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The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library.

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March 31, 1967

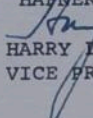
Mr. George B. Van Schaack
Librarian
Missouri Botanical Garden
2315 Tower Grove Avenue
St. Louis , Missouri 63110

Dear George:

Your letters of January 30th, and February 15th have now been digested. When the people at the Garden asked me about the Wild Flower book ,I told them I wasnot too happy about it. Some of my objections were the same voiced in your letter, but I am afraid that our voices will not be heard in the wilderness. I am only glad that we do not have to sell the book.

I do hope you will find a replacement and enjoy your retirement. I am now working(5 years) on a Catalog of early American Botany which should go to the printer shortly, We will send you a copy when ready.

Kind regards, Sincerely yours
HAFNER PUBLISHING COMPANY


HARRY LUBRECHT
VICE PRESIDENT

HL/sh

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN HERBARIUM
NORTH UNIVERSITY BUILDING
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN, U. S. A. 48104

April 20, 1967

Dr. George B. Van Schaack
Missouri Botanical Garden
2315 Tower Grove Ave.
St. Louis, Missouri 63110


Dear George:

I have been quite remiss in failing to acknowledge with thanks your communication of some two months ago, consisting of a copy of your detailed report to McGraw-Hill on the Rickett Wildflower book.

Probably I was indeed too generous in my Michigan Botanist review. No one can question the errors you cite and the faults with many of the pictures. I would not deny for a minute that the pictures could have been better in many cases, and ought to have been better. But I would still say that it's the best collection of pictures of our wildflowers yet produced. Unfortunately, the "best" is farther from perfect than it should have been. (Frans Stafleu, here last month, pointed out that the "Aralia racemosa" is really Sambucus pubens, with opposite leaves visible!)

When your letter came, I immediately had made for you the enclosed copy of my letter to Cronquist about the newly launched (then only proposed) Flora of North America. [Excuse the poor reproduction -- this is a copy of a carbon copy.] The same kinds of errors which are, perhaps, a little less important in the wildflower book will, I fear, be super-multiplied in a "quickie" flora of the continent! These are not the kinds of works which can be produced speedily.

Best regards,


Edward G. Voss

June 14, 1966

Dr. Arthur Cronquist
The New York Botanical Garden
Bronx, New York 10458

Dear Art:

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I hope you have now seen the minutes of the meeting of the ASPY committee to consider the feasibility of a flora of North America. As the sole dissenter to the final report of the committee, I am elaborating herewith my reactions, as you have requested. The minutes give a good impression of the meeting as a whole; I have no quarrel with them. The differences of opinion are recorded, and I think they involve, for the most part, differences in deciding what problems are important and which ones may be disregarded or "swept under the rug." I came away from the meeting feeling much more than I did previously that a flora as proposed is feasible -- in the sense that something could be produced, but I am as convinced as ever that the project is not desirable, for the product, at this state of our knowledge, would be a greater disservice to science than a service.

I do not need to expound here on the several good arguments which do exist for such a flora and which are recorded in the minutes. A project of this sort would doubtless stimulate students in "classical" taxonomy and floristics, improve the "image" of our field in the eyes of others, help to reveal problems needing further attention, coordinate and improve existing overlapping projects, and so forth. I am for all of these worthy goals, at least if they can be achieved without an equivalent amount of undesirable effects to offset the ledger. Given, then, there are some virtues to such a project -- and these were made more clear to me at the meeting of the committee. Let me spell out a few of the negative points which still haunt me.

(1) The sticking point to any particular objection is that the matter was not a problem for the Flora Europaea, or that it was easily solved for that Flora. It seems to me that worship of the Flora Europaea, fine as it is, can be carried too far, and is not a substitute for sober consideration of the merits of a flora of North America, which will (almost entirely) not be written in Europe or by Europeans. I do not speak from personal experience in Europe, but I have the impression (as I think is generally conceded) that Americans work under greater [at least, more numerous] pressures, are involved in more activities, hurry more, devote longer days to academic pursuits, have less "spare time," etc. I am not saying that this need is good, but I do think we must consider the manpower situation more seriously than has been done. Ideally, as much of the flora as possible would be written by monographers who have familiarity with at least some of the species in a portion of their North American range; most of these will be people in academic life, buried in the projects, reports, committees, paper work, teaching, curating, editing, writing, and/or other duties which no Americans allow ourselves to become overburdened with. There are limits, which cannot be shrugged off, to the trite philosophy that the way to get something done is to ask a busy man,

(?) Closely related here is the idea that the specialists will be "snared" into contributing their specialties for a continental flora (although admittedly it isn't stated quite that baldly). Taxonomist X, an authority on family Y or genus Z, will be invited to write a treatment of his group by a certain deadline -- with the threat, implied or explicit, that if he is unwilling or too tardy, the group will be assigned to his chief rival, or to some new Ph. D. who would be willing to undertake it in the secretariat. I admit that such a ruse operandi would tend to be effective, and thus that the project is in a way "feasible." But I think it is an imposition on the specialists (I'm glad I'm not one!) to pressure them in this way. (And to whatever extent they resist the pressure, of course, to that extent the flora would be deficient in authority.) As with the Flora Europaea, several taxonomists would be needed as full-time research associates to write up the considerable portion of the flora for which there are no specialists (or no willing ones). Any project which expects to gather together a half-dozen or so young taxonomists competent to do the work required is going to have to offer salaries and working conditions competitive with all the other institutions trying to hire competent taxonomists! (This is not an insurmountable problem -- enough money will do anything -- but it is part of the manpower consideration, and I think may be somewhat different from the European situation.)

Incidentally, in observing that there are about 750 members of the IAPT in Canada and the U. S. compared to about 600 in Europe (including, by the way, cryptogamic botanists), I did not suggest that we were any better off from a manpower standpoint. Americans are notorious "joiners." A great many graduate students, and most staff members of some institutions, belong to IAPT; Europe has, I believe, relatively few student members, often only one senior member per institution, and very few Soviets. My only point is that for a continent roughly twice as large, with perhaps somewhat more species (not fewer, anyway), and thus far less well known, we probably have no significantly larger number of available taxonomists.

(3) A more serious problem involves the extent to which existing information could indeed be utilized in preparation of such a flora (or could be, on a short schedule). Even if we agree that the flora should represent a stage of synthesis in the history of American taxonomy (and I would not agree that the time is yet ripe for that synthesis), how much of the available herbarium material would actually be examined and utilized and incorporated into the synthesis? When groups have already been monographed, or thorough local floras prepared, then much of the "available knowledge" will be evident. But there will be many groups and vast areas where the only source of available knowledge will be scattered among countless herbaria (and let us not underestimate the importance of small, perhaps old, herbaria for distributional records). Synthesis of this knowledge is indeed desirable (if we have any taxonomic agreement on the entities), but trying to do it all at once for the entire continent strikes me as a premature biting off of more than can be chewed. [See also lb, below.] I cannot accept the proposition that any complete North American flora would be better than none, and that a continental flora had best precede thorough regional work.

(4) The Flora Europaea seems to have a practically hypnotic effect in guiding deliberations on a flora of North America (see (1) above). Proponents of the latter, collectively if not individually, seem to me to become involved in some circular arguments; "pros" become "cons" and "cons" become "pros" until at any given moment there would seem to be no serious objections to so stupendous an undertaking. A few final illustrations, mostly related to this observation:

(a) In questioning the need for a flora of North America, I point out that literature on our flora is for the most part in a single language, English, and that national barriers have not restricted the growth of libraries and accessibility of literature; hence, that we do not have the need, which obviously existed in Europe, to provide a single flora, widely available, in a single language. Proponents respond, of course, that this merely means it will be that much easier to write a flora of North America. (It is amazing how "easiness" becomes a criterion when neither need nor scientific value can be invoked! It is the same argument that since we know less, it will take less time to complete it.)

(b) Blake & Atwood require 79 pages to list floras for Canada and the U. S.; 564 pages for western Europe alone. More pages are required to list floristic works for Scandinavia than for all of the U. S. and Canada. (Comparatively little of this difference can be attributed to the time lag before appearance of Blake's second volume.) I take this as an indication that much of the sifting and evaluating of specimen records (as well as of taxonomy) preliminary to a continental flora was already done in Europe; but it has been argued that since there is so little literature, in comparison, for North America our task would be so much easier! I say that if we have to go back to the specimens in herbaria, back to existing knowledge less thoroughly documented than the European, we have a more formidable task, if we are to produce a work of comparable caliber and if we are indeed to synthesize existing knowledge and not only a portion of it.

(c) A continental flora is urged as a service we taxonomists ought to render to the non-taxonomists, including the public at large, and to non-Americans, who cannot (or will not) consult monographs and local floras where appropriate and who need a quick synthesis of "existing" information for areas and groups not even covered by monographs and floras. But when the objection is raised that such a flora may tend to perpetuate ill-advised taxonomic and nomenclatural decisions (made necessary to keep on schedule), the reply is that tentative treatments will be identified as such, problem species commented upon, etc. So, what is the value of such treatments for those persons who supposedly need the flora? [I hope the analogy is far-fetched, but I get a little weak-kneed just thinking of the possibility that authorities (such as the U. S. Government Printing Office) which decree that common names shall follow "Standardized Plant Names" may one day decree that scientific names (and by implication, taxonomy) shall follow "Flora Boreali-Americana".] It is said that the flora would obviously be only preliminary -- it would be revised and improved. (This presumably means that the secretariat and advisory personnel would be permanently involved in a constantly rotating schedule of revisions, and would accomplish little else in taxonomy.) Seriously, how long would it really be between revisions? It took Fernald 40 years to revise Gray's Manual, in the best known part of the country -- and some of us are still unhappy with parts of it. Think of the revision needed in an ad hoc treatment of, say, Veronica for all of North America, written in a few months by a new Ph. D. on the secretariat! The non-taxonomist is already upset enough by "name changes" without our seeking to provide a continent-wide standard and then from the start admitting that it needs much revision.

(d) It is stated that there will always be those who think the time is not ripe. Of course there will; there will always be someone available to oppose any scheme, any time. But this is no serious argument that we ought therefore undertake immediately every scheme which is proposed, no matter how ill-advised.

