



ODONTOGLOSSUM HASTILABIUM.



SHAKESPEARE'S words to the effect that the man who has no music in himself is fit only for treasons, stratagems, and spoils, might appropriately be adapted to flowers.

Certainly the man or woman who finds it impossible to love the rose and the violet, the chrysanthemum, and even the simple little primrose which will be so much abroad during this month of April, is lamentably lacking in something. So much is indisputable of flowers in general, and of the subject of this paper in particular. The rose alone excepted, no plant has inspired the abiding love shown for the orchid, and, not even excepting the rose, none has been the object of such enthusiasm. The study of the orchidaceous family, as some one has said, is a liberal education, and it was once declared, with all the authority of print, that Mr. Joseph Chamberlain must be possessed of a fine character because he loves these extraordinary flowers. If the predilection for orchids is to be accepted as proof of any such possession, the English race is in no danger of deterioration.

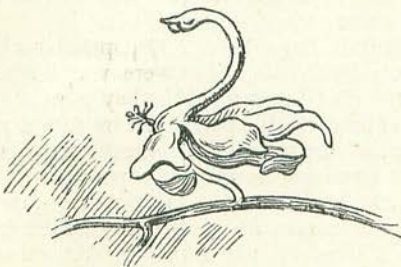
Many of our readers will have heard of the tulip mania which raged so fiercely in Holland about the middle of the seventeenth century, when simply fabulous prices were given for a single bulb. There was little that was either reasonable or explicable in the desire to secure the tulip at all costs, but the popularity of the orchid is easily understood by anyone who cares to go into the subject. We venture to believe that by the

time we have said all we have to say—and how small a portion that is of what we could say!—those who peruse this paper will find it somewhat difficult to resist running off to the nearest nurseryman and asking to be shown over his houses, or to the nearest bookseller and ordering one of the numerous popular manuals which will instruct them how to set about becoming orchid growers themselves. We have often heard the uninitiated wonder what there is to attract in the orchid, more than in any other beautiful flower. Well, to say nothing of its exquisite and unique charm as a mere spectacle, Darwin gave many reasons, and the Darwinian mind, we believe, has actually sought to show that the orchid is the missing link between animal and vegetable nature. The student will find lots to support this fascinating theory, and to induce him to think that if the other missing link—that between the man and the animal—is discoverable, we shall have completed the chain of nature starting with man and ending with the garden cabbage. But all this is another story, with which it is not our province now to deal.

Orchids have been really popular about twenty-five years. They were well known in the last century, but they were the possession of the privileged few, and were regarded as a mere floral curiosity. One day, however, some sixty years or more ago, the late Duke of Devonshire chanced to come across an orchid from Demerara, which bore an extraordinary resemblance to a butterfly. His delight was immense, and he proceeded forthwith to cultivate the

plant, of which a variety is shown in our illustration of the *Oncidium Kramerianum*. A little later he purchased a "Moth Orchid," for which he paid 100 guineas; and to the interest taken in these floral mimics by the ancestor of Lord Hartington are traceable the developments which have been so remarkable during the last decade or two.

Almost the first thing that strikes the spectator at an orchid show for the first time, after he has recovered from a sort of shock at the overwhelming beauty of the display—a display out-rivalling the rainbow in its variety and blend of colour—is the quite ludicrous resemblance of many of the flowers to animals, birds, and insects. Bees, spiders, grasshoppers, flies, lizards, and toads are quite common forms of orchid mimicry. Our illustration of *Cycnoches Warscewiczii* shows a swan, with a curious-looking tuft upon its breast. Another species is very like a dove as it may be seen hovering for an instant near the branch of a tree before alighting. One group has a flower in which a resemblance to the monkey is found; but the most ludicrous of mimetic vagaries is surely that of the species known popularly as the "Man Orchid." "Dressed like an acrobat in skin tunic of green, it swings as if gibbeted, in company with some fifty other little felons." But the flower is not content to run animate nature close in outward appearance; it evinces a disposition to rival man in the manufacture of various kinds of appliances. It takes a hint from the boot-maker, and produces the "Lady's Slipper"; it provides for the wants of a young family, and turns out a "Cradle"; it even resolves itself into a sort of swimming bath, in which the bee sometimes finds himself involuntarily immersed, and from which he escapes by means of a side-door arrangement. Well might Dar-



CYCNOCHES WARSCEWICZII.



