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HUNTIA is a yearbook devoted to studies of the literature on systematic botany and horticulture, botanical voyages and explorations, early agriculture, medical botany, and the related subjects of botanical biography, iconography, and bibliography.

While HUNTIA serves primarily as a record of investigations at The Hunt Botanical Library, its pages are open also to papers from scholars of other institutions.

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The Agnes Arber collection

James D. Van Trump

A COLLECTION OF THE SURVIVING PAPERS of Mrs. Agnes Robertson Arber (Mrs. E. A. Newton Arber [née Robertson]) (1879-1960) was acquired by the Hunt Botanical Library in 1961 from her daughter, Miss Muriel Arber, through the offices of W. T. Stearn of the British Museum (Natural History). Further additions have been contributed by Edgar Anderson, B. C. Sharman, and Anthony Lilly. The following is a summary account of selected items from the collection.

Mrs. Arber, although an eminent botanist, did not limit her cultural interests to her own specialty as may be seen in the obituary notice in *The Times* (London) of 24 March 1960, reprinted with a note by W. T. Stearn in *Taxon* (9: 261-263, 1960, with portrait). Her work as a distinguished plant morphologist was complemented and expanded by her endeavors as a botanical bibliographer and historian, as a philosopher, and as a student of aesthetics. She was also much interested in literature and wrote both well and with considerable stylistic felicity.

Collections containing research records are always valuable for the raw materials that went into the production of the author's published work. This collection of Arber material reflects all the facets of Mrs. Arber's intellectual life, but there is little here that is purely personal, and only through some of the letters is one afforded glimpses of her personality or private life. The largest number of items consists of boxed file cards and notebooks containing the research material used in the production of some of her books—notably her volume, *Herbals*—together with much supporting illustrative material. A considerable group of newspaper and periodical clippings relating to the subject matter have been inventoried separately, although many of them had been incorporated by Mrs. Arber in her notebooks. There are several typescripts of her articles. Reprints of her published papers and botanical reprints by others are well represented. Numerous autograph letters from a large and varied group of correspondents form an important and interesting section. The entire collection is largely concerned with Mrs. Arber's bibliographical, historical, and philosophical

work in connection with botany rather than with records of her scientific observations.

The notebooks dominate the collection. They include a small volume—an herbarium—labeled “Agnes, aged seven, 4th May, 1886,” several school exercise books—notably some summer holiday notes—and an album of 1895-96 which displays engagingly her talent for sketching. In one of 1894 there is a note of Dodoen’s *Nievue herball* of 1578 from which, she said, began her study of botanical history. Supplementing this closely is another notebook dated September 1900 which she inscribed “Herbals and Herbalists”—evidence of her early interest in this facet of botany.

These thin volumes bring us to the largest group of items in the collection, the materials dealing with her book *Herbals* in both the first and second editions of 1912 and 1938 respectively. Two notebooks deal with the herbals in the libraries of Cambridge University, and are accompanied by seven large notebooks which contain general notes supplemented by seven 3" × 5" file boxes of other notes, bibliographies, and a subject index. An extensive group of items—photographs, photostats, and proofs—deal with the illustration and embellishment of her *Herbals*. Rounding out this section is an assorted group of unbound proof sheets, apparently from both the first and second editions.

There are a few notebooks on morphological material, one on the “law of loss” which she promulgated and advocated, another is on Goethe, and others are on the text figures of her volume on the grasses, *The Gramineae*. Notebooks on botanical illustration in general, and in particular on biographical studies of Charles Bonnet, Guy de la Brosse, Nehemiah Grew, plus notes on her reading in the philosophers, complete this section.

Next in interest to these materials is the group of autograph letters comprising some 154 items consisting of letters from and to Mrs. Arber, as well as a few associated with Ethel Sargant (1863-1918), another distinguished morphologist, who was Agnes Robertson’s friend and mentor during her early career. In passing, it might be noted that two sonnets by Ethel Sargant in the collection’s manuscript section demonstrate the literary interests so often evinced by the British no matter what their profession. There are also two interesting letters of 1897 and 1901 from Professor Edward Strasburger at Bonn to Miss Sargant. Addressed to Mrs. Arber are a large group of letters from other botanists thanking her for reprints or discussing morphological matters. B. Daydon Jackson, Lady Isabel Browne, E. J. Salisbury, Louis Dollo, and John McClean Thompson are some of the names encountered, and accompanying these there is a long series of letters from D’Arcy Thompson. Letters from Mrs. Arber’s family, especially from her artist-

sister Janet Robertson and her brother Professor Donald S. Robertson, reveal something of her family background. The two-way correspondence recently donated by Dr. Sharman reveals the genial helpful side of Mrs. Arber's character, as well as some interesting sidelights on war-time Britain. Now that the collection has been established, it is hoped that other Arber material will be contributed to it.

Only a few manuscripts—short botanical articles, obituaries, and book reviews—are included and not all of these are by Mrs. Arber. The extensive collection of reprints of Arber papers serves to indicate the range of her publication.

The collection, of course, has its "trivial fond records" and there are indications that the eminent scientist was also a woman. Among the illustrative material are preserved a small group of early nineteenth century flower engravings, mostly of the "pretty" variety and mostly cut from so-called "art" calendars. An exception among them is a group of five colored engraved plates in dark blue wrappers, apparently a prospectus for a "small" edition of Sowerby and Smith's *English botany*. All these items, inscribed as gifts "with love" were treasured among the monumental achievements of a dedicated and active life.

