

PREFACE.

THIS volume has been produced in order to supply a want which has long been felt in the Australian Colonies, but which hitherto has been found to be impracticable, as local publishers would not undertake the risk. Fortunately this difficulty has been removed by the combined action of the Governments of the most important colonies to assist in this publication. It is now issued under the sanction and authority of the Governments of Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, and Tasmania. It has not been attempted to incorporate New Zealand, and only to refer to most of the species which are common to Australia and New Zealand, the majority being different.

The material upon which this work is based consists of the species enumerated by Kalchbrenner in "Grevillea," and previous authors, with those collected since and communicated to the author by Messrs. F. M. Bailey, Dr. Berggren, Mrs. Flora Martin, Baron F. von Mueller, F. Reader, Schomburgck, and others. In addition to these may be mentioned the specimens secured by Sir Joseph D. Hooker, in his Antarctic Voyage, in the *Challenger* Expedition, and other Expeditions which have touched upon the coasts.

It is not supposed that the present work is by any means exhaustive of the Fungi of the Australian Colonies, since those which are so minute as to require the aid of a pocket lens are far below the number which would be reasonably expected to occur

over such a large expanse of country. Such specimens are unobserved by the ordinary botanical collector, and require some experience to detect. Thanks are, therefore, due to the perseverance of Mr. F. M. Bailey, Mrs. Martin, and Baron F. von Mueller, in continuing to secure and forward specimens to England for identification, since, without their co-operation, this volume could scarcely have been produced. My thanks are also due to Mr. George Masee for his constant assistance in the examination and determination of the material which forms the basis of this work. Except the *Hymenomyces*, all the specimens enumerated and described by Kalchbrenner were referred to myself at the time, and we shared the responsibility.

Unfortunately, in some cases, the localities attached to the specimens which have passed through my hands are not indicated, as also is the case with some published descriptions of species which I have never seen, so that I have had to rest content with the general indication of "Australia," instead of the usual quotation of each colony. Interested persons will possibly take exception to the omission of the names of collectors under each individual species, but as this could not be done, for lack of the necessary information in all cases, it was considered advisable not to attempt it in any. Moreover, this could hardly be classed as "scientific information," and would in no way have contributed to the practical value of the volume.

The difficulties in the way of determination or description from dried specimens, especially of *Agaricini*, badly preserved, with no information, and destitute of figures, are almost insurmountable. Errors are almost inevitable in such cases, and there is never so much certainty or satisfaction as when the specimens can be seen living, or in a fresh state. The best substitute for the latter condition lies in faithful coloured drawings and accurate sections, with the addition of such notes as could not be indicated in the figures. This has been the great desideratum with Australian *Agaricini* and *Boleti*. Rarely have the specimens been carefully dried, and much more rarely have they been accompanied by any notes or figures. Exceptions must be made in favour of some drawings by Miss Wehl, Mrs. Martin, Mr. Tisdall, and some rough sketches by Mr.

Bailey, although often for lack of sections these have not been all that could have been desired. As must be expected, a great number of badly dried Agarics, without a scrap of information, have been at once condemned as useless.

In the preparation of this volume my thanks are due to Mr. W. Phillips, of Shrewsbury, for his valuable assistance with the Discomycetes, and also to Mr. G. Masee for his aid and counsel with the Gastromycetes and Myxomycetes; and also to Mrs. Flora Martin for her unflagging energy in smoothing the way for the accomplishment of this long-cherished design, now brought to a close.

It has been my endeavour, with the illustrations, to represent each genus, and the principal subgenera, as much as possible by Australian examples. As for the classification and arrangement, I accept the responsibility, and, if need be, shall be prepared to defend it. I can only hope that the publication of this "Handbook" may prove a boon to the Colonies, and justify their Governments in having given to it their liberal countenance and support.

M. C. COOKE.

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