ONCIDIUM KRAMERIANUM.

win say that the orchid family seemed to have been modelled in the wildest caprice. Proteus himself was incapable of assuming so many shapes.

The prevalent notion that these marvels are only for the owners of heavily-laden pockets dies hard. A pious wish that orchids were less expensive and could be grown at home is not uncommon.

It will be a revelation to some people to learn that an orchid which shall be a source of endless amusement and of considerable instruction may be had for a few shillings. Whether, in short, you have a few odd hundred pounds or merely a few odd hundred farthings to spare, you may gratify your love for this particular flower. You cannot expect to walk into, say, Mr. Bull's establishment in the King's-road, Chelsea, some day when you are passing, and for the price of a couple of dozen cigars appropriate the beautiful *Celogyne cristata alba*, some idea of whose virgin purity is conveyed in our illustration. This plant originally cost Mr. Bull £200. Great as this price is, it is barely two-thirds of the record; £300 has been exceeded for a single plant. Mr. Bull possesses a variety of the "Lady's Slipper" for which he paid that very figure. In 1883 Sir Trevor Lawrence paid 235 guineas for an orchid,



CELOGLYNE CRISTATA ALBA.

and Baron Schröder paid £165 and £160 respectively for two plants. Many firms have paid hundreds of pounds for the possession of a rare species, whilst, of course, one may often hear of a collection being sold for many thousands. At the same time, Mr. Bull or Messrs. Veitch, or any well-known cultivator will be happy to place orchids, which a few years ago were beyond the reach of even a large proportion of the middle classes, at your disposal for five or six shillings.

And be it understood, in buying an orchid you can never be quite sure that you have not secured a veritable treasure. The speculative element enters into orchid-collection to a degree undreamt of by the outsider. As the value of the most valuable just purchased by a duke may disappear in an hour, so that of the most common just purchased by yourself may be

augmented a hundred-fold by an eccentricity. Take an instance of depreciation recorded by Mr. F. W. Burbidge. A species of "Lady's Slipper" was imported and the single plant fetched £100 easily. But the home of the plant was discovered, and in the course of a week or two nurserymen were selling the same thing for five shillings. On the other hand, Pescatore's *Odontoglossum*, we are told, had been imported for years, and plants might be picked up for

a few shillings each, when "quite unexpectedly a lovely form heavily barred with purple appeared, and, had it been sold by auction when first it flowered, it would have brought from £50 to £100." Before it bloomed the plant would, in common with others of the same species, have been readily disposed of for a trifle.

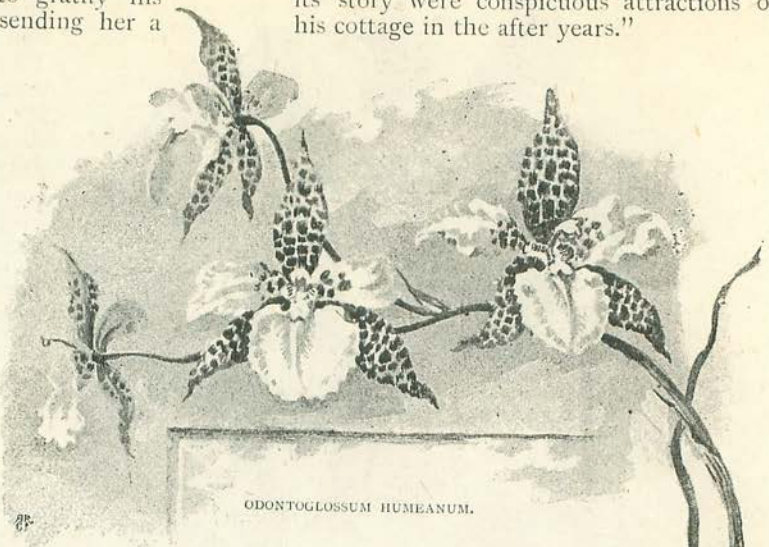
A friend of Mr. Burbidge's chanced to buy cheap a number of plants which were "hanging fire." "They were shrivelled plants of *Odontoglossums* in paper bags, and they took a good deal of skill and attention to bring them into vigour and health again. But when they bloomed some of them turned out very distinct, and an offer of £500 made for the lot as they stood, after the first five or six had bloomed, was not accepted." The most interesting piece of luck of this sort, however, which we have come across is related by Mr. Frederick Boyle. A Mr. Spicer, a tea planter in Sylhet, knowing his mother in England was fond of orchids, sent her some plants. They were an ordinary "Lady's Slipper" variety. Mrs. Spicer brought them to flower, and noticed certain curious characteristics. She consulted an expert, with the result that he paid her seventy guineas down and carried off the plant. "For years," says Mr. Boyle, "this lovely species was a prize for dukes and millionaires," and its introduction was due

