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INTRODUCTION.

With the exception of New Providence, the numerous islands of the Bahama group lie outside the usual routes of tropical travel, and access to them can be had ordinarily only through the use of small schooners. The comparative insignificance of the Bahamas in their trade relations has intensified this isolation and resulted in their remaining in large measure, as *terra incognita* to the rest of the world. It is a strange commentary on the mutations of time, that on that very island where Columbus first set foot and praised his God for so fair a landing, there has been placed a lighthouse with but the single purpose of warning the mariner from its lonely shores.

In the hope of adding somewhat to our rather meager knowledge of these Islands, and of bringing into more accessible form the scattered observations of others, the Geographical Society of Baltimore, in the summer of 1903, organized an Expedition for the purpose of their exploration. I, with my two assistants, Mr. C. A. Shore and Mr. F. M. Hanes, was given charge of the botanical side, and this report is the result of observations and collections made during the voyage. As an apology for many deficiencies, I would call attention to the limited time at our disposal, and to the extreme difficulty of drying and preserving plants on the decks of a schooner generally exposed to a stiff breeze. Except in the town of Nassau, where we secured a working room for several days, the plants had to be brought to the boat and there pressed, labelled, and stowed away. On account of the salt air and frequent rains constant attention was necessary to prevent the decay of our specimens. Wherever possible notes were made on the spot, and it is from these that most of my descriptions are taken.

A large part of our time was consumed in sailing from port to port, or rather from point to point, as there are few protected harbors in the Islands;

and at a number of landings we had time for but a few hours on shore and had to avail ourselves of every moment.

On our return, the collections were distributed among a number of specialists, who kindly undertook their determination and who are responsible for the nomenclature. All of the ferns and flowering plants, with the exception of the grasses, sedges and palms, were determined by Dr. N. L. Britton; the grasses, by Dr. H. F. Hitchcock; the palms, by Dr. O. F. Cook; the myxomycetes by Dr. W. G. Farlow; the algæ, by Dr. M. A. Howe; the fungi, by Dr. Geo. F. Atkinson; the lichens, by Mr. W. W. Calkins; the liverworts, by Dr. A. W. Evans; and the mosses, by Mrs. N. L. Britton. To each of these I am under many obligations not only for undertaking the work, but for the kindness that they have in every case shown in furnishing information and in answering my inquiries. To Dr. N. L. Britton, Director of the New York Botanical Garden, my thanks are particularly due for the assistance he so generously offered during my stay of six weeks in the Bronx Park Museum. To Mr. C. A. Shore, who aided me in collecting, and to Mr. F. M. Hanes, who took the photographs, I wish to express my gratitude for faithful assistance under all circumstances.

SKETCH OF BOTANICAL EXPLORATIONS IN BAHAMAS.

Since Mark Catesby's visit in 1725, these Islands have been frequently explored by botanists; unfortunately, however, without system. Most of their scientific exploration has yielded little fruit, as there are but a few publications of any extent on a flora that is both abundant and attractive. Most collectors have been satisfied with making herbaria without troubling themselves with written observations. Some few have merely identified without collecting. The Bahama plants that have been preserved are now, however, quite numerous, and when thoroughly worked up, they will no doubt be found to include the major part of the flora of the Islands.

The earliest collector of whom we have any information was Mark Catesby. After visiting Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia and Florida, he went to New Providence in 1725. From there he made visits to Eleuthera, Andros, Abaco and other islands. He remained in the Bahamas until 1726 and collected plants from all the points he visited. His collections are now at Oxford and in the British Museum. On his return to England, Catesby published two large volumes of explorations which contained many illustrations.[1] The first

[1] The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and The Bahama Islands, etc. London, 1731-43.