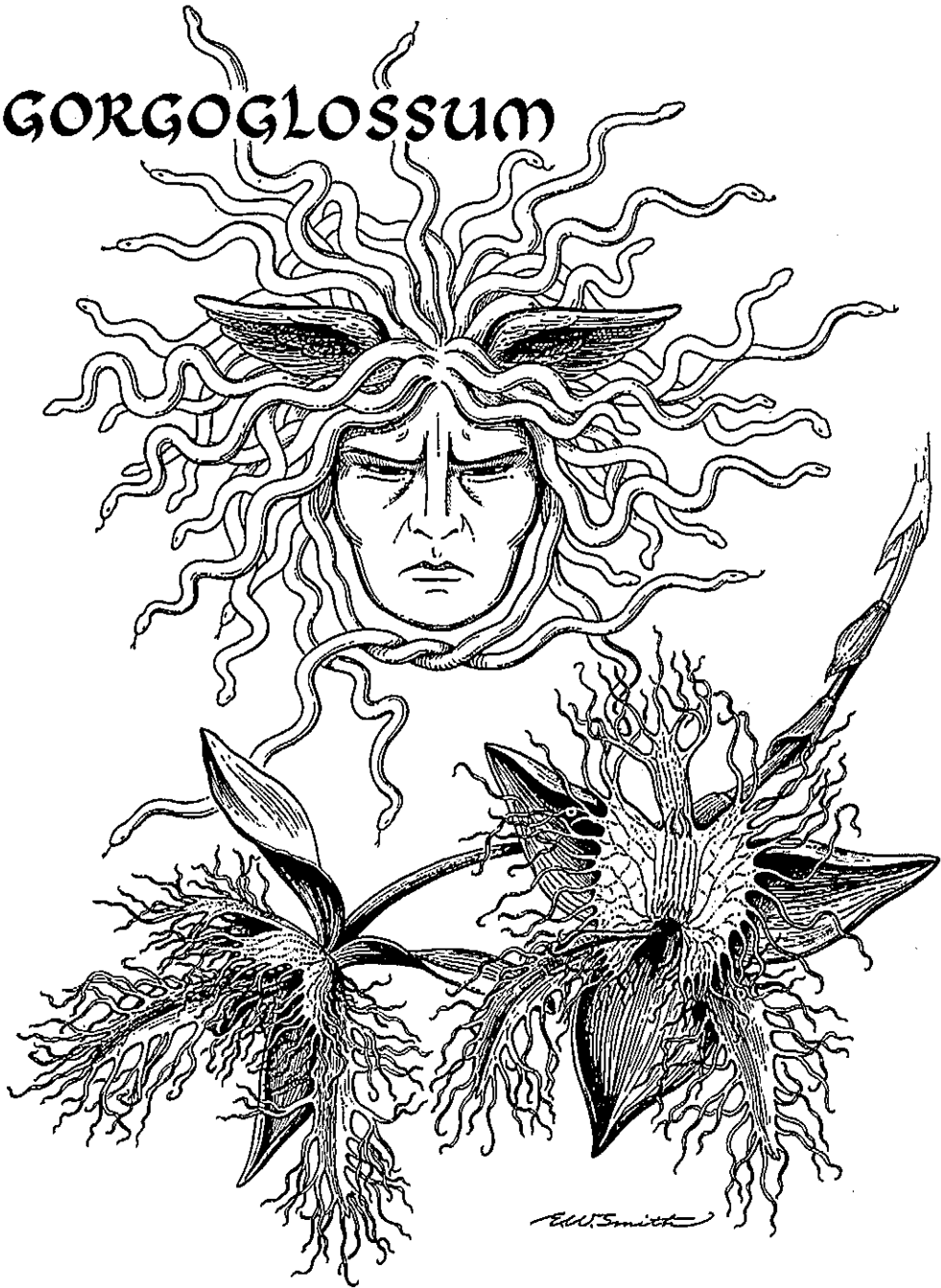


# GORGOGLOSSUM



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GENERIC NAMES  
OF ORCHIDS  
Their Origin  
and Meaning