My own conclusion is that a flora can be done, if we merely seek to embed in it the best we can do as of the present state of taxonomic knowledge (or lack of knowledge). Because of a comparative shortage of "available information," it would be less reliable and less useful than the celebrated Flora Europaea. It is therefore premature and dangerous to commence such a project. The question ought not be whether it can be done (and perhaps feasibility was the only charge to the committee), or how easy it might be (if every complexity be excluded or ignored or allowed to "solve itself"), but whether it would be wise to do it, whether it would render sufficient service to taxonomist and non-taxonomist, whether it would produce benefits worthy of the time and effort and expense of production. I remain unconvinced on these points.

Sincerely,

Edward G. Voss,
Curator & Associate Professor

cc Starbelle
W.H. Wagner
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March 14th, 1967

Dr. F. A. Stafleu
International Bureau for Plant Taxonomy and Nomenclature
106 Lange Nieuwstraat
Utrecht, The Netherlands

Dear Frans:

Hugh Iltis called me by 'phone last evening to tell me of your visit to Madison and of the pleasure he had had in seeing you; he told me as well of your regret that you had had to leave without calling me. I am sorry we did not get to speak, but I hope there will be other times.

I was flattered to hear that you had taken time to read my remarks about Wild Flowers of the United States, and additionally flattered that you were upset by them. Your reaction cannot have been such because you are irrational (that you aren't we certainly agree), but because you consider them important enough to take seriously (about which we also agree). However, I am perplexed that you should so 'violently' disagree with my opinion in respect to the matters I mentioned in my remarks. These were not written as an attack on Dr. Rickett personally--I scarcely know him, and have no slightest reason to attack him on a personal basis. In fact, when I finally sent these pages to Mr. Carruth of McGraw Hill, I felt a sort of nausea at having to honor my sense of scientific and bibliographic integrity by presenting such a report, which must inevitably reflect upon the performance, if not the competency, of so many people, either my friends, or at least not my enemies. But I believe in integrity, passionately--the paucity of it in the world is so rampant that one must wonder how much longer we can escape the inevitable consequences of such a condition. When so blatant an example of lack of integrity as volume one of Wild Flowers of the United States comes along I cannot be wholly silent. Please note that I have not said 'dishonesty'--for me dishonesty is a positive intent to operate without integrity--the lack of integrity in the matter in question is the result of the absence of positive intent to achieve integrity. I think if you will read my letter to Mr. Carruth carefully you will see that it is just that of which I accuse McGrawHill--lack of positive intent to achieve maximum integrity, traditionally to be expected. So far as I am concerned, Dr. Rickett and Dr. Steere, however sloppily they may have managed their affairs here, are no more, and probably much less, culpable than McGraw Hill, which purports to be a reliable publisher. In this instance they certainly did not so act--they accepted too American dollars to perform a task in which it ought to have been reasonable to expect they would render a type of service which they completely failed to give.

It seems to me, Frans, you must, as one who has spent so much of his life with the printed word, and has produced so many well-written and well-published printed pages, be shocked that one of America's foremost publishers should betray both the authors and sponsors of the book as well as its readers. This is not the path we should be

March 14th, 1967

traveling!

As for my competency to criticise which you seem to have questioned, I think you will find that almost without exception my remarks are questions of fact accessible to those who read, observe, and think, or of logic--I do not pose as a botanist nor as a writer, neither of which I am; I am a reader, a member of the class for which, I understand, the book was written!

What is the chance of inducing you to include St. Louis in your next trip to the United States? Dr. Gates mentioned yesterday that he would like to have you meet some of the new staff, discuss with us our problems and plans and generally give us advice on how to get this garden going full tilt in the right direction. Naturally, there would be a suitable honorarium.

Cordially yours,

GEORGE B. VAN SCHAAK
Librarian

GEVS:VG

Enc.

Via Air Mail

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PLANT TAXONOMY

Office:
International Bureau for Plant Taxonomy
and Nomenclature
106 Lange Nieuwstraat
Utrecht
(Netherlands)

UTRECHT, 29 March 1967.

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Dr George B. Van Schaak
Missouri Botanical Garden
"Shaw's Garden"
2315 Tower Grove Avenue
St. Louis, Missouri 63110 - U.S.A.

Dear George,

Many thanks for your letter and for the copy of your remarks on the Wild Flowers. There is no doubt that you have many good points in your criticism, but I am afraid that you spoil it all by several unnecessarily unpleasant remarks. Some of these are not founded in fact: let me mention only one: your suggestion on p. 5 (after having used the nasty and in this case 100% wrong word 'mania') that this was "a clever device for getting your slides in print." You withdraw this statement more or less in the next phrase but you maintain it all the same. Anyone who knows the simple facts of how this book came about knows that you are wrong and will be less inclined to give weight to your other criticism.

The main point about the book and its mistakes is that any big undertaking is apt to show deficiencies. I publish myself quite regularly and I am painfully aware of the mistakes I make. You say you criticize as a reader. All right, but then as a reader who has no experience in what it is to try to do a job like this. If all readers were this way less mistakes would be made for the simple reason that major undertakings were absent. Anyone who works makes mistakes. It is correct to point these out because the author and the publisher will gain from it. But why do it in such a disagreeable manner? Your case is stronger when you state simply the bare facts. The conclusions which you draw from the real shortcomings are too sweeping and stand in no relation to them.

I must also say that I protest most sincerely against the implication in your letter of "lack of positive intent to achieve integrity" in the case of Rickett. Again you direct yourself to the publisher, but the intent is clear. This is really not the way to criticize a major undertaking, because to anybody who knows Rickett the statement is clearly absurd.

I do not agree with you that McGraw Hill has betrayed authors and sponsors of the book as well as its readers. It might have given more attention to what you say about consulting additional advisers, but that is something else. The language is simply too strong.

I am afraid, George, that we shall remain of different opinion

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PLANT TAXONOMY

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106 Lange Nieuwstraat
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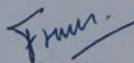
on all of this. In my opinion you let yourself go. My evaluation of the situation as a whole differs from yours and is - may I say it - somewhat more charitable. I have great admiration for performance and achievement, even if it is imperfect.

My visit to the USA was very pleasant. I spent many amusing hours with Hugh Iltis, partly in very amicable difference of opinion on the Wild-Flowers. Hugh is a very stimulating personality although sometimes (also) a little given toward overstatement.

My next trip will be in June, and then perhaps again in November. It would certainly be very nice to visit St.-Louis again and to see the new developments! If Dr Gates wants me to visit the garden I am sure he will take up contact with me. I am sorry that I missed him by a few hours when he was in England.

With all good wishes,

yours very sincerely,


F.A. Stafleu.

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THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN
BRONX • NEW YORK 10458 LU 4-8500

February 23, 1967

Dr. Hugh H. Iltis
Department of Botany
Birge Hall
The University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

Dear Hugh:

Thank you for your thoughtful letter of February which I have discussed at some length with Dr. Rickett. Although I do not enjoy prolonging correspondence of this sort unduly and feel that you would have gained a much better impression of the book had you read the statement of what it was intended for in the introductory material, I do feel that some of the questions you have raised should be answered.

Although it is quite impossible to send out proofs for review, Dr. Rickett did have various botanists read manuscript. In fact, he tells me that practically all the botanists you named in your review were actually consulted. Cronquist, for example, who is one of the most critical people I know, says that all the goldenrods are correctly named and all but two of the illustrations quite typical. Dr. Rickett points out that it would not be possible to put the membership of ASPT on the title page.

With reference to geographic ranges, all the statements you criticize are Fernald's, who did work in a splendid herbarium. The one exception was a "Missouri" that somehow got printed as "Maine."

With reference to common names, most plants have none. Many common names have been made up by authors of manuals, but unless they are in common use, they are hardly common names. Again, I refer you to the Introduction.

As I emphasize in my earlier letter, Hugh, the purpose of this book is not to provide a manual for professional botanists, but to give a really scientific but non-technical work suitable for the non-botanist. Botanists have walled themselves off so from the general public by the special vocabulary that we have a whole new job to do in arousing general interest among people interested in plants but who could care less about botany as a field. I hope that this

Dr. Hugh H. Iltis--Page 2--February 23, 1967

point of view will find a larger expression in your review, which as I read it sounded more as if you were reacting to something designed for botanists.

Sincerely yours,

Bill

William C. Steere
Director

WCS/gd

P.S. With reference to the slides mentioned in your post-script, Dr. Rickett tells me that you promised to send him some at the Amherst AIBS meetings, but he never received them.

February 13, 1967

Dr. William C. Steere, Director
New York Botanical Garden
Bronx Park
New York, New York 10458

Dear Bill:

Thank you very much for your long letter. I know it took a long time to write - but so did my review, which I must now shorten. The big questions that I did ask have not been answered by you either -- Are you going to send proofs of the next volumes out for review??? Are you going to get collaborators that are collaborators??? To cite the 6 in volume one is a misrepresentation. They never saw one single page of proof, or a line of ms. Thomson still can't believe all this. Woodson is dead! Are you going to have better pictures and better names for the pictures? I read Ed Voss' review and that adds 4 more misidentifications. I think the total must be around 40 (I have 30 now that are clear). I don't know whose fault this is, but to tell me that the day you quit making mistakes is the day you are dead, is missing the point. ~~Such~~ erroneous ranges --ye gods, nobody, not even the NYBG can do that to us phytogeographers. These are not mistakes -- these are nonsenses! I cannot answer some of your defenses, but common names are nevertheless a must, as are the cross references. Believe me, I will always respect you and NYBG and even Rickett, whom I really don't know. But what happened with that book is inexcusable, and must not happen again. It is the job of the NYBG to disseminate information about plants but not misinformation.

With all good wishes,

Very sincerely,

Hugh H. Iltis
Assoc. Professor of Botany
Curator of the Herbarium

P.S. Next time someone from the project comes through here, have him see me. I'll show them some slides that would make a great many of those used look silly.

THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN
BRONX • NEW YORK 10458 LU 4-8500

February 6, 1967

Dr. Hugh Iltis
Department of Botany
University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin

Dear Hugh:

The McGraw-Hill Book Company has sent us your long evaluation of *Wild Flowers of the United States*, "a critical look at the million dollar book." I have read this carefully and with considerable interest. Knowing that Dr. Rickett will probably not respond to it, I take upon myself this responsibility.

