# SCIENCE

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### THE NEED OF MONOGRAPHIC AC-TIVITY IN AMERICAN BOTANI-CAL TAXONOMY<sup>1</sup>

It recently fell to my lot to oversee the reclassification of a large botanical library during its reshelving at the Gray Herbarium. Many questions arose during the process, most of them relating to clearness and expediency from the standpoints of library methods and experience. With these I will not trouble you. But incidentally I was impressed by certain quantitative aspects of botanical literature, particularly of taxonomic publication. These proved interesting to me and I hope I can make them so to you.

Nearly all publications on systematic botany fall pretty readily into one or the other of two chief categories: they are either floras, dealing with the vegetation of some particular region, or they are monographs treating a special group of plants. Our fundamental division was, therefore, into floras, arranged geographically, and monographs, classified systematically.

In this grouping the first thing that struck me was the overwhelming predominance, both in bulk and numbers, of the floristic works over the monographic. The second was that of the monographs, that is to say of those works treating not a region but a particular group of plants; the output in America has at all times been exceedingly small compared with that in Europe. Finally it was evident that most of the monographic work thus far accomplished in America has been restricted to purely American groups, exceedingly little of it taking on a cosmopolitan character.

The historic reasons for this state of affairs are tolerably obvious and there is no need to go into them at any length. American botany is relatively recent and its workers, at no time very numerous, have been confronted by the overwhelming task of reducing to systematic

<sup>1</sup> A communication read before the Systematic Section of the Botanical Society of America, December 29, 1922.

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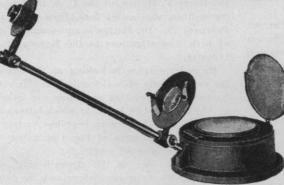
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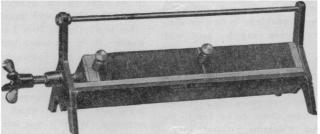
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