
Cereal, Bamboo, and Grass

"It is now more than thirty years since, at my suggestion, Ethel Sargent sowed the grains of wheat and maize which formed the starting-point of work upon the grass seedling which we did together." . . . "The mystery abides." Thus does Mrs. Arber begin and end her book, but between those two sentences such a multiplicity of material is presented that it will long remain the source-book for those seeking information on the structure of the grasses.

Since there are over 8,000 species in the group it would be impossible adequately to incorporate the vast amount of information already accumulated and in the words of the author: ". . . I have no such encyclopaedic aim, but . . . have sought, primarily, to detect the pattern and rhythm underlying that complex of plant types called the Gramineae; . . ." Yet this central theme has not deterred her from writing three chapters on the origin and dispersal of the economic grasses; nor has it interfered with a delightful interpolation of "asides," born of a long intimacy with the comparative morphology of vascular plants, without which the book would lose much of its charm and a great deal of its stimulating philosophy.

Although primarily designed for the plant anatomist and morphologist, the book will be indispensable for the agronomist and taxonomist. Neither will the plant geneticist nor the ecologist be disappointed, for they too will find a great deal of solid information pertinent to their fields.

It is the culmination of a monumental piece of personal investigation—as evinced by the 212 text figures containing over 1,200 individual drawings and with but few exceptions, done by the author herself. It is amply appended with a twenty-one page index and a bibliography of nearly 600 titles.

For the botanist who has any preconceived notions that the problems of plant morphology have been settled, the reviewer specifically recommends Chapter 5, on the "Tree Habit" in the Angiosperms; Chapter 14 on "Morphological Categories;" and the last chapter, on the "Pattern and Rhythm in the Gramineae." They may be disturbing, but they will surely prove stimulating.—W. H. CAMP.

The Gramineae, by Agnes Arber; xvii + 480 pp. Cambridge, England, The University Press; New York, The Macmillan Co., 1934.