The New York Botanical Garden took upon itself the task of preparing this work for many of the very reasons that you give in the first pages of your review. If plants and their identification are not taught in the grade schools, high schools, and colleges, people should have some way of finding out for themselves what the plants are. For one, I feel very strongly that botanists themselves have reduced more than increased the interest in plants for the general public. By the same token, I feel that it is a central responsibility of a botanical garden to disseminate information about plants, in every possible way, to increase the popular understanding of them. We hope in various ways to re-generate a popular interest in plants and in botany that is so desperately needed in this country. Dr. Rickett has been one of the few people in this country willing to face the teasing of his colleagues for preparing outstanding books on wild flowers, something that is considered a fully professional and worth-while occupation in Europe, but not properly recognized in this country. I think I can summarize this by saying, simply, that these books are designed to arouse maximum interest in plants and not written for botanists--or at least plant taxonomists.

I am sure that Dr. Rickett will be interested in some of your remarks about geographical distributions, and, personally, I rather like your idea of giving the locality in which the photograph was made. However, people are already complaining about the size of volume 1, and volume 2 will be even larger. What was left out was as carefully considered as what was put in, and I am afraid that you are looking at this book as a botanist, and not as a non-botanist, or at least a non-plant taxonomist, who for the first time finds a means by which he can actually recognize most of the plants he sees. This book is also prepared with the knowledge that there are many levels of interest, so that some people will simply scan the pictures, whereas others--and we hope in increasing numbers--will actually learn to use the keys and understand the descriptions that supplement the illustrations.

As for mistakes, my own personal philosophy is that when I stop making mistakes, I will know that I am dead! Dr. Rickett was under great pressures to get this first volume out, and I feel that under the circumstances there are remarkably few errors. I should stop here long enough to tell you that this is no blind defense of Dr. Rickett, whom I have known and admired for a long time, but simply my own appraisal of the situation, which I have observed carefully and reasonably closely over a considerable period of time. As Dr. Rickett says freely, there will be fewer errors and better photographs in each volume, just because more time will be given to him for preparation and for finding the photographs over a greater length of time.

I feel that your use of Roger Tory Peterson's books is hardly fair, because of the relatively small number of birds and the much greater emphasis that has been given to each species. One of the problems that botanists have not quite solved is their willingness to study groups that are too large, with too many categories in them, whereas the zoologists are much more practical in their technique of going at a few species in depth.

I keep coming back to some of your thoughts about the inclusion of evolutionary ideas, mechanisms of pollination, and other matters that are of interest to botanists. However, these books are designed to help people identify plants, and not to give them basic biological concepts; there are other books for that purpose. Again, knowing Dr. Rickett's outstanding ability as a bibliographer, I am certain that he has again selected what to put in and what to leave out, with the basic intent of the books in mind. However, I do like your idea of a bibliography to lead the more interested or advanced amateur--or the scientist who is not a plant taxonomist--into works that will give him information in greater depth.

I am sure that Dr. Rickett will appreciate your specific corrections and comments. However, I am surprised at your urgency on common names, when they are so notoriously unstable from one part of the country to the other. As a native of southern Michigan I am perpetually surprised at how many common names the same species bears as one moves about. With reference to this sort of thing, you mustn't forget that Dr. Rickett spent considerable time both at the University of Wisconsin and the University of Missouri so that his knowledge of plants is not based on those of the vicinity of New York; in fact, he has done an enormous amount of travel on his own in the preparation of the several volumes, and probably has as good a knowledge of the over-all flora of the United States as anyone in the country.

Your suggestion about the inclusion of trees and shrubs has already been covered, in that the books would become intolerably large with them. However, if this series of five books on wild flowers is successful and further funds are forthcoming, a series on trees and shrubs--as well as ferns--would be thoroughly worth-

Dr. Hugh Iltis--Page 3--February 6, 1967

while and I am sure warmly welcomed. In light of your comments about the ecology, we have already discussed with Pierre Dansereau, as well as with the publisher, the possibility of a volume showing in detail the various kinds of specific habitats all over the United States. This would be as useful to ecologists and botanists as it would be to the general public.

Again, please do not think that I am on the defensive in saying all these things, but only trying to give you some idea of the rationale behind this book. Personally, I feel that Dr. Rickett has done a superhuman job and I hope that now you have all this off your mind you will feel enough better to take a somewhat friendlier look, as a human being, not as a plant taxonomist.

Sincerely yours,

Bill

William C. Steere
Director

WCS/gd

Prepared and sent to the publisher at the
request of a botanical acquaintance who
had judged the book very highly as
botanical information - and was less
private

Prepared as a sort of ~~private~~ ^{private} protest
against the avalanche of ~~favorable~~
reviews, so far as I know all favorable
many enthusiastically ~~so~~ - ^{candidate} ~~now~~ ^{seem to have been} ~~written~~
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?
of accuracy, reader convenience or design

to fill the blurb's promise —
~~like this~~

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Indentation in text design.

A paragraph indentation of more than one em is seldom good-looking, and one of over twice that, ~~as found here, is rather~~ barbarous. Moreover, in the descriptive section it is especially infelicitous combined with the treatment of the second line:

S. STELLATA is a smaller plant
 24 inches long. The flowers ..
 and disposed in a

 May to August

is distinctly annoying as found here.

Extreme indentation, already identified with 'paragraphs', confuses the reader when used also for the second line of an unindented paragraph. How much better would have been:

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Then all descriptions would have stood out clearly and would not have appeared typographically ^{unset} ugly. Decreasing the measure of the lines of description by one em would scarcely account for any increase in number of lines--~~not~~ ^{would} nearly all paragraphs of description end in short or very

short lines. This fact could ^{probably} have been determined by proper sampling ahead of time.

If Mr. Lewis F. Wright did design this book (or the typography of it) perhaps he should be sent to school (or replaced). Of course he is not alone in practicing these stunts and/or producing these barbarisms--so-called typographers all around us are behaving similarly--but they are just as surely creating bad design as people who don't know or care how to drive an automobile produce accidents.

One cannot look upon this book as a great work marred by a number of relatively unimportant errors and unavoidable omissions; it is a genuinely poor production, ill conceived and badly executed, saved from being totally ~~worthless~~ ^{useless} by the inclusion of several hundred, poor to moderately good, colored photographs and a scattering of occasional scraps of interesting, out-of-the-way information. One must ask 'what went wrong?'

Certainly one of the major things that went wrong was the belief that the ~~intention, as limited as it was, was still too much~~ ^{scope of the intention} which one might infer from examining the work ~~to be~~ could possibly have been achieved ~~anyway~~ ^{in any way} by one man in such a short time. One must also ask ^{whether} ~~whether~~ such a book as might have been produced ~~would~~ be anywhere near as useful as a much smaller book, chiefly made up of pictures, which could be carried in the field to aid immediate identification of live plants, with perhaps a companion volume of text to be left at home and consulted while relaxing after the field trip?

plet

One ~~must~~ notes the irony that although the whole project was originally set going by the realization of the lack of floras covering certain parts of the country, the initial ~~piece~~ ^{volume} should be that ~~referring to~~ ^{referring to} the part of the country best known and should still be so badly done. What can we expect of the volumes which ~~were~~ ^{will} treat the less well-known parts of the country?

As one can maintain that it is easy to write a work like this and not introduce errors. But their ~~quality~~ ^{quality} must be kept as low as possible. The ones cited above ~~were~~ ^{were} pushed almost at random ~~only a few dozen pages~~ ^{at most were read by no means was even a fourth} ~~half~~ ^{half} the work read (or ~~even~~ ^{even} scanned) - there

Some highly critical and more unfavorable paragraphs
from an unpublished review of
Wild Flowers of the United States, vol. 1, 1966

At first glance this work is impressive--by our good American standards. It is large, heavy, costly, arresting, provided with eminent dedicatees, sponsored by a distinguished institution, and sporting a group of collaborators--one unaware of his status, another long since deceased. What more can you want for a million dollars?

In judging a work such as this, one should try to discover answers to the following questions:

- a) What was intended and was the intention wisely formulated?
- b) In how far was the intention kept as a goal?
- c) How well was the intention executed?
- d) Is the result worth the effort?

What are the tragic answers? The intention of the book is very clear (p. ix): 'to present all the wild flowers of the northeastern United States in color photographs and nontechnical descriptions, so that for the first time the layman might be able to identify any he might find'. Not a word is promised about what flowers are, what role they play in the ecology of the earth, what good or evil they may be, how or where they live, how they have fared at the hand of man and promise to fare, etc.

Perhaps the foreword (p. v-vi) promised more--let us see! Boiled down but with no essential left out it says: '... the idea of the preparation of a series of comprehensive books covering all the wild flowers of the United States in scientifically accurate and nontechnical language and with each species beautifully illustrated in color ... was greeted with enthusiasm by the Board of Managers of the New York Botanical Garden ... Moreover, because the wild flowers of the United States are now well known to systematic botanists the time seemed ripe to embark upon the enormous task of making this information available ...' That is all! What information? Logically little more than the name, the description, the locality, and the photograph. Again nothing about the role of flowers in the earth's ecology.

The publisher's blurb does promise, to be sure, 'the most complete nontechnical work ever published on wild flowers in this hemisphere', 'providing a superb aid to identification' and offering 'the intelligent and interested reader a wealth [sic] of detailed information to deepen his understanding of wild flowers'.

Well, we have not been delivered anything such as was promised by the publisher nor even by the sponsor and the author, and by no means what we should have hoped for and ought to have expected. The pictures are here, and there are descriptions, many far from satisfactory. There remains a patter, turned on and off like a juke box in a sparsely filled hamburger joint--original home of plant, derivation of its name, medicinal property, a habitat note, an historical association--but truly, that is about all, and such bits occur only three or four to a page. There is nothing 'comprehensive' as one might think it was intended to imply by the use of that word on page v, nor, as the blurb says, 'a wealth of information'.

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But let us look at these matters more closely and systematically!

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A paragraph indentation of more than one em is seldom good-looking, and one of over twice that, as found here, is rather barbarous. Moreover, in the descriptive section it is especially infelicitous combined with the treatment of the second line:

S. STELLATA is a smaller plant
 24 inches long. The flowers ..
 and disposed in a

 May to August

Extreme indentation, already identified with 'paragraphs', confuses the reader when used also for the second line of an unindented paragraph. How much better would have been:

S. STELLATA is a smaller plant
 24 inches long
 and disposed in a

 May to August

Then all descriptions would have stood out clearly and would not have appeared typographically ugly. Decreasing the measure of the lines of description by one em would scarcely account for any increase in number of lines--note that nearly all paragraphs of description end in short or very

short lines. This fact could have been determined by proper sampling ahead of time.

