

**THE CULTURE OF
GREENHOUSE ORCHIDS;
OLD SYSTEM AND NEW**

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The culture of greenhouse orchids; old system and new by Frederick Boyle & Joseph Godseff

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FREDERICK BOYLE & JOSEPH GODSEFF

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BY

FREDERICK BOYLE

AUTHOR OF "ABOUT ORCHIDS—A CHAT," ETC.

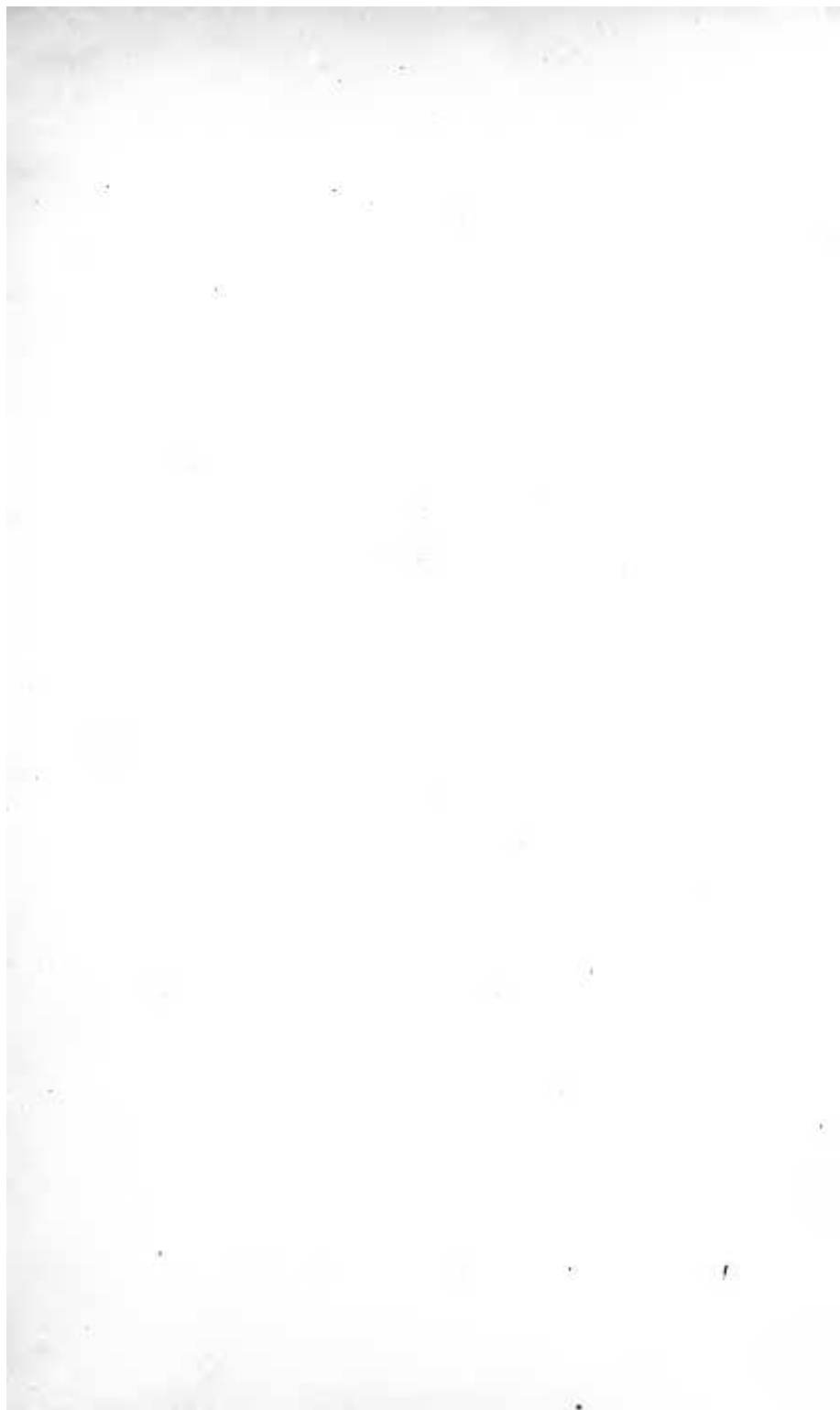
SUPERVISED BY JOSEPH GODSEFF

*WITH THREE PLATES IN COLOUR AND FIFTY ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY COL. F. C. TAYLOR*

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P R E F A C E

THE literature of orchidology is voluminous in these days. But the book written "by an amateur for amateurs" is still needed. I have at least the advantage of knowing what manner of work it should be, for I have suffered from the want of it. The various manuals current are not fitted, though designed, for the class I would address—that large number of persons whose gardener, competent in other branches of his profession, must "turn up the volume" for guidance in dealing with orchids, and, often enough, appeals to his master's judgment thereon. How many they are my correspondence proves. Such persons demand plain words from the author, not general expressions; having no capacity to read between the lines, they must needs mark every gap where all is smooth for the trained orchid-grower. From that class I myself have struggled upwards until I, too, consult the expert without observing deficiencies. But I do not forget the time when wicked words arose as I turned from one authority to another, seeking in vain the

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simple fact, the clear downright statement "yea" or "nay," the bit of elementary instruction which ignorance requires. Remembering that era, I feel able to write such a book as would have cheered and helped me then. It is said that poets "learn in suffering what they teach in song." I venture to apply the aphorism.

This is no disparagement of the valuable works existing. What they lack may be expressed in one word—precision. General terms are used, and they suffice for the experienced. But the beginner knows not how to interpret them. He does too much or too little, and always he is irritated by uncertainty. Upon these points it is unnecessary to say more; the reader will judge.