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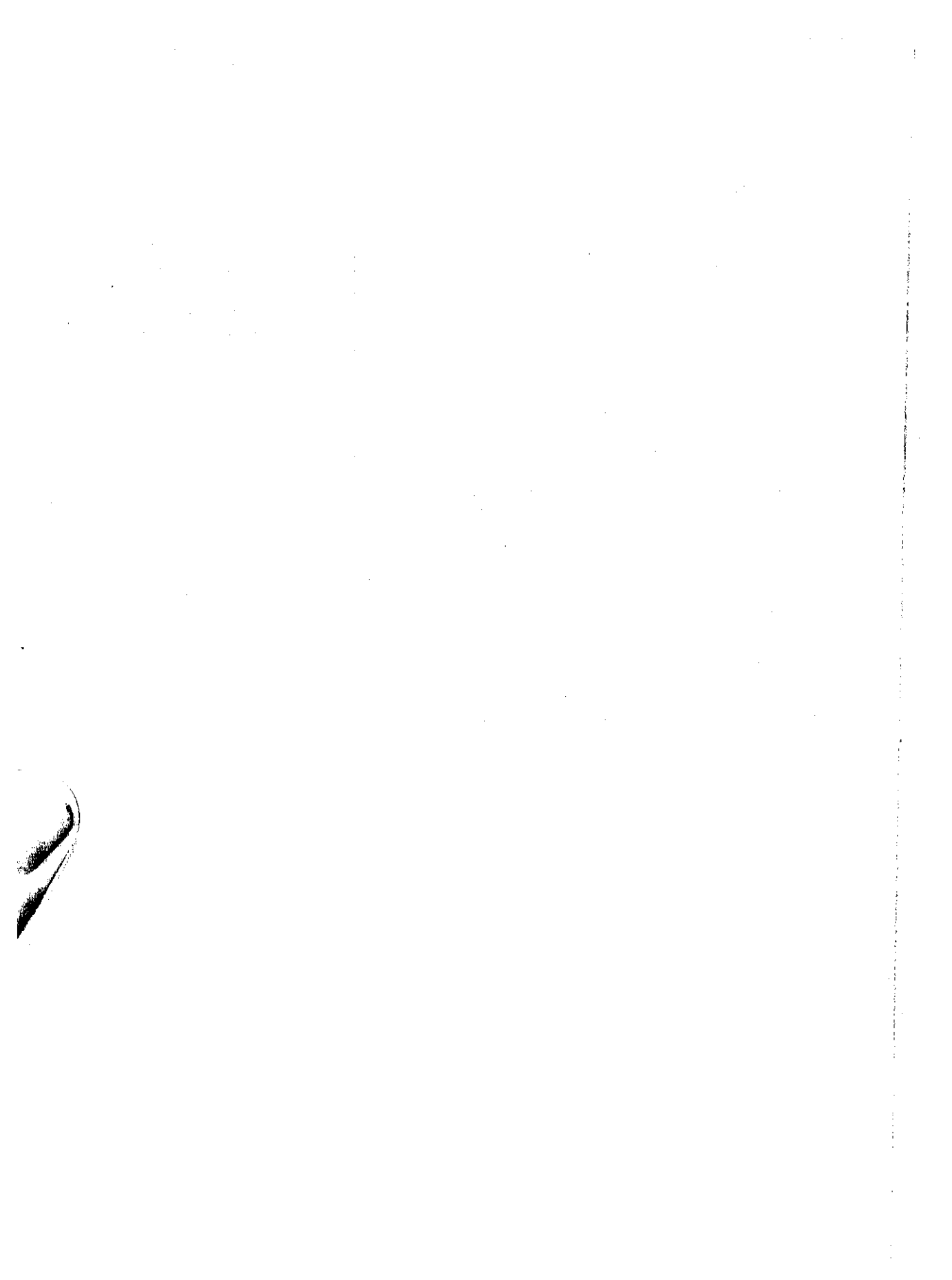
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## FOREWORD

We have written this book because we believe that there is a real need for it. This need is manifest not only in amateur circles but also in scientific work. The Orchid Herbarium of Oakes Ames, for example, receives numerous requests each year for the meaning of technical names of orchid genera. We have found in answering these requests that it is not always easy to ascertain the derivation and meaning of the epithets. We have likewise discovered how little there is in the literature of botany to help him who sets out alone to unravel some of the intricacies involved in the origin and significance of botanical names.

It has been our aim to try to keep the level of this book on a high technical plane, for we realize that careful and meticulous scholarship alone will contribute to a clarification of the many problems which we take up for consideration. We realize, furthermore, that this approach will be appreciated not only by our botanical audience but also by those interested in horticultural activities and by the amateur orchidophile who loves orchids for their own sake.

Some names of orchid genera were explained as to their origin and meaning by the botanists who described the concepts and gave them their epithets. In many instances, however, there is no such clarification in the original description, and we must look to later works which might have attempted to present an explanation.

In the earlier years of the past century, sundry dictionaries were elaborated which included etymological analyses of technical plant names. In 1840, Sir Joseph Paxton (24) published his useful "A Pocket Botanical Dictionary." This was expanded into the better known "Paxton's Botanical Dictionary," edited by Samuel Hereman (15) and published in 1868. The more important horticultural genera are included, with etymologies; but a number of them are clearly erroneous, and some are rather unlikely suggestions as to meaning.