If Mr. Lewis F. Wright did design this book (or the typography of it) perhaps he should be sent to school (or replaced). Of course he is not alone in practicing these stunts and/or producing these barbarisms--so-called typographers all around us are behaving similarly--but they are just as surely creating bad design as people who don't know or care how to drive an automobile produce accidents.

One cannot look upon this book as a great work marred by a number of relatively unimportant errors and unavoidable omissions; it is a genuinely poor production, ill conceived and badly executed, saved from being totally worthless by the inclusion of several hundred, poor to moderately good, colored photographs and a scattering of occasional scraps of interesting, out-of-the-way information. One must ask 'what went wrong?' Certainly one of the major things that went wrong was the belief that the scope of the intention which one might infer from examining the work could possibly have been achieved anyhow by one man in such a short time. One must also ask whether such a book as might have been produced would be anywhere near as useful as a much smaller book, chiefly made up of pictures, which could be carried in the field to aid immediate identification of live plants, with perhaps a companion volume of text to be left at home and consulted while relaxing after the field trip.

One must note the irony that although the whole project was originally set going by the realization of the lack of floras covering certain parts of the country, the initial piece should be that referring to the part of the country best known and should still be so badly done. What can we expect of the volumes which treat the less well-known parts of the country?

St. Louis, Missouri

January 25th, 1967

Mr. Gorton Carruth
McGraw-Hill Publishing Company
330 West 42nd Street
New York, New York 10036

Dear Mr. Carruth:

Some time ago Dr. Hugh Iltis of Madison, Wisconsin, sent me a copy of the remarks concerning Wild Flowers of the United States which he was just then sending you. He wanted my opinion of what he had to say, so I had finally to take time to examine the work which I had till then only glanced at.

It took me some hours to get through his 'paper', for every time I turned to the book to check him I found myself prompted to check many details he had not touched upon at all--so many, in fact, that I soon had a thick sheaf of notes of my own. I can't imagine you will have much interest in these at this late date, but Dr. Iltis has urged me to send them to you. Such as I have had time to edit into intelligibility constitute the enclosure.

You will note at once that little of what I have written has anything to do with botany--this is as it should be, for I am not a botanist. Practically all of it concerns matters which I like to think are the publisher's concern--this is probably not as it should be, for I am not a publisher either, and you will at once recognize how much I don't know about publishing if you get around to reading what I send you. You see, I am merely a perfectionist, that most annoying member of the human race, without whose protestations, however, we should not have any of the almost, if not quite, perfect things which have been produced. For just how annoying I can be let me refer you to my good friend, Mr. Harry Lubrecht, of Steckert-Hafner--I have pricked him and Mr. Hafner over and over, but he tells me they have always benefited.

I feel that a great error has been made in publishing this work, and I have tried to show why I think so. What I am not sure of is who made the mistake--was it you, that is, your firm, or the New York Botanical Garden? Were you a mere hireling in this matter (as perhaps you are) probably I should let you off at that--but to think of McGraw Hill as only that, in any act, would be rather painful. I must consider you as, at least, nothing less than a joint publisher. As such, it seems to me, you not only had the responsibility to 'blurb' this work just as accurately as you expected your compositors to set type for it, but in addition the responsibility of knowing, yourselves (or, by extension, thru your top grade editorial assistants) what is so and what is not so (when facts are concerned), what is good exposition and what is not, what is good taste and what is bad taste, and what is good design and what poor. (Parenthetically I wonder if you even sought adequate

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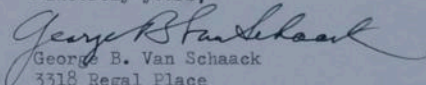
disinterested advice on whether this work was needed, and whether it was likely to result from the labor of those who were to create it.)

I am sorry to have to maintain that as a publisher you did not discharge your responsibility as regards strictly production matters (paper, typography, lay-out, etc.) and that you also made the mistake of not fulfilling the publisher's added traditional role of author's adversary (and don't protest that publishers are no longer authors' adversaries!)--that is, to watch over every detail of fact, exposition, and presentation, and to demand that correctness of fact, clarity of exposition and cogency of presentation be supplied by the author before you print his material.

These two errors were fateful, and a monster has been brought forth!

Please feel at liberty to circulate or to suppress my remarks as may suit you. I should like, however, to insist that they are an expression of private opinion and in no sense an official statement of the institution with which I am connected.

Sincerely yours,


George B. Van Schaack
3318 Regal Place
St. Louis, Missouri 63139

Enc.

J. S. Sargent

Please return

Some highly critical and more unfavorable paragraphs
from an unpublished review of
Wild Flowers of the United States, vol. 1, 1966

At first glance this work is impressive--by our good American standards. It is large, heavy, costly, arresting, provided with eminent dedictees, sponsored by a distinguished institution, and sporting a group of collaborators--one unaware of his status, another long since deceased. What more can you want for a million dollars?

In judging a work such as this, one should try to discover answers to the following questions:

- a) What was intended and was the intention wisely formulated?
- b) In how far was the intention kept as a goal?
- c) How well was the intention executed?
- d) Is the result worth the effort?

What are the tragic answers? The intention of the book is very clear (p. ix): 'to present all the wild flowers of the northeastern United States in color photographs and nontechnical descriptions, so that for the first time the layman might be able to identify any he might find'. Not a word is promised about what flowers are, what role they play in the ecology of the earth, what good or evil they may be, how or where they live, how they have fared at the hand of man and promise to fare, etc.

Perhaps the foreword (p. v-vi) promised more--let us see! Boiled down but with no essential left out it says: '... the idea of the preparation of a series of comprehensive books covering all the wild flowers of the United States in scientifically accurate and nontechnical language and with each species beautifully illustrated in color ... was greeted with enthusiasm by the Board of Managers of the New York Botanical Garden ... Moreover, because the wild flowers of the United States are now well known to systematic botanists the time seemed ripe to embark upon the enormous task of making this information available ...' That is all! What information? Logically little more than the name, the description, the locality, and the photograph. Again nothing about the role of flowers in the earth's ecology.

The publisher's blurb does promise, to be sure, 'the most complete nontechnical work ever published on wild flowers in this hemisphere', 'providing a superb aid to identification' and offering 'the intelligent and interested reader a wealth [sic] of detailed information to deepen his understanding of wild flowers'.

Well, we have not been delivered anything such as was promised by the publisher nor even by the sponsor and the author, and by no means what we should have hoped for and ought to have expected. The pictures are here, and there are descriptions, many far from satisfactory. There remains a patter, turned on and off like a juke box in a sparsely filled hamburger joint--original home of plant, derivation of its name, medicinal property, a habitat note, an historical association--but truly, that is about all, and such bits occur only three or four to a page. There is nothing 'comprehensive' as one might think it was intended to imply by the use of that word on page v, nor, as the blurb says, 'a wealth of information'.

As for coverage: 'all the wild flowers' (p. ix) is honored in the breach--no trees, no shrubs (not even roses!) no grasses, no woody vines (not even the trumpet vine!), no unattractive weeds with greenish flowers (whose 'unattractive'?) like the ones that produce so much hayfever, for example, etc. 'In color photographs', too, didn't hold up--only 40% of the plants admitted get color treatment. 'Nontechnical descriptions so that ... the layman might identify ...' also breaks down badly (Silene cseri resembles S. cucubalus, but the leaves are thicker and the inflorescence narrower'. How thick the leaves and how wide the inflorescence of S. cucubalus are not vouchsafed'.)

But let us look at these matters more closely and systematically!

Glossary.

p. 16. Circle--inapt figure showing too much (both leaves and flowers) and too little (the point of attachment). Geometers will be interested in this 'representation' of one of their basic elements. Why not whorl?

p. 20. Pod--'any fruit that is not small and seedlike'. According to the author's definition of fruit (p. 18) the edible part of a strawberry is 'fruit'. But this is not small nor is it seedlike; is it a pod? How easy it is 'to describe plants quite completely and precisely without most of them' [i. e. the terms of systematic botany (see p. ix, col. 2)]

p. 16. Cyme--however good or bad the definition may be, the figure and the definition should agree (see p. 17 where the uppermost lefthand flower is supernumerary so far as the definition is concerned).

Locutions.

p. 22. The first paragraph speaks of stamens, with the obvious implication that the number mentioned refers to the number per flower. Why then the later phrase four times in the key: 'stamens in the flower'? Where would they be and why shouldn't they be per flower?

Use of the word plate. What is gained by misusing the word plate throughout the volume? The pages upon which the so-called plates are to be found are already implicitly numbered, and it would have greatly simplified finding the position of the illustrations had they been explicitly numbered and these explicit numbers used.

Exposition.

For a fine piece of obfuscation read page 65, col. 1, beginning 'these two peculiarities ...'. By line 10 of this paragraph the reader has been sufficiently confused so that he cannot tell what 'this condition' is. The author had only to take care in the second sentence preceding to say 'uppermost petal or sepal becomes the lowermost'. Then 'this condition' would have been clear and the footnote would not have been so completely further confusing. The latter is still confusing, for the author has just said 'The lip starts ... as the uppermost petal'. What's so obviously wrong then about what most modern technical manuals say--'with the lip uppermost ...[the flower is] called resupinate'?

By the way, let's look at the first sentence of this same paragraph. Exactly what does the clause 'that differ in almost every other respect' mean? Well, nothing but nonsense as a statement about any family of plants--plants belong to a family because in general they are alike in a great many respects, not different in almost all respects. Many an amateur will think he will never learn to recognize an orchid if he sees one--actually it is quite easy to recognize an orchid, easier probably than, from a glance, to be sure about a member of the rose family (sorry, roses don't count here!)

p. 14, col. 1, first paragraph after IV. The topic sentence is: 'This is the most puzzling group ...' The next paragraph begins: 'The following lists contain the most noteworthy of these perplexing plants.' Buried in the long paragraph between these two sentences there is a shift from reference to the plants of IV to those not of IV. Anybody can understand the situation by careful reading, but the prominent display of these two topic sentences in adjacent paragraphs, apparently referring to the same plants, but actually to entirely different ones, could have been avoided--by thinking about it.

The Latin names.

In the introduction (p. 2-3) the author makes a good case for the use of Latin names, even pointing out that they are usually distinguished in print by being in italics. One is led to expect that the plant will at

least be introduced by its Latin name (in italics) followed by an English name when such is available. But no! A hodgepodge is created by putting the English name first when one exists--look, for example (p. 47-48), at the typographic mess made of the names of iris. If the convention of abbreviating the Latin generic name to its initial is adopted for use here, it cannot be satisfactory typographically, or in any other way, to put the occasional English name first; some paragraphs then begin with long phrases (Southern Blue Flag) and others with abbreviated Latin names (*I. verna*), and all in the same type face.

