

**A PLAIN AND EASY  
ACCOUNT OF THE  
BRITISH FERNS**

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A plain and easy account of the British ferns by Various

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**VARIOUS**

**A PLAIN AND EASY  
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BRITISH FERNS**



A  
PLAIN AND EASY ACCOUNT  
OF  
THE BRITISH FERNS.

WHEREIN

EACH SPECIES IS PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED UNDER ITS  
RESPECTIVE GENUS, AND THE CHARACTERISTICS  
OF THOSE GENERA GIVEN IN WORDS  
OF COMMON USE.

WITH

A GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL TERMS,

SERVING AS A KEY TO LARGER TREATISES.

L. B.

LONDON:  
ROBERT HARDWICKE, 38, CUREY STREET.  
1854.

191. c. 11.



ROBERT HARDWICKE, PRINTER, CARMY STREET, LINCOLN'S INN.

## PREFACE.

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THE present Outline of our BRITISH FERNS is mainly indebted to the following works, though I have not considered myself bound implicitly to abide by them. While freely using their assistance therefore, I yet do not claim their authority.

'An Analysis of the British Ferns.' By George Francis, F.L.S.; 4th edition. London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., Stationers'-hall-Court, 1850. The arrangement of the genera herein is simple, easy, satisfactory; and well and clearly delineated in the respective figures; the definitions and accounts of each species are ample and minute; a slight record of the natural

habitats (or localities where to be found) of each is added; the whole is an excellent little instructor to those who already understand, or can elsewhere make themselves masters of the technical terms of Botany, employed in this as also in the other books mentioned.<sup>1</sup>

Much the same order is adopted in Sowerby's 'English Botany,' Single No. Class XXIV, Cryptogamia, Order I, Filices Ferns, pp. 29, pl. 43.—The definitions here also are useful, though less elaborated; the plates beautifully executed, and often, but not always, very faithful. To a beginner, therefore, it is a welcome guide, as actually presenting to the eye what it might be more difficult to distinguish by mere verbal descriptions, especially when conveyed in scientific expressions. The

<sup>1</sup> I have now appended a Glossary, explanatory of the principal technical and other scientific terms occurring in works on Pteridology.



classification employed by these two authors, and sanctioned more or less by others, is chiefly, though not absolutely, pursued in this Outline.

'A Handbook of British Ferns.' By Thomas Moore, F.L.S. London: Groombridge, Paternoster-row, 1848; and Pamplin, Frith-street, Soho.—This is yet fuller, and more particular, and gives the proper mode of cultivation in every case. Unfortunately, though in other respects an admirable little work, a more complicated plan of arrangement and occasional change of nomenclature<sup>3</sup> render it better fitted

<sup>3</sup> "A change of names," well remarks Francis, "is always perplexing, and in this case unnecessary. I cannot admit either that the amount of evil is very greatly less in re-establishing an obsolete nomenclature, than in coining a new one. As to the mere intention assigned by some of restoring their due honour to ancient botanists, it is a principle good in theory, but cannot be carried out; and it would be of much injury to botany if it could, as we should be soon overwhelmed with terms now forgotten, which are generally less appropriate and significant than the more modern appellations." Had, indeed, the present alterations been from *Lastrea*, for

for those who already know somewhat on the subject, than for the entire novice.

'A Popular History of the British Ferns.' By the same. London : Reeve & Benham, Henrietta Street, Covent-Garden, 1851. A more elementary book, and, like Sowerby's, with coloured plates, instead of, as in the former and in Francis, mere woodcuts or etchings. The same complicated classification, &c. ; of considerable service,

example, the mere unmeaning derivative from *M. Delaetre*, and the vague *Polystichum*, equally applicable to half a dozen other species, to the more definite and descriptive *Aspidium*—there might have been some show of reason therein ; but surely not for the reverse, from good to bad. So, if *Quercina* were substituted for *Aquilina*, as regards *Pteris*, from its greater resemblance to an oak than an eagle, objectionable as such innovations must be, it would yet bear a face ; but what sense could be extracted from Newman's proposed *Eupteris* ? So of the system of classification according to the venation, the same writer says, "I do not find it either correct, convenient, or practicable." See his 'Observations,' p. vii, ed. 4th. And surely, while so easy, simple, and decided an arrangement can be gained from the fructification of each genus, it were somewhat superfluous to resort to any other.

however, as containing a more complete and detailed list of habitats.

In the following pages the subject has been more simplified than in any of the foregoing treatises—(all of which, however, are strongly to be recommended to one who would study it fully); the attempt having been made to describe each species in words of common use, technical language being avoided. I must only beg to be excused in designating the different parts of the Ferns by the names the corresponding parts of a tree would bear: the main stalk as a "stem," the lateral shoots therefrom as "branches" or "boughs;" the foliage on the latter, whether formed into a distinct and separate member, or joined to them in its whole width, as "leaves;" &c., critically incorrect as the application of such terms may be.

E. B.