

Hobbies

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means by which he turns his material into art and/or profit. As no one cares what make of typewriter the novelist uses (except perhaps the maker), surely no one is much concerned with what kind of precision-built, chrome-plated, coated-lensed tool the photographer uses; and while a few technicians might be interested or envious for a time, few of the millions who participate visually in his work care much how long and in what temperature it was developed as long as it has something valid and useful to say clearly.

Flora Wild

"Wild Flowers of America," based on paintings by Mary Vaux Walcott, with additional paintings by Dorothy Falcon Platt; edited by H. W. Rickett (Crown Publishers. 400 pp., 71 plates. \$10) makes available to the general public some classic portraits of America flora. Here it is reviewed by Alfred Stefferud, editor of publications for the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

By Alfred Stefferud

MARY VAUX WALCOTT was a rich, talented, determined artist-scientist who spent a good share of her eighty years searching for wild flowers and making beautifully accurate watercolors of them. Naturalists discuss her career and her masterpiece, "North American Wild Flowers," in the same respectful tones they use for Audubon and Linnaeus.

When she was sixty or so she had made more than four hundred paintings. Their enthusiastic reception at a few exhibitions gave her the idea of publishing them. Horticultural societies, wealthy Americans who subscribed five hundred dollars apiece, the Smithsonian Institution, and Mrs. Walcott herself put up the money. William Edwin Rudge, the New York printer, and more than four years of work and experimentation solved the rest of the problem. He laboriously made 2,500 prints of each painting. Five hundred sets, signed by Mrs. Walcott, were put up unbound in luxurious portfolios for sale at five hundred dollars each. The rest of the sets, also in five-volume cases, had smaller margins and a different arrangement of descriptions and, at

a hundred dollars each, were called the library edition. The production job is said to have cost \$750,000.

It was truly a work for the ages, one that nature-lovers have drooled over since 1925. They need not drool so much any longer; they can get a reasonable facsimile of it at an everyday price. "North American Wild Flowers" was not copyrighted. From the public domain Crown Publishers has brought 380 of Mrs. Walcott's paintings and put them, with twenty by Dorothy Falcon Platt, into a sturdy, attractive, king-size, ten-dollar bound volume, "Wild Flowers

of America." H. W. Rickett, of the New York Botanical Garden, wrote an 1800-word introduction.

Very likely Mrs. Walcott and the Smithsonian, who have been approached before with plans for cheaper editions, would not be exactly happy with "Wild Flowers of America." The plates have lost some of their delicacy, brilliance, and depth. The paper is not perfectly opaque. The poetry and flower lore of the parent work have given way to more matter-of-fact descriptions—surely a book like this gains from the marriage of the arts and skills and sciences of poetry,

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painting, writing, typography, printing.

But comparisons with the limited edition of another and a lower-cost day are perhaps unfair. In comparison with many another flower book, "Wild Flowers of America" shines like a beacon.

Flora East

"The Macmillan Wild Flower Book," with illustrations by Edith Farrington Johnston, text by Clarence J. Hylander (Macmillan, 480 pp., 232 illus., \$15), is a new album of flowering plants found in the Eastern United States. Norman Taylor, our reviewer, is the editor of "The Encyclopedia of Gardening."

By Norman Taylor

THE Macmillan Wild Flower Book" avoids the pitfall that thirty years ago trapped the Smithsonian Institution's "Wild Flowers of America," in which superb color illustrations were embellished only by chatty talk. In his descriptive text, Dr. Clarence J. Hylander has reduced the jargon of botanists to a minimum.

The selection of five hundred species from over twenty thousand is a major decision in any book of this sort. By its very limitations it can never replace more exhaustive works, and hence cannot be even a moderately comprehensive guide to the flora of its area.

Dr. Hylander and Edith Farrington Johnston, who made the 232 colored illustrations, have made a good selection of the showiest plants within the area, east of the Rockies and south to Florida. No technical flora has yet dared to cover such a huge region or aimed to include such a staggering number of species. The present book covers only a handful of really Southern species and a dozen or so of prairie plants, so that it is primarily a book for those in the Northeastern states, and perhaps it should say so.

Over thirty species have full descriptions but no pictures. One cannot help wondering why, when condensation was so necessary, the garden phlox, the French mulberry, and the English cowslip should have been selected. The first two may be moderately common mostly as "escapes," but the primrose, which is the despair of many gardeners, is certainly very rare as an established "wild flower."

Equally surprising is the statement that *Lantana camara* is a shrub that grows in Maryland. Every gardener knows it comes from tropical America, is grown in greenhouses in the North, or as a summer bedding plant as tender as a canna. That it no doubt occasionally escapes to roadsides in the South scarcely makes it a "wild flower."

It is, however, idle to pick flaws in the text (there are many others) when the colored illustrations were the obvious reason for making such an expensive book. No one who is not as skilful as Mrs. Johnston knows the difficulty of reproducing an artist's painting on the printed page. It is only fair to say that the publishers have in some cases done her less than justice. Blue is a rare color in the plant world, but we do have it in dayflowers, some gentians, and one or two bellflowers. The blue of none of these is satisfactory in the Macmillan book and this should surely be charged against the engraver, not to such an accomplished artist as Mrs. Johnston. No doubt from the same cause some of her whites have become tinged with other colors. The illustrations, as a whole, are of very high quality, however, and reflect great credit on the artist who painted most of them from fresh material. That they will inevitably be compared with the Walcott paintings is as unfair as to liken Mendelssohn to Mozart.

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT NO. 562

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 562 will be found in the next issue.

YEFS TSWUFL LSSL ZUYA

YAS SNS DH B QAUCR

BWR YAUWVL ZUYA

YAS PEBUW DH B

TSWUU.—K.V. YADJBIBW.

Answer to No. 561

An efficiency regime can't be run without a few heroes stuck about to carry off the dullness.—E.M. Forster.