to a son's desire to gratify his mother's tastes by sending her a few everyday orchids!

The mention of this discovery brings us to the more tragic side of orchid collecting. Mr. Sander, the famous orchid grower of St. Albans, despatched a representative to try to find the particular species which had proved so profitable to Mrs. Spicer. After many fruitless efforts, "Mr. Forsterman got on the track, but in

the very moment of triumph a tiger barred the way, his coolies bolted, and nothing would persuade them to go further. Mr. Forsterman was no *shikari*, but he felt himself called upon to uphold the cause of science and the honour of England at this juncture. In great agitation he went for that feline, and, in short, its skin and

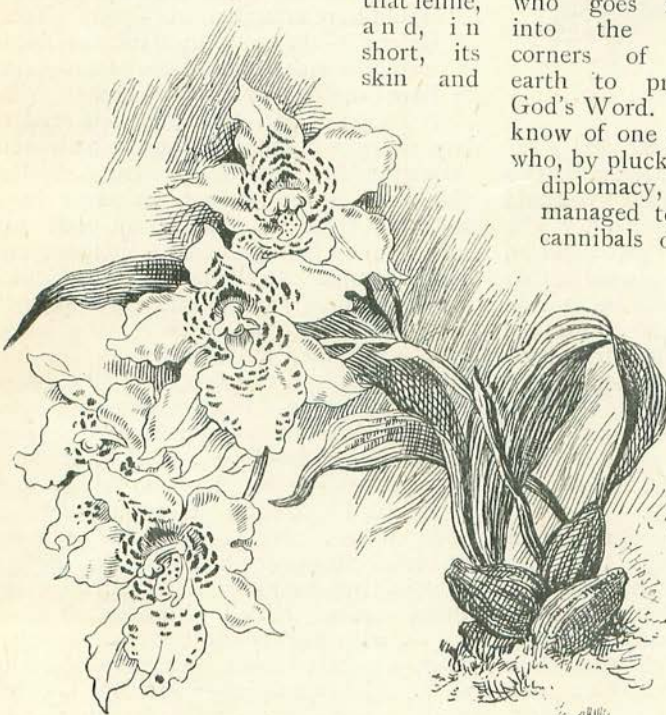
its story were conspicuous attractions of his cottage in the after years."



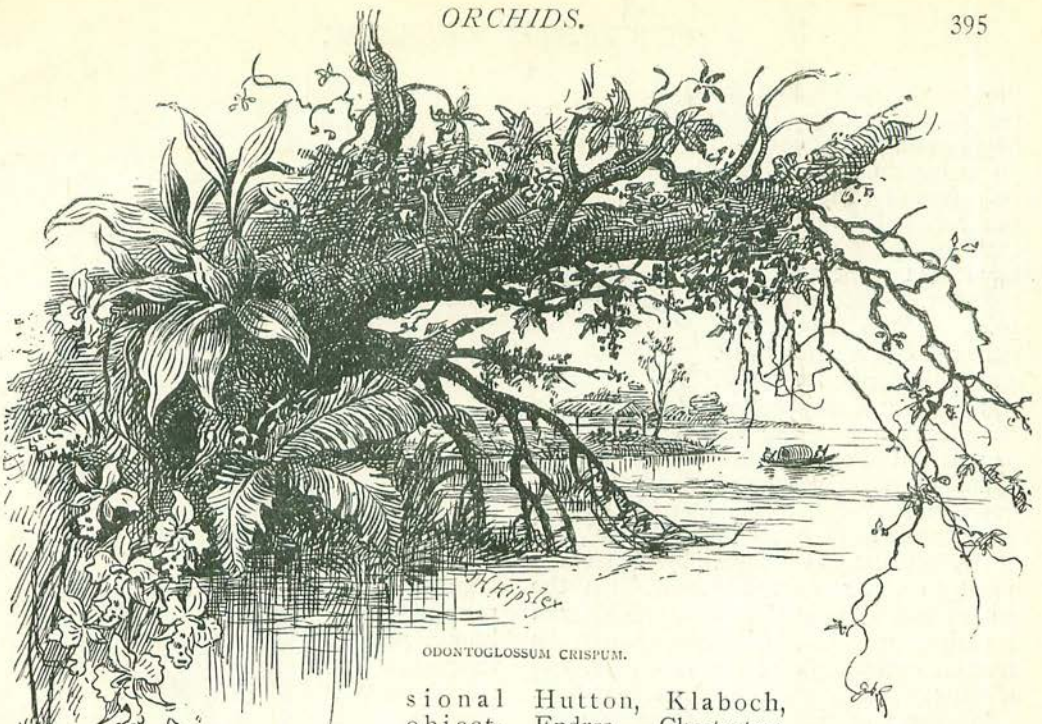
ODONTOGLOSSUM HUMEANUM.