Misinformation and publisher responsibility.

It is surprising to learn (p. 85) that the specific epithet in *Liparis Loeselii* refers to Loiseleur-Deslongchamps. After struggling to cut Loiseleur down to Loisel and then to change i to e, the reader discovers on consulting Linnaeus, who started the whole business, that after all he was referring to Johann Loesel, somebody else--a German instead of a Frenchman. Armchair etymology can be so intriguing! The author has often been associated with nomenclatural committees and their problems and knows very well that one doesn't form specific epithets from proper names as it is implied this one was formed. Did he write this part of the text? Did he read it? Did any collaborator read it? Beside all this the plant was named by Linnaeus in 1753, twenty-one years before Loiseleur-Deslongchamps was born! This error did not result from ignorance, that is, culpable ignorance, on the part of the author--no one is expected to run around with minutiae of this kind filed away in his mind--it resulted from carelessness, which is culpable; the correct detail was on the author's desk in Gray's Manual, 8th edition, page 486, and in Pritzel sub nos. 5575 and 5584.

This type of mistake is very unnerving--oh, yes, for the author, of course, but I am thinking of the reader. After running across such an error can he believe that anything is authoritative? The author is at fault here, to be sure--but so is the publisher. Minus saepe erres si scias quid nescias. When a publisher does not know what he doesn't know he should make sure he has his books read by somebody who does. All authors make mistakes and few of them can find their own. In this instance, McGraw-Hill should have employed a truly knowledgeable systematic botanist to read the manuscript, the galley proof and the page proof--someone not otherwise connected with the undertaking, but with a broad background of field work (in the northeastern United States), and of

taxonomic literature and its pitfalls. In reading the manuscript he would not only have found the mistakes, but the gaps as well, many of which he could have filled. It would have been worth the cost.

Such experience as I have with modern botanical literature from Europe convinces me that the mistakes which lead to a lack of confidence in the work are fewer there--the standards of publication won't permit them. Recently when in Europe for several weeks, I read newspapers in English, German, French, Italian and Dutch, at least--I noticed not a single typographical error, although in United States papers I find every column with its quota. In Europe the standard does not permit typographical mistakes--even the publisher himself can recognize them--and when faced with purging a manuscript of more technical errors he has at hand able assistance, which itself holds a high standard.

The pictures.

When I first heard of the likely publication of this work and recalled the author's mania for flower color photography, I remarked to myself, 'What a clever device for getting your slides in print!' Uncharitable? Yes, definitely; probably even without any true basis, but when you get right down to the actualities of the result as we now have it, one has to conclude that the publication of colored flower photographs, if not the excuse for the work, has been the guiding light of it. Poor as some of them are (out-of-focus, messy, badly framed) the general level is fair to good, if seldom excellent. At least once a month my mail contains publishers' blurbs from Europe with reproductions of colored transparencies equaled by scarcely a single shot from Wild Flowers of the United States either in original composition and focus or in brilliance of reproduction. The paper here seems to have been badly chosen; it cuts down the reflection needed to bring sunshine into the pictures. Mrs. White, in her New Yorker review, has noted the great distance between some illustrations and the associated text. Actually this criticism is not valid except for the flowers illustrated on plates 176-180. Here is a melange of some thirty left-over illustrations from all groups, which should have been put in before, but are here run off as a bunch interleaved with text about the aster family!

Miscellaneous.

p. ix. 'It is fortunately possible to describe plants completely and precisely without most of them' [i. e. the polysyllabic words of systematic terminology]. Is it? If this were true (which of course it isn't) why

have the pictures at all?

p. 7. The table of contents does not indicate where the key is.

p. 39. Of the three species of yucca, only one is really 'northeastern'; yet the only one figured is completely out of range except for dooryards (wild flowers?)

p. 39. Veratrum. The sundry remarks about true hellebore, however correct and/or interesting seem to be rather misplaced here; it is doubtful that the layman is going to have any idea what is what or where, since it is not revealed that true hellebore belongs to another family, and doesn't even enter into the area covered by this book.

Design.

pp. 12, 13, 14, 15. The arrangement of material on these pages was certainly not carefully considered. The heading 'The Fourteen Groups of Families' ought to be a heading, that is, at the head of a page--in fact, of page 13--immediately followed by the chart, and then, on page 14, by the enumerated paragraphs (there was plenty of room; see the unused space on page 15). Had this been done the unfortunate mistake of using the wrong size of type for the Roman numeral I at the foot of page 12 would not have been made, and persons looking at the text following the chart wouldn't have to wonder 'what became of group I?'

pp. 8, 9. The arrangement of material here is certainly not very felicitous. Instead of ruining both pages by putting the cuts at extreme top or bottom, not to mention confusing the heading 'Fruits' and the cut below it showing flowers, the cut on page 8 should have preceded the heading 'Fruits' and that on page 9 should have been opposite the (new) position of the one on page 8.

The whole lay-out of the cut on page 9 is bad. It is not rectangular, but leans over to the right; pieces which belong together are spaced far apart (is that funny thing in the lower righthand corner part of a smartweed--it has about the same orientation--or is it a strawberry-- its orientation differs by 180°; the heading of the cut, 'Fruits', is badly placed typographically, etc.

Legends on line drawings.

The cut on page 7, besides being a mess as to composition, contains legends not used in the text (presumably the apple blossom and blueberry flower--or is it vice-versa--are by exclusion the two at the left, since the object at the right seems not to fit anything which is mentioned).

p. 19. The object labeled 'inferior ovary' would seem to be a whole blueberry flower--a bit confusing to the layman. Further, typographically the legends 'inferior ovary', 'palmately lobed', 'lanceolate toothed', and 'ovate notched' would all seem to be textually equivalent, that is, two words linked to signify a single phenomenon. However, the first two have this character while the latter two are merely pairs of words having no relation to each other whatsoever except that they both refer to the same picture.

p. 64. Here, again, we are confronted with typographic confusion in the paired words Pontederiaceae and Heteranthera (one above the other), and Isotria and medeoloides (one above the other)--the first pair refers to family and genus, while the second pair refers to a single species. Moreover, the second pair is placed remote from the picture it is supposed to signify, being separated from it by the name of the family, Orchidaceae.

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Wild Flowers of the United States, vol. 1, by H. W. Rickett. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1966.

In judging a work such as this, one should have in mind such questions as these:

- a) What was the intention and was it wisely formulated?
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The intention of the book is very clear (p. ix): 'to present all the wild flowers of the northeastern United States in color photographs and non-technical descriptions, so that for the first time the layman might be able to identify any he might find'. Not a word is promised about what flowers are, what role they play in the ecology of the earth, how good or evil they may be, how or where they live, how they have fared at the hand of man and promise to fare, etc.

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The publisher's blurb does promise, to be sure, 'the most complete non-technical work ever published on wild flowers in this hemisphere', 'providing a superb aid to identification', and offering 'the intelligent and interested reader a wealth [sic] of detailed information to deepen his understanding of wild flowers'.

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Let us look at some details closely and systematically!

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pp. 12, 13, 14, 15. The arrangement of material on these pages was certainly not carefully considered. The heading, 'The Fourteen Groups of Families', ought to be at the head of a page--in fact, of page 13--immediately followed by the chart, and this in its turn by the enumerated paragraphs beginning with no. I (there was plenty of room; see the unused space on page 15). Had this been done the unfortunate mistake of using the wrong size of type for the Roman numeral I at the foot of page 12 would not have been made, and persons looking at the text following the chart wouldn't have to wonder 'what became of group I?'

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The cut on page 7, besides being messy in composition, contains legends not used in the text (presumably the apple blossom and blueberry flower-- or is it vice-versa--are, by exclusion, the two at the left, since the object at the right seems not to fit anything which is mentioned).

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A paragraph indentation of more than one em must not obtrude; the one of more than twice that, as found here, is distinctly annoying. Moreover, in the descriptive section it is especially infelicitous combined with the treatment of the second line:

S. STELLATA is a smaller plant
 24 inches long. The flowers ..
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 May to August

Extreme indention, already identified with paragraphs, confuses the reader when used also for the second line of an unindented paragraph. How much better would have been:

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Then all descriptions would have stood out clearly and would not have appeared typographically inept. Decreasing the measure of the lines of description by one em would scarcely account for any increase in number of lines--nearly all paragraphs of description end in short or very short lines as set up.

It is hard to look upon this book as a great work marred by a number of relatively unimportant errors and unavoidable omissions. The remarks above doubtfully treat more than a minor selection of infelicities, for only a small part of the more than 500 pages was read or even scanned. The multiple statement of intention depicted a goal which could not be held to, while the execution of what was done is far less than well done. Even had the intention been more modest, and that better executed, would such a work as might have been produced be anywhere near as useful as a much smaller book, chiefly made up of pictures, which could be carried in the field to aid immediate identification of live plants, with perhaps a companion volume of text to be left at home to be consulted while relaxing after the field trip?

One notes the irony that although the whole project originated with the realization of the lack of floras covering certain parts of the country, this initial volume should treat the part of the country best known, but should still be so badly done. What can we expect of the volumes which will be concerned with the less well-known parts of the country?

Wild Flowers of the U.S.

McGRAW-HILL BOOK COMPANY

A DIVISION OF McGRAW-HILL, INC.

330 WEST 42ND STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y. 10036

JOHN W. TAYLOR
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

December 27, 1968

(212) 971-2055

Mr. George B. Van Schaack
Bibliographic Consultant
The Morton Arboretum
Lisle, Illinois 60532

Dear Mr. Van Schaack:

Your recent letter reached Mr. Harold McGraw, Jr., President of the McGraw-Hill Book Company, just as he was about to leave on a trip and he has asked me to reply to you.

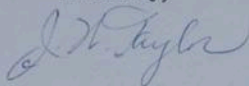
About all we can say is that "we can't please all of the people all of the time." Fortunately we have found a very large number of purchasers and also a large number of reviewers who do not at all agree with your evaluation of Rickett: *WILD FLOWERS OF THE UNITED STATES*. Their evaluation has brought an outstanding critical and sales success.

