

"I RECALL..."

HUGH EVANS

For many years, indeed long before I engaged in the nursery business, I expended time, effort, and research in procuring from abroad new or unusual plants possessing merit, so that our gardens and streets thereby might be more adorned.

Looking over my old lists of plants, of things obtained mostly from Australia and South Africa, I am almost daunted as I read them. Virtually all of this material came here as seeds, and much of it from countries which had a definite prolonged dry season, similar to our own Southern California. Unhappily, many of these plants which I raised to the flowering stage from seed, no longer exist. Most of them I did not propagate in any quantity and when I left my old garden, many of them perished, and those which found homes in various gardens received perpetual irrigation, a treatment to which they sooner or later succumbed.

Scrutinizing catalogues and horticultural books of the two countries mentioned above, and admiring the illustrations of the various subjects, I experience a distinct sense of loss and dismay when I realize how many of these beautiful and interesting plants have passed entirely from my ken, and I fervently hope that in the new State and County Arboretum, all these subjects which require and must have the right environment and treatment can be made happy and will flourish and cause pleasure to all who behold them. It is true, too, that whereas so many plants from North and South Africa and from West Australia especially, dwindled and passed way for lack of rest; on the other hand, a number of subjects from the moisture-laden regions of New Zealand and Chile for instance perish with us here in Southern California for lack of atmospheric humidity while around the Bay region in northern California they grow and thrive.

It is easy, too easy sometimes, to put moisture into the ground, but without taking pains and installing overhead piping systems to cast a fine misty spray to combat our atmospheric aridity, many beautiful things which insist on moisture-laden air cannot be successfully grown here, though where there are trees which do not cast too dense a shade and at the same time throw off moisture into the air, these adverse conditions can be to a large extent obviated.

From where I am sitting, writing at my desk, I look out at a bush of *Luculia gratissima* from China; this shrub is about fifteen years old and carries about fifty large trusses of its lovely waxy pink fragrant flowers. The chief reason I mention this, aside from its natural charm, is because this particular plant seems to defy all rules; it is in the main a difficult and capricious subject, yet this specimen has been growing all these years in the hardest, most intractable and badly drained soil it is possible to imagine. Some years ago we grew hundreds of this lovely shrub; they received every attention — various types of soil were tried; but unfortunately "When we learned to know them well, and love them, they were sure to die." I recall, we got all the scientists and horticulturists in the countryside to prescribe for them, but alas, nothing would avail: up to about a year or more old they seemed to rejoice in life, and then some obscure malady carried them off.

About four years ago, when I was in Oakland, my friend, Dr. Harry Shepherd, of the University at Berkeley, took me to his garden in Berkeley to see a *Luculia* which he said I had given him about ten years previously. I think I never saw a more entrancing thing: it had over three hundred trusses of flowers, and the plant was in magnificent health. A year or two later, Dr. Shepherd told me he could not begin to count the flower clusters. We are growing this superb plant all over again, and hope from past disaster to pluck final success.

Aside from the material secured from Africa, Australia and New Zealand, I naturally procured quite a few meritorious subjects from China and India, the Canary Islands, and Central and South America, and quite a number of exotic plants from England. Hillier & Sons, a very old firm at Winchester, used to and still do grow quite an assortment of rare and uncommon flowering shrubs, and I obtained many fine things from this source.

I remember vividly how many years ago the late Sir Arthur Hill, Director of Kew Gardens, was rambling with me around my garden and noticed some unusual items I had received from England. He asked me from whom they came; I told him (it was not Hilliers) and he remarked, "I think he lifted them from Kew; he is a very enterprising man. When

he comes to Kew we delegate one man to walk in front of him, and another to keep right behind him, and he gets away with plants in spite of that." I regret to say that both Sir Arthur Hill and the nurseryman in question have gone to a better land. It was Sir Arthur Hill, incidentally, who sent me seed of *Ceratostigma Wilmottianum* which up to that time was not in Southern California. Given plenty of water during the summer, this is a valuable plant with its profusion of blue flowers for month after month.

In this connection, no one has any business experimenting with new plants unless together with the joys of realizations, he is also steeled to endure the pain of disillusionment. He will only too often stand over some distressful subjects and in imagination hear them cry like the gladiators of old in the Roman arena—

"We who are about to die salute thee."

In another article I hope to mention and pay tribute to the men and women who did so much to enrich our state by their introductions.



LASCA, AND ITS BIRD-LIFE

W. DAN QUATTLEBAUM

In the area now known as LASCA—Los Angeles State and County Arboretum—there has been, very probably for thousands of years, a small lake maintained by perennial springs from which flowed a small brook. It was the site of an Indian village, and the Indian name for the place was "A-hupquing-na"—Place of Waters. With very fertile soil and ample moisture, the area around and near the lake and springs undoubtedly produced a veritable jungle of Alder, Willow, Sycamore, Walnut, Toyon, Coffee-berry, Creek Dogwood and Wild Grape. Scattered there also were the Live Oak, Mesa Oak, Sumac, Elderberry, Baccharis and Squaw-bush, on Tal-lac Knoll and the mesa.

Such favorable conditions for bird life continued without a break, perhaps, until much later, when after E. J. Baldwin had developed the place, there was a luxuriant stand of Eucalyptus, Cypress, Fan Palms, Eastern Elms, Persimmons and Magnolias. These almost ideal conditions — trees, shrubs, underbrush and water — made this area an attractive habitat for permanent as well as summer and winter residents of upland birds and water fowl. It was also a stopping place of natural attraction for migrants on their way to and from their summer homes in the mountains and North Country.

When the Arboretum Foundation took charge of the grounds in 1948, it was about the best spot in this section to see a good list of birds. "Birders," including myself, had haunted the place for several years. About 1940, the Burrowing Owl and the Roadrunner were still there. And about this time, one day in March, I saw a Sum-

mer Tanager, an exceedingly rare visitor from the East, in an eastern Oak near the Queen Ann Cottage. Two other "birders" saw a roaming Duck Hawk and a roving Cardinal. In 1947, a pair of Pied-billed Grebes raised two broods on the lake; and on December 23, the same year, they brought off the third brood of two young. These young survived a severe winter and grew to maturity. The summer of 1949, the Caretaker who lived by the lake noticed the Green Heron and Black-crowned Night Heron nesting at the same time, in his yard. Two rare Florida Gallinules spent the fall and winter of 1949-50 on the lake.

I have compiled the records of the birds observed by local ornithologists in the area of the Arboretum, and to date the total is 156 species: of these 39 are residents, 11 summer residents, 20 winter residents, and 86 migrants.

The officers and councilors of the California Arboretum Foundation, Inc. are to be heartily commended for their action in setting apart the Arboretum as a Bird Sanctuary. The staff at the Arboretum is also very cooperative in the interest of bird-life on the grounds. Plans are afoot to grow special plants which are known to furnish food for birds. The art and work of developing a great Arboretum was well under way in June 1950. There have been many changes in removing trees, and otherwise preparing for new landscaping; more is coming, but the grounds and the lake—and the Arboretum—will always be a haven for birds.



Evans, Hugh. 1951. "I recall..." *Lasca leaves* 1(Spring 1951), 22–23.

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