The perils which men face in the search for orchids are as great as those encountered by the prospector for precious stones and metal, or by the missionary who goes forth into the wild corners of the earth to preach God's Word. We know of one man who, by pluck and diplomacy, has

managed to pass unscathed among the cannibals of New Guinea. When he first arrived, he was honoured by a careful overhauling on the part of the natives, who ultimately declared that he was too thin to eat. He has since made himself more or less at home with them, though he has only succeeded in winning their esteem by sitting down to the same dish and partaking of its contents, whatever they might be, and in compelling their respect by placing a few inches of cold steel at his side, and giving them an occa-



ODONTOGLOSSUM CERVANTESHI DECORUM.



ODONTOGLOSSUM CRISPUM.

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object-
lesson in the wonders of the revolver. He carries his life in his hands, and all for the sake of the chance of finding an orchid with some feature possessed by none other. The collector who would make his mark must be prepared for hazardous marches, for hanging like a sailor by his eyebrows over mighty precipices, or for wading for

days in swamps. He must have self-reliance, resource, patience, knowledge, and endurance.

The orchid has not only its heroes, it has its martyrs as well. Any great grower will give one the names of a dozen men who have sacrificed all in their efforts to add to the list of species. Collectors have been lost in Panama, Rio Hacha, Ecuador, Sierra Leone, Orinoco, and probably other places. "I wonder," said a friend to Mr. Burbidge, "if orchid amateurs ever give a thought as to the real price their orchids cost," and he proceeded to enumerate the names of such men as Bruchmueller, Zahn,

Hutton, Klaboch, Endres, Chesterton, and Freeman, who have died in the interests of the orchid lover. "On the roll of martyrs to orchidology," says Mr. Boyle, with enthusiasm, "Mr. Pearce stands high. To him we owe, among many fine things, the hybrid Begonias which are becoming such favourites for bedding and other purposes. . . . It was his great luck and great honour to find *Masdevallia Veitchii*, so long, so often, so laboriously searched for from that day to this, but never even heard of. To collect another shipment of this glorious orchid, Mr. Pearce sailed for Peru in the service, I think, of Mr. Bull. Unhappily—for us as well as for himself—he was detained at Panama. Somewhere in those parts there is a magnificent *Cypripedium*.* . . . The poor fellow could not resist this temptation. They told him at Panama that no white man had returned from the spot, but he went on. The Indians brought him back some days or weeks later, without the prize; and he died on arrival."

