

ARNOLDIA REVIEWS

A Quest of Flowers: The Plant Explorations of Frank Ludlow and George Sherriff. Harold R. Fletcher. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. xxix and 387 pages (includes botanical index and general index). Illustrated. £10.

Frank Ludlow, naturalist and educator, and George Sherriff, professional soldier, met in Kashgar in the winter of 1929. Finding that they shared an interest in the flora and fauna of the eastern Himalayas, they planned a series of expeditions to systematically cover the Himalayas of Bhutan and Tibet. Between the years 1933 and 1949, they produced numerous botanical discoveries, introducing to England countless plants that had been overlooked by earlier explorers of the same territory, primarily within the genera *Rhododendron* and *Primula*. Their extensive and detailed notes on each collection were of great importance in the taxonomic classification of the Himalayan flora.

This volume, compiled largely from the diaries and correspondence of Ludlow and Sherriff, will give the reader a vivid image of the land, the people, and the plants of the eastern Himalayas, as well as a feeling for the two explorers as individuals. In all cases of plant collections, the specimen's collection number is noted, increasing the book's value to the botanist. As is generally the case with accounts of such expeditions, the book abounds with descriptions of exotic locales and excellent photographs of the terrain and of individual plants. The photographs have all been reproduced in muted tones and with their corners cropped diagonally to give the impression of old prints in a scrapbook. To some this might seem too "cutesy," but I found it pleasant.

One annoyance, however, was the type style used. The "t" consistently appears to be wearing an *accent aigu*, and the Italic style includes characters (notably the "d" and "h") that are considerably more decorative than readable. This reviewer found it quite impossible to read for any length of time without eyestrain — very irritating when the subject matter was so engrossing.

JENNIFER HICKS

Major Medicinal Plants. Julia F. Morton. Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas. 431 pages, illustrated. \$49.50.

The word pharmacognosy means the study of drugs and other economic products obtained from natural sources. The formidability of the term prevented the author from using it in the title, but that is what the book is about. She has written for two groups: (1) the pharmacologic students who need a reference source in a field that has become relatively neglected in the curriculum, and (2) the consuming public. The latter group is particularly important because recent years have seen the laity acquire an unprecedented thirst for knowledge of things medical and a strong interest in the consumption of natural products, both food and drugs.

I am not equipped to enter the discussion alluded to by the distinguished professors who wrote the forewords, as to how far the curriculum of schools of pharmacy should continue this movement away from natural products and towards synthetic drugs and their clinical uses. But I can vouch for the great interest the volume holds for the consumer group.

The major medicinal plants are arranged according to their twenty-eight families and are listed with scientific and common names and synonyms. Dr. Morton has set up each chapter under parallel headings so that the sources, preparation, constituents (active principles), medicinal uses and toxicities are not omitted in any. One can find without difficulty

that reserpine is the most active ingredient of *Rauvolfia serpentina*, or Serpent-wood of the Dogbane family, Apocyanaceae, and that it is native to Southern Asia where it was used for snake bite and nervousness for 4,000 years before its modern recognition for the treatment of high blood pressure. The methods of cultivation of the plant and the extraction of reserpine are outlined in detail, as are its toxic effects if the doses are too large. All the other products are treated in the same manner. Some of them are familiar, such as castor oil (*Ricinus communis*); some not, such as cade oil (*Juniperus oxycedrus*) for dermatitis. Some are an essential part of our therapeutic armamentarium; for example, digitalis for heart disease (*Digitalis purpurea* or foxglove). Others are not, such as marsh-mallow (*Althaea officinalis*) used as a demulcent and emollient (incidentally, no longer an ingredient of the confection).

The orderly arrangement is carried into two appendixes. The first is a list of plants that, although still listed in the Pharmacopoeia and used in patent medicines, have fallen into clinical disuse. Examples are *Salicin* from *Salix*, the original source of aspirin, which is now made synthetically, and witch hazel from *Hamamelis*. The second appendix is a list of plants that are used only as vehicles, lubricants, and flowers. Examples are the alga, *Furcellaria fastigiata*, or Danish agar used for suspensions and foams, and *Smilax aristolochiaefolia*, or Mexican sarsaparilla, a familiar flavoring agent.

Since most medicinal plants are toxic in overdose, the book is also of concern to those dealing with the effects of poisonous plants on man and animals. The illustrations are good, the index useful, and the author has placed a list of six hundred references at the end as a guiding hand for those who wish to proceed further.

In sum, it is a scholarly work on a subject with a wide interest.

RICHARD WARREN, M.D.

Ehret: Flower Painter Extraordinary. Gerta Calmann. Boston, MA: Little Brown (a New York Graphic Society Book). 160 pages with 95 plates in color and black and white. \$32.50.

