

PREFACE

SOME fifteen years ago, the late Ethel Sargent accepted the invitation of the Editors to write a book on Monocotyledons for this series. It is a matter for the deepest regret that the failure of her health prevented her from using this opportunity of treating a subject, which she had made peculiarly her own, in more comprehensive fashion than was possible within the limits of her published memoirs. Shortly before her death in 1918, when she was beginning to feel that her physical powers had become unequal to any prolonged strain, she suggested that I should undertake the task in her stead. I had hoped that among her manuscripts, which were left in my hands, there might have been some fragments intended for the book, which it would have been possible to utilise; but with the exception of a number of drawings, and a few notes which I have been able to quote, I found nothing which I could incorporate. For the present volume I am, therefore, wholly responsible. By the generosity of the Mistress and Council of Girton College, I have had the use of Miss Sargent's library, and also of her collection of slides; these, in addition to a bibliography of the literature relating to Monocotyledons, which she had begun to compile, have been of the utmost service in connexion with the present study. But this book—or indeed any other piece of work falling to my lot—owes more to Ethel Sargent than can be conveyed by any statement of specific indebtedness. As her assistant, and, afterwards, her colleague in joint investigation, I received from her a training for which no expression of gratitude can be adequate. That my study of Monocotyledons has led me to depart, fundamentally, from the views which she herself advocated, is a result which she would have welcomed: she was keenly alive to the fact that scientific hypotheses have in their nature no pretension to permanence, and that they should be judged by their capacity for bringing to light further generalisations, to which, in turn, they yield their place. To work with Ethel Sargent was to realise the pursuit of science as an unending adventure of the mind: in dedicating this book to her memory, I dedicate it to the very spirit of research.

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