

Book Reviews

penetrate. I looked for the usual introduction on “How to use this book”, and did not find it, until page 39. Equally, it takes a little searching to find out why a large section of the listed material is not actually reproduced in the book, but is on the microfiche. Finally, the coverage of countries is heavily towards Britain and North America, although this is only explained in one of the essays. Even this enormous survey is not exhaustive, and should not be regarded as such. However, I am sure that motivated users of the catalogue will be able to cope with these problems and be helped considerably in the location of archival material.

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A. G. MORTON, *History of botanical science*, London and New York, Academic Press, 1981, 8vo, pp. xii, 474, illus., £8.80 (paperback).

Botany has on the whole been well served by its historians, but readers have long felt the need for a fresh account of this science, particularly one that takes advantage of modern insights and scholarship. Age can hardly wither Julius Sachs's *History of botany*, but things have surely changed since the 1860s. When Sachs was considering the history of his subject there was little to say about plant physiology or the developing fields of cytology or genetics; photosynthesis was still a mystery, ecology merely a strange word coined by Ernst Haeckel in 1866. Despite a passionate interest in every aspect of the botanical sciences, Sachs therefore found it hard to make his book more than a story of advances in classification and the anatomy of plants – the very areas guaranteed to make eyes glaze and heads nod.

Professor Morton has achieved the near impossible in his *History of botanical science*, providing us with a lively, informative, and interesting survey of botany. Like all good histories, it throws new light on familiar figures and introduces others unknown to most professional scholars. J. B. Amici, Anton de Bary, and Joachim Jung take their place alongside old favourites like Ray and Grew; Theophrastus is reassessed; Goethe is well discussed. Yet the real merit of this book lies in the author's determination to continue the story through to the present day, and his ability to place every event and intellectual achievement firmly in its context, demonstrating that the history of plant life is more than counting stamens. Botany is here integrated with movements in the other sciences, and neatly interwoven with a larger history of Europe. Medicine, horticulture, and the needs of agrarian economies are given their due, as are the vagaries of scientists (laziness, p. 183, political allegiance, p. 232) and quirky interludes such as seventeenth-century tulipomania, where rare bulbs were changing hands for thousands of guilders. The commonsensical approach of the text is also cleverly backed up by long, discursive footnotes which, for the connoisseur of such things, are a delight in themselves. It would be hard to find a better study.

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S. M. WALTERS, *The shaping of Cambridge botany*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, 4to, pp. xv, 121, illus., £17.50.

Charles Raven wrote of John Parkinson's *Theatrum botanicum*, published in 1640, as being the work of a man revealing “the authentic passion for a garden, and the quiet wisdom of a gardener” (quoted by Walters, p. 9). Surely these same words could be applied to this volume that marks the sesquicentenary of Henslow's Botanic Garden at Cambridge University. Walters gives an account of the development of botany at Cambridge, which shows a wealth of primary research and sympathy for predecessors who found their life-work in the study of the living plant. Indeed, the book is sub-titled “A short history of *whole-plant* botany at Cambridge from the time of Ray into the present century”. There is a useful bibliography, and the author is especially good as a biographer of J. S. Henslow (1796–1861), to whom he gives credit for removing the plant from the herbarium, and for emphasizing that it was a living thing – “Henslow had foreshadowed the dethronement of Linnaean systematics, but circumstances pre-