FLORA DOMESTICA,

&c.

ADONIS.

RANUNCULACEAE.          POLYANDRIA POLYGYNIA.

Italian, adonio.—French, adonide; rose rubi; gouttes de sang [drops of blood]; aile de faisan [pheasant’s-wing]; oeil de perdrix [partridge’s eye].—Greek, eranthemon [spring-flower].—English, adonis-flower; bird’s eye; pheasant’s eye; flos-adoonis. The autumnal adonis is also called red maythas, red morocco; to which Gerarde adds may-weed, and red camomile. “Our London women,” says he, “do call it rose-a-rubie.”

This flower owes its classical name to Adonis, the favourite of Venus: some say its existence also; maintaining that it sprung from his blood, when dying. It is likely that the name arose from confounding it with the anemone, which it resembles. There are, however, other flowers which lay claim to this illustrious origin; the larkspur is one, but the claim is too weak to be generally allowed. Moschus has conferred this distinction on the rose. Others, again, trace its pedigree to the tears which Venus shed upon her lover’s body; and Gerarde would persuade us that these tears gave birth to the Venice-mallow: but the anemone has pretty generally established her descent from both parents.—See Anemone.
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The name of the beautiful huntsman, in his living capacity, however, applies well enough; for the Adonis is handsome and ruddy, and an enemy to the corn; but the flower is not so hardy as its godfather, and must be sheltered from the frosts of winter.

The Autumnal, or Common Adonis, has usually a red flower; but there is a variety of this species, of which the flowers are lemon-coloured. It is a native of most parts of the south of Europe; in Germany it grows wild among the corn; as it does, according to Gerarde, in the west of England. It is very common in some parts of Kent, particularly on the banks of the Medway,—a water-nymph, according to Spenser, famous for her flowers.

"Then came the bride, the lovely Medway came,
Clad in a vesture of unknowne geare,
And uncouth fashion, yet her well became,
That seemed like silver sprinkled here and there
With glittering spangs that did like stars appear,
And waved upon, like water chamelot,
To hide the metal, which yet every where
Bewrayed itself, to let men plainly wot
It was no mortal work, that seemed, and yet was not.

Her goodly locks adown her back did flow,
Unto her waist, with flowers bescattered,
The which ambrosial odours forth did throw
To all about, and all her shoulders spread
As a new spring: and likewise on her head
A chapelet of sundry flowers she wore,
From under which the dewy humour shed,
Did trickle down her hair, like to the hore
Congealed little drops which do the morn adore."

The Vernal Adonis [Fr. hellebore d’Hippocrate] is a perennial; and, as it does not flower the first year, it might be more convenient to purchase it at a nursery when in a state to flower, than to raise it at home. It may, however, be treated in the same manner as the Autumnal Adonis. It is a native of Switzerland, Germany, &c. It bears a large
ADONIS.

yellow flower, which blows about the end of March, or the beginning of April.

The Apennine Adonis is very similar to the vernal, of which it is termed the sister; but it continues longer in flower than that species, which, true to the name it bears, comes and goes with the spring. The reader of poetry is aware that Adonis, after death, was supposed to spend his time alternately with Proserpine in the lower regions, and with Venus on earth.

"Go, beloved Adonis, go,
Year by year thus to and fro,
Only privileged demigod!
There was no such open road
For Atrides; nor the great
Ajax, chief infuriate;
Not for Hector, noblest once
Of his mother's twenty sons;
Nor Patroclus; nor the boy
That return'd from taken Troy."

There is also a shrub Adonis, a native of the Cape of Good Hope.

The Autumnal Adonis is an annual, and the seeds sown in spring will flower in October. If some of the seeds are sown in September they will blow early in June. As the flowers open sooner or later in proportion to their exposure to the sun, a little attention to their arrangement will insure a longer succession of them. The seeds should be sown two or three in a pot, half an inch deep. During the severity of the winter, the pots should be housed; but in mild weather they should stand in the open air. In dry weather they should be occasionally, but sparingly, watered, just enough to preserve them from drought.

* See the Translations from Theocritus, in Hunt's Foliage.
FLORA DOMESTICA.

AFRICAN LILY.

AGAPANTHUS.

HEMEROCAILLIDÆ. HEXANDRIA MONOGYNIA.

The botanical name of this flower is from the Greek, and signifies a delightful flower.

This Lily is a native of the Cape of Good Hope: it is of a bright blue colour; very showy and elegant. The flowers blow about the end of August, and will frequently preserve their beauty till the spring.

