



Plate 1.—(Frontispiece)

Kalchbrennera corallocephala (Welw. & Curr.) Kalchbr. (after Kalchbrenner).

PREFACE.

Dr. Ethel Doidge has asked me to write a short preface to this valuable piece of work which she has just completed.

It is indeed a pleasure to do so for two reasons. Firstly it gives me a very welcome opportunity to pay tribute to a former colleague, who has carried out for many years excellent and most painstaking work in a field of science that is all too little known to, and still less appreciated by the general public in this country. I refer, naturally, to the study of our African fungi and their many important bearings on both plant and animal life throughout the continent. Dr. Doidge took up this study more than 35 years ago. She has made her impress on it and has left a record of it for which younger workers in years to come will never cease to thank her.

Secondly I must refer very briefly to the subject itself. The foundation of a fungus herbarium was laid in Pretoria in 1906, and, largely owing to the loyal co-operation of early colleagues, had grown by 1916 into a collection of over 4,400 specimens. Dr. Doidge's share in this work has been mentioned, her chief contribution being to the ascomycetes and rusts. The late Dr. P. A. van der Byl, who later built up a second herbarium at Stellenbosch, became interested in the Polyporaceae in the indigenous forests and collected a large number of specimens. Miss Bottomley, whose main interest has been in the Gasteromycetes and in fungi parasitic on plants of economic value, has been in charge of the herbarium almost since its inception; under her care it has grown to a collection of over 35,000 specimens of which a large proportion is fungi of southern and tropical Africa.

When it is realised that by far the greater part of southern Africa experiences a semi-arid to arid climate, and that the humid and semi-humid portions have been comparatively little worked over for the collection of fungi, it will be appreciated what a vast field of study still awaits those who are to follow on.

The recent work by Fleming and his co-workers on the genus *Penicillium* opens up an entirely new world in the study of fungi and one that may lead to still greater benefits to mankind.

When the mycologist succeeds in unravelling the secrets of the fungi cultivated in the fungus gardens so characteristic of the termite mounds throughout semi-arid and arid Africa, perhaps this will then reveal the reasons that lie hidden in man's failure to maintain successfully the fertility of the cropland in the semi-humid and semi-arid climates.

The field for research in Mycology in this country is thus immense, but this Science rarely appeals to the average Administrator under whom much of the work usually falls. Its progress, therefore, must naturally be slow and far from encouraging. However, there are still some labourers in the field of Science whose only thought and ambition is to advance the knowledge of their particular subject for the general benefit of mankind, and in this Dr. Doidge has certainly succeeded. She has tirelessly paved the way and truly laid the foundation on which Mycology in Southern Africa will be built. Great things no doubt will come from the further study of African fungi and more that is new from Africa will still arrive, but come what may, future workers in this field will rightly appraise the value of Dr. Doidge's work.

I trust, therefore, that no time will be lost in publishing this work, so that it may become available not only to workers in Africa but also to mycologists in other parts of the world.

Irene,

I. B. POLE EVANS.

12th November, 1945.