So far as the generalization in the last paragraph of your letter to Mr. Drysdale is concerned, it is also fortunate that the record does not support your contention. Year after year we receive more awards than other publishers for outstanding design and manufacture of our books. This does not mean, of course, that every one of our books is outstanding in terms of these criteria. It is simply impossible to hit the bull's eye every time. Further, there are some market areas that are so limited that they in turn will support only a limited investment in order to meet their needs.

Your conjecture that a fantastic demand for books as a result of the U.S. Government subsidy of acquisitions in U.S. libraries is causing publishers to rush to the marketplace with poorly conceived and poorly executed piles of books, couldn't be further from the mark. Our experience is that the great preponderance of our library customers are still operating with limited funds and that we must earn our share of their limited dollars by publishing books that merit their sales.

Despite your discouraging comments, we will continue to plug ahead and hope that we eventually earn your praise also.

Sincerely,



jwt

(Dictated but not read by Mr. Taylor
and released in his absence)

Dear Mr. T^ylor,

Thank you for your restrained answer to my letter of December 18 regarding 'wild flowers of the United States', et al. I am old enough to realize when I come up against a blank wall. The season being what it is, I wish you a Happy New Year.

Sincerely yours,

PETER FARB

310 RIVERSIDE DRIVE • NEW YORK, N. Y. 10025

January 12, 1968

Dear Mr. Van Schaack:

It was kind of you to write. I am pleased to know that at least some specialists agree with me. I got a lot of sneers from people around the botanical garden for my review of the Ricketts-committee book.

I honestly didn't catch the points in the Milne book that you did -- but I caught others. However, I felt that on the whole they were not numerous enough or serious enough to detract from the overall usefulness of the book for the general reader.

X At least in comparison with the Ricketts books, I felt ~~them~~ well worth the money. Please remember, though, that I had only a few lines in which to summarize each book and tell what was good or bad about it. I could have gone much more deeply into errors in all the books I reviewed -- but I simply didn't have the space.

Thank you again for writing.

Good wishes,

Peter Farb

Farb

January 8, 1968

Mr. Peter Farb
o/o Saturday Review Inc.
25 West 45th St.
New York, N

Mr Farb,

I am more than pleased to have been shown your remarks on Wild Flowers of the United States which appeared in SR November 25. Of my own opinion of the work (vol. 1, parts 1&2!) I enclose a much boiled-down version of an original which I sent to McGraw-Hill (without acknowledgment). To find your two paragraphs epitomizing anything I might have written and published with a circulation hundreds of times larger than I could have counted upon is cause for rejoicing. A copy of my original sent to a distinguished European botanicist, a mutual friend of Dr. Rickett and myself, elicited the remark to another friend, 'What right has George to offer such criticism--he has never produced anything of this magnitude himself (!)

Your following paragraphs on Living Plants of the World sent me to consult it. I found it a truly exciting collection of illustrations which I am glad not to have missed studying in some detail. I agree that the text is readable and the it contains much of interest. Being no longer exactly a layman I perhaps misjudge the full value of this text to a genuine layman--but I cannot recall that my knowledge of the plant world some thirty-two years ago (just as I finished my doctorate in mathematics) nor for the succeeding nine years of teaching mathematics (after which I begin to study plants more or less systematically) was in any sense large enough for me to have profited by reading more than a limited amount of this text. Inquiry reveals that the Milnes are respected for their fine photographic sense, but not so generally for their texts, so I am not surprised to find myself rather critical of this one. How many laymen able to thrill to these photographs are well enough informed to know what the scarlet pimpernel looks like? At least partly lost, therefore, is the last paragraph on p. 195, for there is no illustration. Or again, how many respond with visual recollection to the word 'teasel'? There is no figure to help them. The three paragraphs on p. 230 are at least 50% lost. In addition they are somewhat incorrect. It is not true that 'All teasels are native to southern Europe, north Africa, Ethiopia, and across the Caucasus to India'--there is a logical mistake in that, while the genus Dipsacus is native to the areas mentioned (i. e., throughout them there is to be found one or more species here and there) it is not true that every species grows in all of those areas. Further, the heading equates the family Dipsacaceae with the 'spiny teasels'; but later on the text says the 'teasel family surely the Dipsacaceae! k.. contains other kinds of plants ... with flowers with leaflike bracts i. e., not spines instead of tentacle-like projections!' Finally, the fullers' teasel has bristles 'particularly stiff and long pointed' as does at least one of the teasels and

with a hook on the end--it is the books which are important for filling.

Please understand that I labor these points not to suggest that you should have caught these inaccuracies, or any of the many others I suspect to be present, but merely to document slightly the expression of my continuing (yes, increasing) dismay that no longer can the layman rely on the publisher to present an authoritatively edited book. Who read the text of the Milnes' book for accuracy before publication--surely no one as knowledgeable as I am, and in most fields, including botany, my knowledge is quite limited. Responsible editing here would have included at least review of the copy for each family by someone recognized as having specialized knowledge of it. There are such people to be found, they are not exorbitantly expensive, and they must be employed if a trustworthy book is to result--let other books fail to appear!

Sincerely yours,

George B. Van Schaack
Bibliographic Consultant

Wild Flowers of the United States, vol. 1, by H. W. Rickett. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1966.

In judging a work such as this, one should have in mind such questions as these:

- a) What was the intention and was it wisely formulated?
- b) In how far was it kept as a goal?
- c) How well was it executed?
- d) Is the result worth the effort?

The intention of the book is very clear (p. ix): 'to present all the wild flowers of the northeastern United States in color photographs and non-technical descriptions, so that for the first time the layman might be able to identify any he might find'. Not a word is promised about what flowers are, what role they play in the ecology of the earth, how good or evil they may be, how or where they live, how they have fared at the hand of man and promise to fare, etc.

Perhaps the foreword (p. v-vi) promised more--let us see! Boiled down, but with no essential left out, it says: '... the idea of the preparation of a series of comprehensive books covering all the wild flowers of the United States in scientifically accurate and nontechnical language and with each species beautifully illustrated in color ... was greeted with enthusiasm by the Board of Managers of the New York Botanical Garden ... Moreover, because the wild flowers of the United States are now well known to systematic botanists the time seemed ripe to embark upon the enormous task of making this information available ...' What information? We do not know.

The publisher's blurb does promise, to be sure, 'the most complete non-technical work ever published on wild flowers in this hemisphere', 'providing a superb aid to identification', and offering 'the intelligent and interested reader a wealth [sic] of detailed information to deepen his understanding of wild flowers'.

Well, we have not been delivered anything to fit the blurb's promise--by no means what, in the light of it, we might have hoped for and ought to have expected. The pictures are here, and there are descriptions, many far from satisfactory. There remains a sort of intermittent pattern--original home of a plant, origin of its name, a medicinal property, a habitat note, an historical association--but truly, that is about all, and such bits occur only three or four to a page. There is nothing 'comprehensive' as one might think it was intended to imply by the use of that word on page v, nor is there, as the blurb claims, 'a wealth of information'.

As for coverage: 'all the wild flowers' (p. ix) is honored in the breach--no trees, no shrubs (not even roses!), no grasses, no woody vines (not even the trumpet vine!), no unattractive weeds with greenish flowers (whose 'unattractive'?) like the ones that produce so much hayfever, for example. 'In color photographs', too, didn't hold up--only 40% of the plants admitted get color treatment. 'Nontechnical descriptions so that ... the layman might identify ...' also breaks down too often ('Silene cseri resembles S. cucubalus, but the leaves are thicker and the inflorescence narrower'. How thick the leaves and how wide the inflorescence of S. cucubalus are not vouchsafed.)

Let us look at some details closely and systematically!

Glossary.

p. 16. Circle--inapt figure showing too much (both leaves and flowers) and too little (the point of attachment). Geometers will be interested in this 'representation' of one of their basic elements. Why not 'whorl'?

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Use of the word plate. What is gained by misusing the word plate throughout the volume? The pages upon which the so-called plates are to be found are already implicitly paged, and it would have greatly simplified finding the position of the illustrations had they been explicitly so numbered and these numbers used.

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A rather extraordinary piece of obfuscation appears on page 65, col. 1, beginning: 'these two peculiarities ...' By line 10 of this paragraph the reader has been sufficiently confused so that he cannot tell what 'this condition' is. The author had only to take care in the second sentence preceding to say 'Uppermost petal or sepal becomes the lowermost'. Then 'this condition' would have been clear and the footnote would not have been so completely further confusing. The latter would still be perplexing, however, for the author has just said 'The lip starts ... as the uppermost petal'. What, then, is so

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By the way, let's look at the first sentence of this same paragraph. Exactly what does the clause 'that differ in almost every respect' mean? Well, nothing but nonsense as a statement about any family of plants--plants belong to a family because in general they are alike in a great many respects, not different in almost all respects.

p. 14, col. 1, first paragraph after IV. The topic sentence is: 'This is the most puzzling group ...' The next paragraph begins: 'The following lists contain the most noteworthy of these perplexing plants.' Buried in the long paragraph between these two sentences there is a shift from reference to the plants of IV to that of the plants not of IV. Anybody can understand the situation by careful reading, but the prominent display of these two topic sentences in adjacent paragraphs, apparently referring to the same plants, but actually to entirely different ones, could have been avoided.

The Latin names.

In the introduction (p. 2-3) the author makes a good case for the use of Latin names, even pointing out that they are usually distinguished in print by being in italics. One is led to expect that the plant will at least be introduced by its Latin name (in italics) followed by an English name when such is available. But no! A hodgepodge is created by putting the English name first when one exists--look, for example (p. 47-48), at the typographic jumble made of the names of iris. If the convention of abbreviating the Latin generic name to its initial is adopted for use here, it cannot be satisfactory typographically, or in any other way, to put the occasional English name first; some paragraphs then begin with abbreviated Latin names (*I. verna*), and others with long phrases (Southern Blue Flag), and all in the same type face.

Misinformation.

It is surprising to learn (p. 85) that the specific epithet in Liparis Loeselii refers to Loiseleur-Deslongchamps. After struggling to cut Loiseleur down to Loisel, and then to change i to e, the reader discovers upon consulting Linnaeus, who started the whole business, that after all he was referring to Johann Loesel, somebody else--a German instead of a Frenchman. The author has often been associated with nomenclatural committees and their problems, and he knows very well that one doesn't form specific epithets from proper names as it is implied this one was formed. Beside all this the plant was named in 1753, twenty-one years before Loiseleur-Deslongchamps was born!