George Dionysius Ehret (1695-1769) rose from obscure beginnings as a gardener in Heidelberg to become one of the most significant botanical and horticultural illustrators through his efforts for the authors of his lifetime — Sir Hans Sloans, Philip Miller, C. J. Trew, Joseph Banks, and Carl Linnaeus, among others. Mrs. Calmann has written of Ehret's life and associations, citing from correspondence and published works in such a way as to bring the man back among us. Ehret's likes and dislikes, his attention to dissections and botanical detail, his search for patrons and a steady income, his intrigue with new plant material, his preference for living material in contrast to dried specimens, and his prolific lifetime production are well described. She estimates that more than 3,000 of his drawings are extant, and she was able to visit the outstanding collections of his work preserved in England, France, Germany, and the United States.

The drawings selected for reproduction are representative of the development of Ehret's style, and each item is documented so as to present location. The incorporation by Ehret of details and dissections, of insects, butterflies, and snails, and his use of descriptive legends and dedications are well shown. The text contains many references to notes supporting each chapter. Useful indices are given to plants and to persons.

Most teachers, and taxonomists in particular, will value the color reproduction of Ehret's "Tabella" of Linnaeus' Sexual System of Plant Classification, which has been available, generally, only in smaller size and in black and white. Those interested in the history of botany and horticulture will find many useful anecdotes and references. This is a book to read with pleasure, to leaf through to enjoy the pictures, or to use for the immense reference value contained.

RICHARD A. HOWARD

Die Hölzer Mitteleuropas, Dietger Grosser. Springer-Verlag: Berlin, Germany. 208 pages, illustrated, packet charts. U.S. \$43.20.

Unhappily, the high price (20¢ a page) and the text in German will dissuade many from purchasing this excellent small volume. The first section of the book is descriptive and explanatory for general wood anatomy. Diagrams, light photographs, S.E.M. photographs, and charts are used effectively in presenting concisely what is generally verbose and elaborate in anatomy texts.

The second section describes and illustrates the wood of common genera of central Europe. Seven genera of conifers and fifty-one genera, representing thirty-two families, of woody Dicotyledoneae are treated, often with several species of the important genera. Text material describes the general appearance of the plant, its use or distribution; the macroscopic characteristics of the wood and the microscopic characteristics, in distinctive paragraphs. Usually four illustrations form a facing plate, with 25x and 75x magnifications of the cross section, and the radial section usually twice the magnification of the tangential, so that the appropriate characters are well known. The inclusion of such genera as *Ilex*, *Buxus*, *Hedera*, *Philadelphus*, and *Daphne* indicates the unusual coverage offered. The volume would be extremely useful in a plant anatomy class that uses campus plants for study.

Two drawbacks should also be mentioned. Several of the plates are foldouts; these buckle with a few uses and must be trimmed. While all the text is on glossy paper, the low quality of the paper of the packet and of the three folded tables is regrettable. One of these, a tabular summary of all taxa included in the text, with vessel element, fibers, rays, and parenchyma, will not stand the long use it is apt to receive.

RICHARD A. HOWARD

Gentians. Mary Bartlett. Blandford Press: Poole, Dorset, U.K., 160 pages, illustrated. £3.25.

Basically this is a fine addition to the list of excellent books on Gentians for the gardener. The first half is devoted to discussions of various aspects of the history and cultivation of this wonderful group of plants, and the last half is made up mostly of individual accounts of about fifty of the commonly cultivated species, giving descriptions and cultural tips. Although the book was written for British gardeners, the cultural information generally is valid for us in the United States except that a number of the species included are tender or otherwise culturally unsuited to the climate here in the Northeast.

I can find little fault with the correctness of the information included, and it is well presented. The treatment of taxonomically difficult species complexes, such as *Gentiana acaulis* and *G. verna*, and their relatives, is handled sensibly. The chapter on hybrids is the most complete account of this subject presently available, and the sections on South American and New Guinean Gentians are unique in the horticultural literature. The only serious flaw is the treatment of *Gentianella*. Most authors ignore the very obvious and taxonomically valid distinctions between this genus and *Gentiana*, so I must give Ms. Bartlett credit for trying. But her chapter on *Gentianella* includes only the "Fringed Gentians" which some authorities include in another genus, *Gentianopsis*. The chapter on annuals correctly assigns most species to *Gentianella*, except for *G. bulgarica*. Finally, the New Zealand and South American species are included under *Gentiana* while they are obviously *Gentianellas*.

The book is well illustrated with generally good color photographs and clear line drawings. Some of the drawings are unfortunately redrawn from previously published works without acknowledgement, one which I recognize being *The Gentians of Canada, Alaska, and Greenland*, by J. M. Gillett.

RICHARD E. WEAVER, JR.



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