

## DR. DENNY'S GERANIUMS.

*(With Coloured Plate of Geranium Imogen.)*

WHEN Dr. Denny, of Stoke Newington, first began to raise seedling geraniums—about ten years since—his principal object was to determine, by systematic experiments and observations, the nature of the process by which new varieties of flowers are produced, and especially the relative influence of the respective parents on the offspring. He could not have selected a more suitable plant for his operations, the zonate pelargonium, or “geranium” of the flower garden, being one of the most valuable plants in cultivation, and presenting in its variations the most opposite and diverse characters. If we place side by side a selection of single and double flowering, gold, silver, and bronze-leaved geraniums, we shall see so many distinct characters that it would pass belief that they are all forms of one species, unless we had evidence to establish the fact. As for the fact, indeed, it is notorious, but it is none the less surprising and wonderful. When Dr. Denny entered upon his agreeable labours, the raising of tricolours was a popular passion. The superbly variegated leaves of these plants are less sought after now, but in common with all other sections of the zonal family, a certain degree of favour they will ever enjoy; for the geraniums are the most useful of the many tender plants that are cherished in our gardens.

It is impossible now to present anything like an analysis of the results obtained by the scientific method of our esteemed friend and neighbour. Some account of registered crossings, and of the plants produced, was given in the “Gardener’s Magazine,” of August 24, 1867, and to that, for the present, we must refer readers who propose to study the subject. It may be well, however, to remark that one broad and useful conclusion arrived at (and, as we believe, sufficiently established) is, that the pollen parent, or say the father plant, exercises the greatest influence on the character of the offspring. The old rule of the florists is, therefore, considerably modified, but we would not cast their rule—which required a well-formed flower for the mother—to the winds, for in this systematic geranium crossing, the seed plant, or mother plant, has always communicated somewhat of its characteristics to the seedlings. How pinks and whites have been bred from scarlets, and how doubles and tricolors have originated, is now in great part explained in a way to satisfy scientific men, and our friend has contributed more than any other worker to this desirable and most valuable end. Whatever interest we, as gardeners, may take in the subject, we cannot but admire the magnificent named varieties that have been selected by Dr. Denny from his thousands of seedling plants, and it is the more agreeable to make note of them, because amongst them are several that so nearly approach true blue in colour, that we are compelled to believe and hope that in due time the Blue Geranium will surely come.

Two years ago Mr. William Paul sent out a set of Dr. Denny’s

geraniums. They soon became famous for their fine habit of growth and large circular flowers. Amongst them *Haidee* and *Diana* were conspicuous for their strong tone of blue, and all were notable for depth and decisiveness of colour and stoutness of petal. Another set is now on offer by Mr. John Copelin, of Tyssen Street Nurseries, West Hackney, and there can be no doubt these will mark a distinct epoch in the history of the zonal geranium. This set comprises seven varieties. *Kienzi* is a scarlet flower of the shape and size of a perfect show pansy. *Lord Macaulay* is plum-coloured crimson. *Richard Cœur de Lion* is deep scarlet, and may be best described as a great advance on *Leonidas*. *Jessica* is of the most perfect form, the colour a deep maroon crimson. *Rose of Allendale* is an improvement on *Beaute du Suresne*, with the same delicious colour, and with broader petals. *Zenobia* is brilliant cherry crimson, and flowers so freely that even now, when frost and fog have made an end of the glories of the garden, the stock of this plant in the nursery presents a brilliant sheet of colour, although the houses in which the geraniums are grown are only kept sufficiently warm to exclude frost safely. *Nelson* is a rich blue-tinted magenta flower, most delicious in colour in the spring and autumn. For winter flowers we have no such zonals as these, for not only are they of the highest quality as florists' flowers, but their lovely shades of blue come out with better effect in the dead season of the year than at any other time.

While enjoying the splendid display of the selected set in Copelin's nursery, we made note of a curious and beautiful seedling, named *Imogen*. As this is not for sale at present, those who would wish to possess it must be content to wait. It is of dwarf growth, and produces flowers of the most perfect form, the colour of which is a soft blue-tinted rose. It will, we have no doubt, prove eventually the finest of all known bedding plants, but it flowers so freely that to propagate it is slow work, and hence it cannot at present be offered for sale. We must confess our plate does not do it justice. Mr. Slocombe exercised his best skill in the drawing, and engraver and printer have spared no pains, and yet the true colour of the flower is not represented. No uncommon case this, and there is no help for it. We must beg our readers to accept the will for the deed, and James Thomson shall apologize for us by asking, "Who can paint like nature?" Probably in the course of the coming spring *Imogen* will be presented to the Floral Committee, and then—the committee shall see what they shall see.

Dr. Denny's home garden is so gay in winter with hundreds of geraniums in gorgeous bloom, that we have sought his aid in the interest of our readers, many of whom, we are sure, would be glad to laugh at the fog and the frost and the rain and the snow, if only they could secure a buxom bouquet of fiery flowers to sustain their merriment.

S. H.