The correct detail was on the author's desk in Gray's Manual, 8th edition, page 486, and in Pritzel sub nos. 5575 and 5584.

The pictures.

When we get right down to the actualities of the result as we now have it, we must conclude that the publication of colored flower photographs, if not the excuse for the work, has been the guiding light of it. Poor as some of them are (out-of-focus, messy, badly framed) the general level is fair to good, if seldom excellent. But at least once a month my mail contains publishers' blurbs from Europe with reproductions of colored transparencies equaled by scarcely a single shot from Wild Flowers of the United States, either in original composition and focus or in brilliance of reproduction. The paper used seems to have been badly chosen; it cuts down the reflection needed to bring sunshine into the pictures. Mrs. White, in her New Yorker review, has noted the great distance between some illustrations and the associated text. Actually this criticism is not valid except for the flowers illustrated on plates 176-180. These contain a melange of some thirty leftover illustrations from all groups, which should have been put in before, but are here run off as a bunch, interleaved with text about the aster family!

Miscellaneous.

- p. 7. The table of contents does not indicate where the key is.
- p. 39. Of the three species of yucca, only one is really 'northeastern'; yet the only one figured is completely out of range except for dooryards (wild flowers?)
- p. 39. Veratrum. The sundry remarks about true hellebore, however correct and/or interesting seem to be rather misplaced here; it is doubtful that the layman is going to have any idea what is what or where, since it is not revealed that true hellebore belongs to another family, and doesn't even enter into the area covered by this book.

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From Saturday Review, November 25, 1967

Peter Farb

.....
The vibrations surrounding Wildflowers of the United States, Volume II: The Southeastern States, by Harold W. Rickett (McGraw-Hill, \$44.50), are intimidating to a reviewer. Lady Bird Johnson herself launched this series last year when she was presented with the first copy of ^{the} Volume on the Northeastern states (peculiarly enough, each 'volume' actually consists of two separately bound books). The entire work is dedicated to David and Peggy Rockefeller, who recruited an ecumenical conclave--that is the only way I can describe it--of personages to provide the hard cash. The distinguished botanist Harold Rickett was put in charge of a team to create the series (which is referred to as a 'program', in the foundation parlance of the subsidizers).

I must nevertheless report that the whole thing is a pretentious failure. I cannot imagine what respectable purpose these volumes will serve. The serious plant-hunter already has his Britton and Brown's Flora and Gray's Manual; the casual plucker of blossoms will flee in horror from this forbidding taxonomic presentation. Nor can it be used as a field guide, since this year's addition to the program alone weighed out at some fifteen pounds on my bathroom scale. The majority of the color photographs are unimaginative, unhelpful, and in several cases chromatically distorted. Most of them are smaller than the Indian-chief cards we used to get with our penny bubble gum, much too tiny to be of any real value in identification. What irks me the most, I suppose, is that while plants are the foundation for all life, almost no information is offered about their relationship to the hosts of creeping, crawling, flying things with which they share the planet.

A vastly superior examination of the earth's green things is Living Plants of the World, by Lorus and Margery Milne (Random House, \$15). The Milnes must have written a couple of dozen nature studies by now, ranging from college texts to books for young children. I do not recall that any of them ever fell below a high standard of craftsmanship; sometimes, as in this case, they are remarkable. Living Plants is a so rigidly organized taxonomically as the Rickett volumes, and it does a good job of sorting out the seed-bearers into their 150 families; but it is also eminently readable, both as a whole and for dipping into now and then. There are 340 photographs, almost half of them in color, and they have been selected with a discriminating eye.

Paragraphs from an unpublished review of

Wild Flowers of the United States, vol. 1, by H. W. Rickett. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1966.

In judging a work such as this, one should have in mind such questions as these:

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The intention of the book is very clear (p. ix): 'to present all the wild flowers of the northeastern United States in color photographs and non-technical descriptions, so that for the first time the layman might be able to identify any he might find'. Not a word is promised about what flowers are, what role they play in the ecology of the earth, how good or evil they may be, how or where they live, how they have fared at the hand of man and promise to fare, etc.

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Paragraphs from an unpublished review of

Wild Flowers of the United States, vol. 1, by H. W. Rickett. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1966.

In judging a work such as this, one should have in mind such questions as these:

- a) What was the intention and was it wisely formulated?
- b) In how far was it kept as a goal?
- c) How well was it executed?
- d) Is the result worth the effort?

The intention of the book is very clear (p. ix): 'to present all the wild flowers of the northeastern United States in color photographs and nontechnical descriptions, so that for the first time the layman might be able to identify any he might find'. Not a word is promised about what flowers are, what role they play in the ecology of the earth, how good or evil they may be, how or where they live, how they have fared at the hand of man and promise to fare, etc.

Perhaps the foreword (p. v-vi) promised more--let us see! Boiled down, but with no essential left out, it says: '... the idea of the preparation of a series of comprehensive books covering all the wild flowers of the United States in scientifically accurate and nontechnical language and with each species beautifully illustrated in color ... was greeted with enthusiasm by the Board of Managers of the New York Botanical Garden ... Moreover, because the wild flowers of the United States are now well known to systematic botanists the time seemed ripe to embark upon the enormous task of making this information available ...' What information? We do not know.

The publisher's blurb does promise, to be sure, 'the most complete nontechnical work ever published on wild flowers in this hemisphere', 'providing a superb aid to identification', and offering 'the intelligent and interested reader a wealth [sic] of detailed information to deepen his understanding of wild flowers'.

Well, we have not been delivered anything to fit the blurb's promise--by no means what, in the light of it, we might have hoped for and ought to have expected. The pictures are here, and there are descriptions, many far from satisfactory. There remains a sort of intermittent patter--original home of a plant, origin of its name, a medicinal property, a habitat note, an historical association--but truly, that is about all, and such bits occur only three or four to a page. There is nothing 'comprehensive' as one might think it was intended to imply by the use of that word on page v, nor is there, as the blurb claims, 'a wealth of information'.

As for coverage: 'all the wild flowers' (p. ix) is honored in the breach--no trees, no shrubs (not even roses!), no grasses, no woody vines (not even the trumpet vine!), no unattractive weeds with greenish flowers (whose 'un-attractive'?) like the ones that produce so much hayfever, for example. 'In color photographs', too, didn't hold up--only 40% of the plants admitted get color treatment. 'Nontechnical descriptions so that ... the layman might identify ...' also breaks down too often ('Silene cseri resembles S. cucubalus, but the leaves are thicker and the inflorescence narrower'. How thick the leaves and how wide the inflorescence of S. cucubalus are not vouchsafed.)

Let us look at some details closely and systematically!

Glossary.

p. 16. Circle--inapt figure showing too much (both leaves and flowers) and too little (the point of attachment). Geometers will be interested in this 'representation' of one of their basic elements. Why not 'whorl'?

p. 20. Pod--'any fruit that is not small and seedlike'. According to the author's definition of fruit (p. 18) the edible part of a strawberry is 'fruit'. But this is not small, nor is it seedlike; is it a pod?

p. 16. Cyme--however good or bad the definition may be, the figure and the definition should agree (see p. 17, where the uppermost lefthand flower is supernumerary so far as the definition is concerned).

Locutions.

p. 22. The first paragraph speaks of stamens, with the obvious implication that the number mentioned refers to the number per flower. Why then the later phrase four times in the key: 'stamens in the flower'? Where would they be and why shouldn't they be per flower?

Use of the word plate. What is gained by misusing the word plate throughout the volume? The pages upon which the so-called plates are to be found are already implicitly paged, and it would have greatly simplified finding the position of the illustrations had they been explicitly so numbered and these numbers used.

Exposition.

A rather extraordinary piece of obfuscation appears on page 65, col. 1, beginning: 'these two peculiarities ...' By line 10 of this paragraph the reader has been sufficiently confused so that he cannot tell what 'this condition' is. The author had only to take care in the second sentence preceding to say 'Uppermost petal or sepal becomes the lowermost'. Then 'this condition' would have been clear and the footnote would not have been so completely further confusing. The latter would still be perplexing, however, for the author has just said 'The lip starts ... as the uppermost petal'. What, then, is so

obviously wrong about ^{what} most modern technical manuals say: 'with the lip uppermost ... [the flower is] called resupinate'?

By the way, let's look at the first sentence of this same paragraph. Exactly what does the clause 'that differ in almost every respect' mean? Well, nothing but nonsense as a statement about any family of plants--plants belong to a family because in general they are alike in a great many respects, not different in almost all respects.

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St. Louis, Missouri

January 25th, 1967

Mr. Gorton Carruth
McGraw-Hill Publishing Company
330 West 42nd Street
New York, New York 10036

Dear Mr. Carruth:

Some time ago Dr. Hugh Iltis of Madison, Wisconsin, sent me a copy of the remarks concerning Wild Flowers of the United States which he was just then sending you. He wanted my opinion of what he had to say, so I had finally to take time to examine the work which I had till then only glanced at.

It took me some hours to get through his 'paper', for every time I turned to the book to check him I found myself prompted to check many details he had not touched upon at all--so many, in fact, that I soon had a thick sheaf of notes of my own. I can't imagine you will have much interest in these at this late date, but Dr. Iltis has urged me to send them to you. Such as I have had time to edit into intelligibility constitute the enclosure.

You will note at once that little of what I have written has anything to do with botany--this is as it should be, for I am not a botanist. Practically all of it concerns matters which I like to think are the publisher's concern--this is probably not as it should be, for I am not a publisher either, and you will at once recognize how much I don't know about publishing if you get around to reading what I send you. You see, I am merely a perfectionist, that most annoying member of the human race, without whose protestations, however, we should not have any of the almost, if not quite, perfect things which have been produced. For just how annoying I can be let me refer you to my good friend, Mr. Harry Lubrecht, of Steckert-Hafner--I have pricked him and Mr. Hafner over and over, but he tells me they have always benefited.

I feel that a great error has been made in publishing this work, and I have tried to show why I think so. What I am not sure of is what made the mistake--was it you, that is your firm, or the New York Botanical Garden? Were you a mere hireling in this matter (as perhaps you are) probably I should let you off at that--but ~~Kothlikoff~~ McGraw-Hill as only that, in any act, would be rather painful. I must consider you as, at least, nothing less than a joint publisher. As such, it seems to me, you not only had the responsibility to 'blurb' this work just as accurately as you expected your compositors to set type for it, but in addition the responsibility of knowing, yourselves (or, by extension, ~~that~~ your top grade editorial assistants) what is so and what is not so (when facts are concerned), what is good exposition and what is not, what is good text and what is bad text, and what is good design and what poor. (Parenthetically I wonder if you even sought adequate

Mr. Gorton Carruth

-2-

January 25th, 1967

disinterested advice on whether this work was needed, and whether it was likely to result from the labor of those who were to create it.)

