

28. PAPHIOPEDILUM VICTORIA-MARIAE

Frederick Sander introduced this attractive orchid into cultivation in 1893, plants having been sent to him from central west Sumatra by his assiduous collector, Wilhelm Micholitz. Sander named it in honour of Princess Victoria Mary on her betrothal to the Duke of York on 9 May 1893, the same day that he showed it to the Royal Horticultural Society's Orchid Committee.

It was figured in *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* in 1898 but the illustration, reproduced here, shows a fraudulently three-flowered plant. In reality, it never opens more than two at a time, but on the original watercolour by Matilda Smith which is at Kew, we can see her note to John Nugent Fitch, the lithographer, to add a third flower to produce an aesthetically more pleasing result!

Considerable confusion has reigned over the name of this species, partly because of the similarity of the name to that of *Cypripedium victoria-regina*, which Sander had named the previous year. Mark Wood (1976a) resurrected the latter name and applied it to this taxon. However, it is quite clear from the original description of *C. victoria-regina* that it is, along with *P. chamberlainianum*, closely allied to but distinct from *P. victoria-mariae* by reasons of its flowers which lack deep maroon stripes on the dorsal sepal, petals that lack large purple spots and a narrow tapering lip that also lacks spotting. Wood's sinking of the name *C. victoria-mariae* as illegitimate can therefore be ignored.

For reasons explained above, I have chosen to treat *P. victoria-mariae* as a distinct species, whilst accepting its close affinities with *P. victoria-regina* and its allies. In floral features, it is the most distinctive member of the group and has a stout characteristically yellow-pubescent scape.



Fig. 58. *Paphiopedilum victoria-mariae*, close-up of flower. (Photo.: P. Cribb)