

VI. Account of a BOOK.

Catalogus Plantarum quæ in insula Jamaica sponte proveniunt vel vulgo coluntur, cum earundem synonymis & locis natalibus ; adjectis aliis quibusdam quæ in insulis Maderæ, Barbados, Nieves, & Sancti Christophori nascuntur, seu prodromi historiæ naturalis Jamiacæ pars prima. Autore Hans Sloane M. D. Coll. reg. Med. Lond. nec non Soc. Reg. Lond. Sac. Londini Impensis Dan. Brown ad Insigne Cygni, & Biblioram extra portam vulgo dictam Temple-bar, 1696. in 8°. with some Remarks on it by John Ray, A. M & F. R. S.

THE Author of this Catalogue doth not present the Reader with Titles of Plants Collected out of other Mens Writings, or of which he had seen only dryed Specimens, but of such as himself saw growing in their Native Places: Among which there are a great Multitude of New and *Non-descript* Species; in one Genus alone, *viz.* Those called *Capillaries*, no less then Threescore, besides those lately Published by *F. Plumier* in his first Volume of *Descriptions of American Plants*, which our Author had observed and described long before that Book came out; and these not small and contemptible ones, or hardly distinguishable from the Plants of that kind already described, but of eminent Stature and Beauty; and some of them of so strange and exotick Form, that if delineated they could not

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but invite, and gratefully entertain the Spectator's Eye. For First, Who would not be delighted to see an arborescent Fern, of a single Woody Stem, streight and undivided, bearing leaves only at the top like a Palm-Tree? Capillaries of almost all kinds, creeping on Trees, or Rocks, or the Ground, with Wires after the manner of Strawberries: Or Thirdly Capillaries, the tip of whose leaves turning downwards, and touching the Earth takes Root and puts forth a new Plant, so Propagating their kind: Or Fourthly Capillaries putting forth from the middle Stem of their Leaves two shoots, each bearing a Spike of Flowers and Seeds. I confess, when I first saw the Authors stock of dried Plants, collected in *Jamaica* and some of the *Caribee* Islands, I was much surpris'd and even astonish'd at the number of the Capillary kind; not thinking there had been so many to be found in both the *Indies*. I might say much of the other *Genera*, but I refer the Reader to the Book it self.

Secondly, The Author in this Catalogue hath done great Service, to at least the inferior Ranks of Herbararists, in reducing and cutting short the number of Species, which were unnecessarily multiplied: For observing, that those who have published Itineraries, or Descriptions of the several parts of *America*, for want of sufficient Skill in *Botanicks*, and not being versed in Describing Plants, have given us such lame, imperfect, and obscure Descriptions of such as they took Notice of, and of the same Tree or Herb many times under different Names, that the Compilers of general Histories of Plants meeting with these Descriptions, and having no other knowledge of such Plants then what they derived from them, have repeated one and the same Species, found in far distant Countries by various Observers, and differently described, once, twice, thrice; (nay some great Authors sometimes even nine times) over, for different
kinds.

kinds. Now the Number of Plants being in Nature ſo vaſt, its pity to add to it more then there are in Nature, making two or three of one, thereby both deterring and confounding the Learner. To clear up theſe difficulties, and to reduce all to their proper kinds, no man can be well qualified, but he that hath a Comprehensive Knowledge of ſuch Plants as grow wild, or are commonly Cultivated in Gardens here in *Europe*, and hath ſeen the *non-deſcript Americans*, or ſuch as are here leſs known growing in their natural places; and hath read, conſidered, and compared what hath been written of them, either by ſuch who have lived ſome time in thoſe Countries, and published Deſcriptions or natural Hiſtories of them, or by ſuch as have only made Voyages thither, and given us Relations and Accounts of their Travels, and what they obſerved during their ſhort ſtay there: All which qualities occur in our Author.

Thirdly, This Work is of great uſe to thoſe that are delighted in reading the Relations and Accounts of Navigators and Travellers, to and in thoſe parts, to inform them concerning the Names of *American* and *Indian* Plants, they ſhall therein meet with, to what Plants they belong, and where they may find exact Deſcriptions or Characteriſtick Notes of them. The Author having with infinite Pains and Patience, read the moſt part of the Books of Voyages and Travels extant, referred the Plants he met with therein, named or deſcribed to their proper Genera, or Titles, under which they are Ranked, and by which they are denominatèd and Characterized by the moſt Learned and Skillful Herbariſts of the preſent, or immediately precedent Age.

Fourthly, The Author in this Work hath cleared up and reſolved many Doubts and Difficulties, and informed us of what Plants are ſignified by many Names frequent in the Mouths and Writings of our own Countrey-men,
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of which before we were either Ignorant, or in some doubt. For Example, He hath informed us that the *Dumb Cane* so called, which being tasted, inflames the Tongue and Jaws in that manner, that for a while it takes away the use of Speech, is not properly any *Species* of Reed or Cane, but of *Arum* or Wake-Robin; which quality indeed agrees very well to the Nature of an *Arum*, which is very Acrimonious, but not to any sort of Cane. That *Logwood* is not (as we conjectured) the *Ligno Brasiliano simile, seu Lignum Sapon, lanis tingendis percommodum* of Caspar Baubine, but *Lignum Campechianum*, so called from *Campeche*, a Province of the Continent of *America*, where they Fell Yearly great Store of these Trees, and bring them to *Jamaica* and our other Plantations, to be Transported hither for the use of Diers. That the *Dildo-tree* is the same with the *Cereus* or Torch-Plant. *Ceterum Dildo nonnullis Priapum fictitium significat, quo effrænis lascivæ mulierculæ abuti solent ad nefariæ quoddam libidinis genus seu coitum umbratilem exercendum.* I might add to these the *Toddy-Tree*, the *Prickly-pear*, the *Sower-Sop*, *Bonavists*, and many others whose Significations may be found in this Catalogue.

Besides, We are assured by this Work, that there are some Plants common not only to *Europe* and *America*, but even to *England* and *Jamaica*, notwithstanding the great distance of Place, and difference, both of Longitude and Climate. But here it is to be noted, that the greatest part of these common Plants are such as grow in the Water, or Watery places; there being, it seems, a greater agreement between the temper of the Waters, then of the Air in these remotely distant Countries.

E R R A T A.

N^o 220. Pag 256. Line 31. For *In a large quantity of it*, read *In a very small drop of which.*

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