I am sorry to have to maintain that as a publisher you did not discharge your responsibility as regards strictly production matters (paper, typography, lay-out, etc.) and that you also made the mistake of not fulfilling the publisher's added traditional role of author's adversary (and don't protest that publishers are no longer authors' adversaries!)--that is, to watch over every detail of fact, exposition, and presentation, and to demand that correctness of fact, clarity of exposition and cogency of presentation be supplied by the author before you print his material.

These two errors were fateful, and a monster has been brought forth!

Please feel at liberty to circulate or to suppress my remarks as may suit you. I should like, however, to insist that they are an expression of private opinion and in no sense an official statement of the institution with which I am connected.

Sincerely yours,

George B. Van Schaack
3318 Regal Place
St. Louis, Missouri 63139

Enc.



THE MORTON ARBORETUM

Joy Morton, founder

LISLE, ILLINOIS 60532 Phone: WOODLAND 8-0074

December 16, 1968

Mr. A. C. Drysdale
c/o Canadian Nurseryman
410 Brant Street
Burlington, Ontario

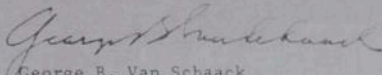
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Recently I was asked to review another McGraw-Hill book, Gould's Grass systematics. I refused to do so, for as a piece of publishing it is the most repellent book I can remember handling for many years. The editor and designer have so let the unfortunate author down that his message is buried in a very infelicitous and boring typeface, without any appropriate display (especially important in a book on systematics!), and with a page design where there are illustrations which gives the impression of a schoolboy's paste-up notebook.

It would be bad enough if all of this stemmed from incompetence, but I fear it is not unconnected with the current U. S. Government subsidy of acquisitions in U. S. libraries. Paying little attention to the fact that they are often publishing trash, on the one hand, and badly designed books, on the other, both U. S. and European publishers can't turn out the material fast enough to fill the book orders--and each is trying to get ahead of the other.

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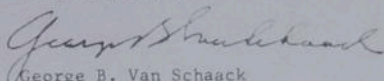
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Time Out

FOR A WORD WITH YOU

by A. C. DRYSDALE

Perhaps more public education on gardening and horticulture is needed, than on any other nation-wide leisure interest. Generally speaking the public is ignorant when it comes to gardening and looks to the trade to provide the information it needs. The trade, in turn, is somewhat unco-operative in that it insists on making gardening difficult for the public by the continued use of botanical names and technical terms. Most persons could care less about the technical side of horticulture — they want it made easy.

In an analogy originally drawn by Bob Lederer, executive vice-president of the American Association of Nursery-



men, the average gardener and nursery stock purchaser is no more interested in latin botanical names than the nurseryman is interested in the chemical name of "Simazine" [2-chloro - 4, 6-bis (ethylamino) - s - trizine] when he is buying that well known herbicide. All of this brings me around to the crying need for good, easily understood gardening and horticulture reference books.

Books such as *Ornamental Shrubs for Canada*, reviewed last month go a long way to helping the public get its information. But what if a poor and inaccurate book is promoted as being the "end-all" of gardening books? When the public buys such a book and finds the information not correct, or that what is written in many chapters is nothing more than "re-hashed" government pamphlets, or that the book seems to be full of spelling errors, it is not only the author and publisher that are subject to criticism. The whole horticultural trade may be seen in a bad light by any member of the public who finds he has purchased such a book.

It is for this reason, I feel that nurserymen and garden centres should refrain from selling the book, *Easy Ways to a Beautiful Garden*, by Stan Larke, and published by McGraw-Hill. In my opinion, and in the opinion of a number of knowledgeable Canadian horticulturists and writers, the book is a black mark on this country's growing horticultural industry.

At first glance, the attractive cover, glossy paper contents, colour and black and white photos seem to indicate an informative volume. However, after not too long a perusal, one easily notes that though the cover states, "Canada's Own Gardening Guide", much of the information is only applicable to Southern Ontario and possibly parts of British Columbia. Also, after the first cursory flip through its pages, the tremendous number of spelling and typographical errors are noted. I don't believe I have ever seen so many (several hundred before I stopped counting) errors in a book before — particularly one published by a reputable firm such as McGraw-Hill. Simple yet inexcusable, bad errors are obvious throughout the book. Examples are "Mexican

Bell Flower" instead of Mexican Shell Flower (facing page 35); "Lady Luck roses" instead of Lucky Lady (on page 41); a photograph of a man pruning a small tree with a pair of hedge (grass) shears instead of the proper secateurs (on page 69); and a completely incorrect definition for the word "Corn" in the glossary (on page 9). One of the funnier errors occurs on page 41, in the chapter on "Roses". Within the paragraph on disbudding of roses, three sketches showing how it is done, are quite obviously Peonies, and not Roses. It's quite a good sketch of Peony buds and flowers, actually!

These errors, however bad, are not the worst part of this book. And, if you presently have a collection of either the Canada Department of Agriculture, or Ontario Department of Agriculture and Food pamphlets, you may easily see for yourself that a goodly part of this book is plagiarized (almost verbatim in some chapters) from these bulletins. And, no actual acknowledgement is given.

Chapter ten, "Landscaping", for instance is almost identical (except for the structure of occasional sentences), to the Ontario Department of Agriculture and Food's publication, No. 521, "Landscape Planting of Home Grounds". Figure 10-1, a sketch of a landscape planting is the identical sketch used in the O.D.A.F. publication but no credit is given. Other chapters too, depend almost entirely or very heavily on already published information. In some cases the pamphlets have not been revised for nine or more years, and therefore, though the book is new, the information often is far from up-to-date. For comparison purposes, it is interesting to note the "similarity" between Chapter 3, "Perennials", and O.D.A.F. Bulletin No. 358, "Perennials"; Chapter 7 "Lawns", and O.D.A.F. Bulletin No. 448, "Lawns"; and lastly, Chapter 11, "The Vegetable Garden" and Canada Department of Agriculture Bulletin No. 1059, "Home Vegetable Growing". In this latter chapter, Figure 11-1, a sketch of a vegetable garden is identical to one appearing in the pamphlet but again is not credited.

At the front of the book, a page headed "Acknowledgements" at first seems to indicate that the impressive list of Ontario Agricultural College professors and others have contributed to the book. On re-reading the paragraph that precedes this list, one realizes that such is not the case at all, and this list of persons and institutions is just there to give the book some prestige. The paragraph that introduces these names reads as follows: "Sincere gratitude to the following learned men whose years of study and research have helped make gardening the popular pastime it is today."

Errors are obvious here too, "Canada Department of Agriculture and Food" is listed, which, of course, should be, Canada Department of Agriculture.

Aside from the most obvious fault that the book is only applicable in one region of Canada, yet is being sold across Canada (I checked in Vancouver and at least five book stores have it), the greatest dis-service to the gardening public and horticultural trade is the dissemination of wrong information. One of the worst examples of this occurs in the Appendix, "Summary of Native Trees". Here, most of the information has been taken from "Native Trees of Canada" (Bulletin No. 61), but with absolutely no regard for those species which cannot be transplanted (e.g. Alpine Larch) and without any mention of where the trees may be expected to grow.

All in all, *Easy Ways to a Beautiful Garden* is one of the poorest efforts to come our way for many years. Please don't burden our "public" with it! And now Time's In until December.

To open cut here

Sender's name and address: The Director, *Dr. H.*
Royal Botanic Gardens,
Kew, Richmond,
Surrey, England

AN AIR LETTER SHOULD NOT CONTAIN ANY ENCLOSURE; IF IT DOES IT WILL BE SURCHARGED OR SENT BY ORDINARY MAIL.

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First fold here

ON HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S SERVICE



Mr. G. B. Van Schaack,
The Morton Arboretum,
LISLE,
Illinois 60532

U.S.A.

Please address any reply to
THE DIRECTOR
and quote:
Your reference:

ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS
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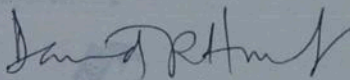
6th September, 1968.

Dear Mr. Van Schaack,

Thank you for your letter of 21st August, which I have received only this week having been away on holiday.

I think 'helpless dismay' was what I also felt on seeing 'Wild Flowers of the United States' Volume I, and hopeless resignation on seeing Volume II! There seems today a preoccupation among publishers to produce 'fine' books, but they appear to credit their customers (perhaps rightly so) with so little discernment that provided the book looks good they think the purpose of the book or its contents do not matter.

Yours sincerely,



David R. Hunt.

Mr. G. B. Van Schaack,
The Morton Arboretum,
Lisle,
Illinois 60532

DC



THE MORTON ARBORETUM

Joy Morton, founder

LISLE, ILLINOIS 60532 Phone: WOODLAND 8-0074

August 21 1968

Mr. D. R. Hunt
c/o Kew Bulletin
Royal Botanical Gardens
Kew, Richmond, England

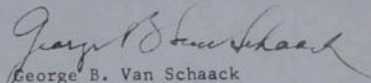
Dear Sir,

I write to thank you for your very refreshing review of H. W. Rickett's first volume. I think I have read some twenty by now, only one of which before yours could be called really critical, and that far from as searching as your own. Just out of helpless dismay that such a monster should be produced with so much heralding and such extensive financing I wrote a long and detailed review which I sent to McGraw Hill, and to a few friends. The first ignored me: from the others the most astonishing reaction I got was from Dr. Stafleu, who sternly denied my right to criticise when I had never produced such a complicated work!

Dr. Hugh Iltis also sent a very adverse review to the company, citing many errors. Now that the second volume is out he discovers that most of those which relate also to plants of SE U.S. have been repeated there. But whether it was my objection or that of someone else which did it, Rickett did not repeat the mistake on p. 85 of volume I, where he refers the derivation of the specific epithet of Liparis Loeselii (L.) Richard to Loiseleur, who was born twenty-one years after Linnaeus named the plant!

I am especially gratified by your remark that the work must 'expect perfectionist criticism'--but discouraged to find that almost no one has taken that attitude here in America.

Sincerely yours,


George B. Van Schaack
Bibliographical Consultant