

SCIENCE

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ON THE UNTECHNICAL TERMINOLOGY OF THE SEX-RELATION IN PLANTS.

THE modern conception of the sex-relation and the alternation of generations in plants has so changed our point of view respecting the morphologies of various members that an entirely new terminology has recently come into use to express the new-found homologies. At the same time, there is an attempt to restrict or to specialize the use of such age-long words as male and female, sex and the like, when applying them to plants. This part of the new terminology which touches common language is not above criticism, and I wish briefly to advert to it.

It should be said, in the first place, that the original conceptions of sexuality in plants, from Camerarius down to the middle of this century, were borrowed and adapted very largely from analogy with the animal kingdom. The stamens were considered to be male organs of sex and the pistils to be female organs, the idea of the necessity of a conformed sex-member being evidently borrowed from a knowledge of animal morphology. At the present time, however, our conception of the sex-relation of the higher plants is borrowed from a study of the flowerless plants, which, with every reason, are believed to represent a more primitive stage of evolution than the flowering plants. The true significance of the sex-process in plants was first clearly conceived