Book Review

Drawings of British Plants. The publication of part 31 of *Drawings of British Plants** marks the completion of Miss Ross-Craig's mammoth task of illustrating "all the thoroughly established flowering plants found growing wild in Britain." The first part of the *Drawings*, comprising Ranunculaceae, appeared in 1948 at the price of 6/- (30p) and successive parts have been published fairly regularly for the last 25 years, resulting in a total of 1317 plates. These could have been purchased at the time of publication for the meagre total cost of £19.7½, and the entire set although now somewhat dearer is still available in separate parts. The eight complete bound volumes, including the comprehensive Index still to be published, are at the time of writing (July 1974) available for £60; the *Drawings* do not include the Cyperaceae and Gramineae for the sound reason that these two families have been adequately catered for elsewhere.

The sequence of the families and genera follows that of Bentham and Hooker's *Genera Plantarum*. A standard pattern has been maintained throughout the *Drawings* so that each page, representing one species, shows wherever possible a life-like representation of the plant, including the underground parts, with surrounding illustrations of the various other organs, usually in enlarged form. The legend at the foot of each page concludes with details of flower and leaf colour. Each part carries a full Index including synonymy and common names.

This article is more in the nature of marking an occasion than a review and it is not my intention now to review each and every part. Over the years there has been some adverse criticism, on such things as the inclusion of some species or hybrids but the exclusion of others; incorrect nomenclature; incorrect common names; and even of the drawings themselves. These apart, all reviewers have had nothing but praise for Miss Ross-Craig's work and such phrases as "treated with that degree of cautious enterprise", "difficult task of reconstruction of living appearance from herbarium specimens", "technique faultless", "great assistance in identification" are a general indication of high regard for the *Drawings*.

Anyone would surely be satisfied to have accomplished this work in a lifetime but to complete it in 25 years with not the slightest decline in standard is surely a great achievement, and Miss Ross-Craig has earned nothing but the highest praise for her tenacity and endurance I leave the final acclaim to Sir Edward Salisbury's foreword in which he said "Miss Ross-Craig's representations are a happy combination of artistic portraiture and scientific accuracy of detail" This ideal has been adhered to throughout.

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* Drawings of British Plants. By Stella Ross-Craig. Vols. 1–8. 1317 plates. 9¾″. G. Bell & Sons Ltd. London. Price £60.