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A Dictionary of Botanical Terms

John Stevens Henslow (1796 – 1861) was a botanist and geologist. As teacher, mentor and friend to Charles Darwin, it was his introduction that secured for Darwin the post of naturalist on the voyage of the *Beagle*. While Professor of Botany, Henslow established the Cambridge University Botanic Garden as a resource for teaching and research. Students were encouraged to examine plant specimens carefully, and to record the characteristics of their structures. Henslow would have known how daunting they found the task of becoming proficient with botanical vocabulary, and produced this volume to provide a secure foundation for scientific investigations. This meticulous glossary, originally published as a single volume in 1857 but drawing on contributions he made earlier to issues of *The Botanist* and Maund's Botanic Garden, is a testament to Henslow's scholarship. It is liberally illustrated with delightful woodcuts that clarify the meaning of selected terms.

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978-1-108-00131-1 - A Dictionary of Botanical Terms
John Stevens Henslow
Frontmatter
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A

DICTIONARY

OF

BOTANICAL TERMS.

BY

THE REV. J. S. HENSLOW M.A.,

PROFESSOR OF BOTANY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

ILLUSTRATED

BY NEARLY TWO HUNDRED CUTS.



LONDON:
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P R E F A C E .

THIS Dictionary was published at intervals; portions being appended successively to the monthly numbers of Maund's Botanist, and Maund's Botanic Garden. It contains a copious list of the Latin and English terms which have been used by various Botanical Authors, the former distinguished by Italic Capitals, the latter by Roman Capitals. The Greek or Latin derivatives are in brackets, immediately after the terms. To avoid needless repetitions, (when the case admits) reference is made from the Latin to the corresponding English term, where the explanation is alone given; small wood cuts occasionally assist in illustrating some of the terms. The names of the Natural Orders are also given, and these are referred to their Classes. It was originally intended to give short accounts of the Orders, (as under Acanthaceæ, Acerineæ, &c.,) but as these seemed needlessly to increase the quantity of matter, and were not exactly in harmony with the technical character of the Dictionary, they were early discontinued. A science with a technical terminology of about 2000 words and synonymes may appear repulsive; but a little consideration will satisfy us that this need not be the case. A large number of the terms here recorded have been very needlessly employed, and are only met with in the works of the older botanists.

Many of the words employed in describing plants retain their ordinary acceptance, and others which have a more technical application need to be explained only once to be easily retained. Those words which have been exclusively coined for this science, and are still in use, are not so numerous as to alarm the least energetic of its votaries. Such a Dictionary as we now present in its complete state, affords every one a ready reference to any term that may be met with in botanical authors, whether it be still in use, or has become so far obsolete that even proficients in the science may be at a loss to ascertain its meaning without more trouble than they would be willing to bestow. No slight confusion occurs in the minds

of beginners from the different sense in which different authors have sometimes employed the same word ; and also from the identity in meaning which they have attached to different words. Carrying on their labours independently, and finding it necessary to give expression to some newly observed fact, authors have done this in ignorance that another observer may be doing the same thing at the same time, or may have done it before. What often happens with respect to names given nearly simultaneously to the same plant by different describers, or given by one in ignorance of the labours of another, has occurred to an unfortunate extent in botanical Terminology ; and hence we are overloaded with synonymes. It is here especially that our Dictionary will be found serviceable ; let any one turn to the word "Receptacle," and he will appreciate this remark. By observing in which of its significations a particular Author employs a special term, all doubt as to his meaning is immediately at an end.

It is certainly to the difficulties which the undue extension of our botanical nomenclature has thrown in the way of beginners, that so many are inclined to turn aside from systematic botany, and to direct their attention, too exclusively, to the engaging speculations of botanical physiology. Without doubt physiology is the higher department of the science, and minute vegetable anatomy a branch of investigation essential to its progress. But it is in vain to attempt raising a superstructure that will be likely to stand, until the foundations shall have been securely laid. And assuredly the labours of systematic botanists, in the present state of our science, are those most needed, and will be so for some time to come, or there will be no steady progress for Botany. The truly scientific systematist is far from avoiding the investigations of the vegetable anatomist and physiologist. No sure step in advance is now to be made in systematic botany without careful dissections, and some reference to the functions of specific organs. All must remain vague and unsatisfactory in physiology which is not secured by those bonds, (constantly strengthening) by which System combines all clearly-ascertained "Facts," and gives expression to the nearest approximation we can hope to make to the Divine scheme upon which this portion of the Creation has been constructed.

J. S. HENSLOW,