

“Flowers for Ladies”

– Exhibition¹ –

Gabriela MORĂRESCU

"Lucian Blaga" Central University Library

The book exhibition entitled “Flowers for ladies” was organized on the occasion of Women's Day (March 8) by the Department of Special Collections of the BCU (Central University Library) in collaboration with the branch Libraries of Botany and Plant Physiology, mainly dedicated to women. In the catalogue of this exhibition four titles of publications are included from the collections of two branch libraries considered special due to their presentation form and their scientific content.

These publications originate from the collections of the Library of the Botanic Institute, shared among the present Libraries of Botany and Plant Physiology after 1925, when the Botanic Garden and the Botanic Museum in Cluj were brought to existence. Thus the collections of systematic botany from the old library collections belonging to the Botanic Institute together with other donations that constituted the first collections of the Botanic Library, while the collections of general botany remained in the administration of the Library of Plant Physiology.

From the collection of the Library of Plant Physiology three publications had been displayed: *Sammlung schönblühender Gewächse*, *Die Algen der Dalmatischen Küste* and *Der Naturselbstdruck*.

Sammlung schönblühender Gewächse was written by **Th. Fr. L. Dees von Esenberk** and **W. Sinning**, and it was published in 1831 in Düsseldorf. It contains plates with color drawings, representing 100 species of flower plants, drawings of a special delicacy and accuracy, sometimes some morphological details of the described plants also appear next to a drawing. The publication ends with a neat handwritten Index of the drawn plants.

Die Algen der Dalmatischen Küste, achieved by Georg Frauenfeld and published in 1855 in Vienna, is a completion to the book of F.T. Kützing's *Species Algarum*; its main objective is to reproduce the image of the vegetal material (algae), collected and studied during an expedition made by the author in 1854 along the Dalmatian coasts accompanied by the algologist Vidovich. References are made to Kützing's work for a complete scientific description. This work is

¹ Okos-Rigó Ileana, Silvia Onac and Raluca Horvath also contributed to the organisation of this exhibition and editing this paper

interesting because the biological material presented in its pages is the result of an innovatory but also expensive procedure for that time (the costs had been supported by the imperial house of Austria) – *Naturselbstdruck* – a procedure used for one-color objects or those poorly interpenetrated by colors, which is briefly described in the preface of the study. The demands of this procedure had been “met” by the algae, these gentle inhabitants of waters, the collection and conservation of which require lots of attention and certain skills. Although this work was achieved almost 150 years ago, it continues to be a helpful teaching material in the professional formation of students as scientists.

Following the Preface, a presentation of the *Physiotypia Plantarum Austriacarum* series is made; the work was ordered at the Imperial Printing House to be presented at the World Exhibition of Industry in Paris, comprising plates that show the diversity of the flora in the Imperial territory using the same procedure, *Naturselbstdruck*. Initially 3,000 plates were envisaged in the project, out of which only 500 of the most representative plants had been actually achieved, the procedure being precarious and difficult.

All these plant species plates systematically arranged from inferior to superior plants, make up 5 oversized volumes - 59x42 cm - (size being the reason for not being displayed), but the detailed description and 30 more plates strictly referring to leaf nervures, constitute a separate volume also present at this exhibition. The title of the volume is identical with the name of the procedure used for the studied material: *Der Naturselbtsdruck*, the authors being Constantin von Ettingshausen and Alois Pokorny (1856).

These volumes are valuable both from a historical perspective (European publications from the 19th century) and from a scientific point of view – for the phytogeographic information comprised (plants from the Austrian Empire), but also for the anatomic and morphologic information (being a model of teaching material used in determining plant species and their classification). The circulation regime for these publications is very limited, because they are true values of the Library of Plant Physiology.

Only one publication was exposed from the collection of the Botanic Library; entitled *Histoire des roses*, published in Paris in 1820; it was achieved by Charles Malo, with drawings by P. Bessa. The book is one of the “jewels” of the Botanic Library with a special format: 12,5 x 8,5 cm. As the author explains in the preface of the book, many scientific works dedicated to roses belong to famous scientists, but all have a rather

awkward format with large dimensions. The publication is supposed to be a complete history of roses that puts together in an easy-to-handle format (pocket size) for ladies, the profoundness of treating this topic, and also the pleasure of reading it.

In this book we find a complex presentation of roses (origin, creed, usage, history, fables and superstitions – in ancient and modern nations), the description of some species, their medical, alimentary and cosmetic properties, and in the end a collection of poems having roses as literary motifs.

As a conclusion to this presentation, nothing would be more appropriate than these lines from the poem that inspired the title of the exhibition *La femme et la rose*:

„Oui, femme et rose sont divines;
mais en nous charmant tour-à-tour,
L'une blesse avec ses épines,
L'autre avec les traits de l'amour.”