It is increased by offsets, which come out from the sides of the old plants, and may be taken off at the latter end of June; at which time the plant is in its most dormant state. It should be turned out of the pot, and the earth carefully cleared away, that the fibres of the offsets may be the better distinguished: and these must be carefully separated from those of the old root. Where they adhere so closely as not to be otherwise parted, they must be cut off with a knife; great care being taken not to wound or break the bulb, either of the offset or of the parent plant.

When these are parted, they should be planted, each in a separate pot filled with light kitchen garden earth, and placed in a shady situation, where they may enjoy the morning sun; a little water should be given to them twice a week, if the weather be dry; but they must not have much, especially at this season, when they are almost inactive; for as the roots are fleshy and succulent, they are apt to rot with too much moisture. In about five weeks the offsets will have put out new roots: they may then be removed to a more sunny situation, and may have a little more water; but still not plentifully. In September they will put out their flower-stalks, and towards the end of the month, the
flowers will begin to open; when, unless the weather be very fine, they should be housed, that they may not be injured by too much wet, or by frost; but they must be allowed as much fresh air as possible. During the winter they may have a little water once a week in mild weather, but none in frost. This flower must be watered only at the roots.

ALMOND TREE.

AMYGDALA.

ROSACEAE.

ICOSANDRIA MONOGYNIA.

The Almond-tree! the lofty Almond-tree a potted plant! the Almond tree, to which Spenser, in an exquisite passage, likens the plume of Prince Arthur:

"Upon the top of all, his lofty crest,
A bunch of hairs discolour'd diversly,
With sprinkled pearl and gold full richly drest,
Did shake, and seem'd to dance for jollity.
Like to an almond-tree ymounted high
On top of green Selinis all alone,
With blossoms brave bedecked daintily,
Whose tender locks do tremble every one
At every little breath that under heaven is blown."

No, it is not this immortal Almond-tree that is to be moved at pleasure from the garden to a room or balcony; but a Russian cousin, the Bobownik, Döiki Persik, or Calmyzkii Orech [Calmuck almond]; but called by the Calmucks themselves, Charun Orak, a young Tartar of humble growth, though emulating his great relation in the elegance of his apparel. He is called the Dwarf Almond tree; and is worthy to have derived his name from the transformation of some dwarf in a fairy tale into a tree. In April the young shoots of this tree are covered with blossoms of a beautiful blush-colour; and the leaves are sometimes
five inches long. It will bear the open air, and, when the weather is dry, should be watered every evening. The young suckers from the roots must be taken off every year, or they will starve the parent plant; they may be planted in February or October, and should be placed in the shade till they have taken root. The fruit of this shrub is about the size of a hazel-nut, and has the taste of the peach-kernel.

Plutarch mentions a great drinker of wine, who, by the use of bitter almonds, used to escape being intoxicated. The Italians, upon their favourite modern principle of contra stimulants, suppose this very likely; and so it may be; but it need not be added, that to tamper in this manner with diseases seems very dangerous.

ALOE.


The derivation of this name is uncertain. Beginning with the syllable Al, it is, perhaps, of Arabian origin; especially as the plant is much venerated in the East. In the Hebrew, a cognate language, it is called ahalah: some derive Aloeis from the Greek als [the sea]; others from the Latin, adolendo; but this can only refer to the Aloe-wood, which is used in sacrifices for its fragrance. On the whole, it is probable the name was first applied to the Aloe-wood, and hence transferred to the common Aloeis, on account of their bitterness. Its medicinal virtues were made known to us by Dioscorides, the physician of Cleopatra; and it is also mentioned by Plutarch. The name Aloe is retained by all the European nations.

From the specimens we are in the habit of seeing in this country, we should be inclined to think that the utility of
the Aloe far surpassed its beauty, and to rank it, as a vegetable, with the camel and the elephant in animal life. Like the larger animals, it is confined to hot, or comparatively uncivilised countries. Its appearance, which resembles a collection of huge leathern claws, armed with prickles, is very formidable; and even the smaller species have a sort of monstrosity of size in their parts, though small as a whole. But notwithstanding the extraordinary utility of the Aloe, those who have seen it in its native country, and in full flower, describe it as scarcely less remarkable for elegance and beauty. The larger and more useful kinds appear to be also the most beautiful. Rousseau uses the epithet beautiful, in speaking of the great American Aloe, or Agave.

“Nature seems to have treated the Africans and Asians as barbarians,” says St. Pierre, in speaking of the Aloe, “in having given them these at once magnificent, yet monstrous vegetables; and to have dealt with us as beings capable of sensibility and society. Oh, when shall I breathe the perfume of the honeysuckle?—again repose myself upon a carpet of milk-weed, saffron, and blue-bells, the food of our lowing herds? and once more hear Aurora welcomed with the songs of the labourer, blessed with freedom and content*?”