But the issue of a new book on the Culture of Orchids may be justified on other grounds. For several years past the shrewd horticulteurs of Belgium have favoured a system utterly different to ours, even opposed in some respects to the principles which we are used to think essential. At the present time it is universally accepted in Belgium, and generally throughout the Continent; but in England few orchid-growers could be found who have given it a trial—the great majority, perhaps, have not yet heard of it. And they laugh, not altogether without reason, if told of practices by the foreigner which defy all their established rules; but they would cease to laugh at sight of

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a Belgian collection grown on the new system. It may be all wrong in theory, but in practice somehow it works wonders.

Evidently, it is desirable that English amateurs should be acquainted with every detail of a discovery so important, which, among other advantages claimed, certainly makes a perceptible reduction in the expense and the trouble of culture. They may adopt it or no. It would be a grave responsibility to recommend such a drastic change. Circumstances vary. There are excellent gardeners who, having worked all their lives on the orthodox methods with credit, would not willingly give the new a fair trial. And, in truth, the orthodox methods have served us well for more than half a century. Therefore I shall say only this: the Belgians raise finer plants than we, and, on an average, finer flowers. After opposing the heresy with scorn for years, Mr. Godseff is now enthusiastic in its favour; and it is adopted at St. Albans.

I deal with cool orchids alone in this volume—the class most interesting to the public. Even thus limited, however, to keep it of a handy size—for the era of big books has passed—I have omitted botanical details which have no reference to the bloom. Very, very few of those for whom I write need scientific memoranda for identifying a plant by the character of its leaves and pseudo-bulbs, or even by the analysis, in Greek and Latin terms, of

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its flower. They trust the dealer to supply that species or variety which they ask of him, and in a lifetime they will not find themselves mistaken.

I have ventured on a great innovation, however, suggested by my own experience. I give the minimum price of all orchids mentioned, where a price can be fixed at this time of writing. The convenience of this information is evident, but it was not so easy to decide how the system should be worked in practice. I have explained my method in an article.

Finally, some may ask what are my credentials for offering advice upon the culture of orchids? They need not be cited, for Mr. Joseph Godseff has examined every page of the work, and he allows me to affix his *imprimatur*.

FREDERICK BOYLE.

NORTH LODGE,
ANDISCOMBE.