In the same period, G. C. Wittstein (33) prepared his exhaustive work on the etymology of botanical names—"Etymologisch-Botanisches Handwörterbuch" (1852). This has become a classic in botany because of its thoroughness and scholarship. It is by far the best dictionary of its kind which we know. Its etymological content is almost unquestionable, but the morphological reasons for the choice of a given name are not always stated and, when offered, are sometimes rather fanciful or open to serious doubt. The second edition (1856) is the more widely known and used. The number of orchid genera described since 1856 is, of course, very large, so that Wittstein, perhaps no more than half complete originally, is seriously out of date at the present time. It has, nevertheless, provided a very convenient and scholarly basis for our own work.

Another very useful dictionary of this sort is G. Nicholson's "The Illustrated Dictionary of Gardening" (23) in 4 volumes which appeared in 1884 and 1885. Its shortcoming from our point of view, naturally, is its partial coverage, for it considered only the genera then known in horticulture.

In 1888, E. S. Rand, Jr. (26) published "Orchids," a book containing an excellent glossary of botanical terms, including a number of generic names and their meanings. A more recent dictionary, A. B. Lyons' (20) "Plant Names, Scientific and Popular," first ed., 1900; second ed., 1907, is excellent, but insofar as the orchids are concerned, it includes only a small number of the total genera, mainly northern temperate ones.

A very recent dictionary published in Portuguese in Brazil commands our respect and praise. It is devoted exclusively to orchids and is remarkably complete. We refer to Hernani Urpfa's (32) "Dicionário Etimológico das Orquídeas" (1949). Urpfa has missed very few genera of orchids and has tried to include an etymological analysis of each name. The dictionary falls short only from the author's inability to consult many of the original descriptions and his failure occasionally to explain the particular morphological or other feature which lies behind the choice of a particular epithet.

It is primarily in floras and manuals that one finds the explanation of technical names. Yet it is surprising how few of these botanical publications really give much heed to this phase of nomenclature. The etymological scholarship found in some of these floras and manuals leaves much to be desired, so that the data which they offer must be employed with caution. We have had occasion, in preparing this book, to go through more than 60 floras or manuals in a search for additional information on the origin and meaning of the names of orchid genera, but only a few are outstanding enough in this respect to remember with appreciation. Of these, we might first point out Carl Ludwig Blume's (5) famous "Flora Javæ et Insularum Adjacentium" (1858), a veritable storehouse of information which we were seeking. Henry Baldwin's (4) "The Orchids of New England" (1894), a popular account, offers some etymologies. The so-called "Gray's Manual" ("A Handbook of the Flowering Plants and Ferns of the Central and Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada") especially the seventh edition (27) (1908) and the eighth edition (12) (1950), have paid scholarly attention to the explanation of generic names. N. L. Britton's (6) "Manual of the Flora of the Northern States and Canada" (1901) also offers the derivation of most generic epithets.

Curiously, it seems to be the more modern floristic works rather than the earlier ones which offer this important information. We might mention as of special merit R. S. Roger's (28) "South Australian Orchids," treated in J. M. Black's "Flora of South Australia" (1922) which offers the analysis of the names but fails to state the reason for applying a name to the orchid in question. In R. S. Adamson and T. M. Salter's (1) "Flora of the Cape Peninsula" (1950), there is an excellent treatment of this phase of nomenclature. The several volumes on Brazilian orchids by F. C. Hoehne (16) in "Flora Brasílica" offer the derivation and reason for every generic name discussed. The same is true of D. S. Correll's (8) "Native Orchids of North America" (1950), W. H. Nicholls' (22) "Orchids of Australia" (1951), R. S. Davis and M. L. Steiner's (9) "Philippine Orchids" (1952), P. H. Allen's (2) article on "The Orchids of Panama" (1953), and R. E. Schultes' (29) "Native Orchids of Trinidad and Tobago" (1960). There are other floras which attempt to explain the scientific names, but they are extremely few and, in general, treat the derivation of the epithets rather uncritically.

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RICHARD EVANS SCHULTES  
ARTHUR STANLEY PEASE



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Without the ever cheerful and spontaneous help of Mrs. Lazella Schwarten, Librarian of the Gray Herbarium and the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, our task in consulting the hundreds of original generic descriptions—some in publications so rare that they are not even in the extensive library of the Orchid Herbarium of Oakes Ames—would have been of supremely discouraging proportions. Mrs. Schwarten's contribution to our work is indeed of a decisive nature.

Dr. Victor S. Summerhayes of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, dean of British orchidologists, has at all times been happy to fit into his very busy schedule our several requests for information and advice, and we acknowledge how much the present work owes to his helpful friendliness.

We are truly appreciative of the work of the several artists whose plates we reproduce: Mrs. Blanche Ames, Mr. Gordon W. Dillon, Mr. Elmer W. Smith, Mr. G. C. K. Dunsterville, Miss Ruth Barton, Mrs. Dorothy Marsh, Mr. John Gumpfenberg, Miss E. B. Phillips, Mrs. Dorothy Allen, and Mr. Douglas Tibbitts. We must likewise acknowledge with thanks permission of the American Orchid Society for the use of a number of illustrations from the *American Orchid Society Bulletin*.

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