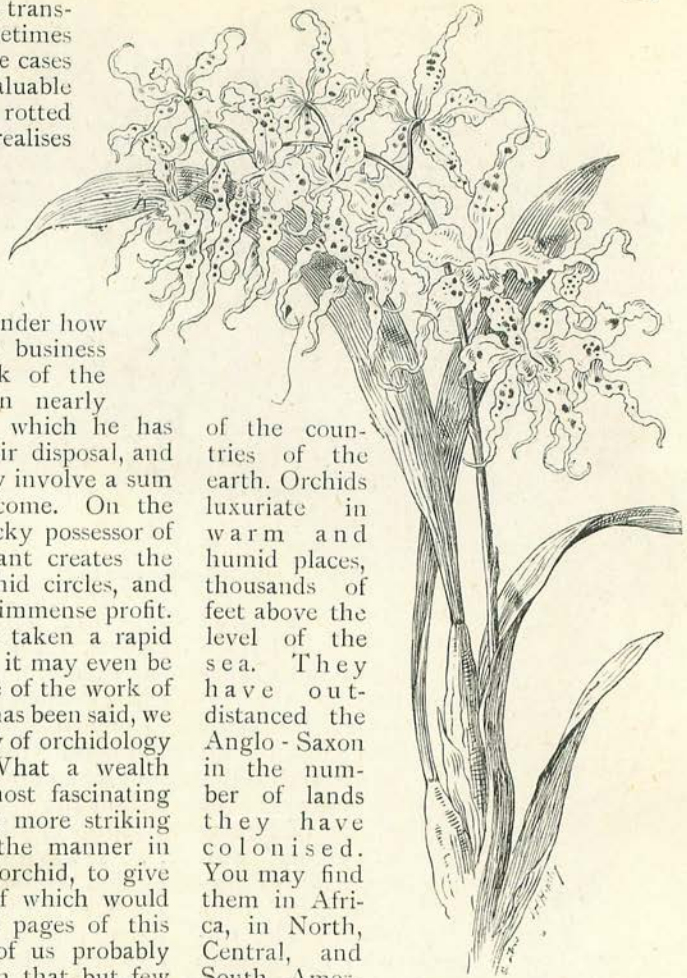
Even when the precious plant is secured, and danger to life and limb is past, the difficulties to be overcome are enormous. To bring a million sterling in gold from Paris or New York under special and vigilant guard, is a process almost simple when compared with the jealous care which

* Lady's Slipper.

has to be expended on the transportation of orchids. It sometimes happens that on opening the cases on arrival in England a valuable collection is found to have rotted *en route*, and the importer realises that hundreds of pounds have been spent and lives risked, to secure worthless roots! The orchid importer needs a stout heart and unlimited enterprise, and some of us may well wonder how he manages to make the business pay at all when we think of the ambassadors he employs in nearly every clime, of the funds which he has occasionally to place at their disposal, and of the fact that one loss may involve a sum equal to a fair annual income. On the other hand, if he is the lucky possessor of a variety of value, the plant creates the greatest enthusiasm in orchid circles, and is consequently a source of immense profit.

We have in these pages taken a rapid glance at the more popular, it may even be said the more romantic, side of the work of orchid collection. Enough has been said, we hope, to show why the study of orchidology is a liberal education. What a wealth of natural history of the most fascinating kind it opens up! Nothing more striking is recorded in nature than the manner in which the bee fertilises the orchid, to give the least adequate account of which would involve another half-dozen pages of this magazine. The majority of us probably would be surprised to learn that but few orchids grow in the ground. They are found often high up on the branches of some monarch of the primeval forest, and the proverbial needle in the bundle of hay might be discovered half a dozen times over whilst the collector is searching for a single plant. Others appear, however, quite low down. The tree-growing orchid is an epiphyte. That is to say, though it lives on the tree it makes the branch a resting-place only. It gets its nourishment from the atmosphere and not the tree, as does the mistletoe for instance. One orchid, a *Diacrium*, actually grows on rocks within reach of the spray from the salt sea waves.

To follow in the footsteps of the collector is to acquire a considerable knowledge



ODONTOGLOSSUM CIRROSUM.

of the countries of the earth. Orchids luxuriate in warm and humid places, thousands of feet above the level of the sea. They have outdistanced the Anglo-Saxon in the number of lands they have colonised. You may find them in Africa, in North, Central, and South America, in Australia and New Zealand, in Asia, in Madagascar, in Europe—everywhere except in very cold climates. One day the orchid hunter may be on the high road of civilisation, pursuing his quest like an ordinary tourist; another he will have plunged into regions dark as darkest Africa, as far removed from modern conditions as the dwarfs of Stanley's limitless forest. In the search for a single orchid he comes across many varieties of the human race, and on a thousand points connected with modes of life, of governments, of the relations of places one to another, far and near, he is better informed than many an arm-chair specialist.