The kind chiefly used in medicine is the Barbadoes Aloe, the preparations from which are eminent for the nauseousness of their bitter. “As bitter as aloes,” is a proverbial phrase. It is a common practice with our fair countrywomen to avail themselves of this bitterness in the Aloe, when weaning their children; applying it to the bosom to induce them to refuse it; but this is surely a more objectionable deceit than that by which they are allured to swallow nauseous drugs.

* St. Pierre’s Voyage to the Isle of France.
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“Così all’ego fanciul porgiamo asperai
Di soavi lecòr gli orli del vasò:
Succhi amari, ingannato, intanto ei beve;
E dall’inganno suo vita riceve.”

Tasso.

So we (if children young diseased we find)
Anoint with sweets the vessel’s foremost parts,
To make them taste the potions sharp we give:
They drink, deceived; and so deceived, they live.

Fairfax’s Translation.

It seems strange that any thing but the most imperative necessity should induce a mother to use any means which can render her an object of disgust to her child.

The most remarkable of the Aloe tribe is the great American Aloe, named by botanists Agave, which name is derived from the Greek, and signifies admirable, or glorious: called by the French aloe en arbre [tree aloe], and also pitte. The natural order in which it should be arranged is uncertain. Bernard Jussieu placed it with the Narcissi, and Anthony Jussieu with the Bromeliaceæ. It is a native of all the southern parts of America. “The stem generally rises upwards of twenty feet high, and branches out on every side towards the top, so as to form a kind of pyramid. The slender shoots are garnished with greenish yellow flowers, which come out in thick clusters at every joint, and continue long in beauty; a succession of new flowers being produced for near three months in favourable seasons, if the plant is protected from the autumnal cold. The elegance of the flower, and the rarity of its appearance in our cold climate, render it an object of such general curiosity, that the gardener who possesses the plant announces it in the public papers, and builds a platform round it for the accommodation of the spectators. The popular opinions, that the aloe flowers but once in a century, and that its blooming is attended with a noise like the
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report of a cannon, are equally without foundation. The fact is, that the time which this plant takes to come to perfection varies with the climate. In hot countries, where they grow fast, and expand many leaves every season, they will flower in a few years; but in colder climates, where their growth is slow, they will be much longer in arriving at perfection. The leaves of the American Aloe are five or six feet long, from six to nine inches broad, and three or four thick.*

Millar mentions one of these plants in the garden of the King of Prussia, that was forty feet high; another in the royal garden at Friedricksberg in Denmark, two-and-twenty feet high, which had nineteen branches, bearing four thousand flowers; and a third in the botanic garden at Cambridge, which, at sixty years of age, had never borne flowers. He specifies some others, remarkable for the number of their flowers, but does not mention the age of any one at the time of flowering.

"With us," says Rousseau, "the term of its life is uncertain; and after having flowered, it produces a number of offsets, and dies."

A kind of soap is prepared from the leaves of this Aloe, and the leaves themselves are used for scouring floors, pewter, &c.; and their epidermis is serviceable to literature as a material for writing upon. The following extract from Wood's Zoography will give some idea of the general utility of this extraordinary plant:—

"The Mahometans respect the Aloe as a plant of a superior nature. In Egypt it may be said to bear some share in their religious ceremonies; since whoever returns from a pilgrimage to Mecca hangs it over his street-door as a proof of his having performed that holy journey. The

* Wood's Zoography, vol. iii.
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superstitious Egyptians believe that this plant hinders evil spirits and apparitions from entering the house; and on this account, whoever walks the streets in Cairo, will find it over the doors of both Christians and Jews.

“The leaves of the different specimens of Aloe, as well as the Agave, are highly serviceable to the natives of the countries where they grow. The negroes in Senegal make excellent ropes of them, which are not liable to rot in water; and of two kinds mentioned by Sir Hans Sloane, one is manufactured into fishing-lines, bow-strings, stockings, and hammocks; while the other has leaves, which, like those of the wild pine and the banana, hold rain-water, and thus afford a valuable refreshment to travellers in hot climates. The poor in Mexico derive almost every necessary of life from a species of Aloe. Besides making excellent hedges for their fields, its trunk serves instead of beams for the roofs of their houses, and its leaves supply the place of tiles. From these they obtain paper, thread, needles, clothing, shoes, stockings, and cordage; from the juice they make wine, honey, sugar, and vinegar.”

Such of the Aloes as do not require a stove will bear the open air, in our climate, from the end of March to the end of September. During the winter they should be watered about once in a month; in the summer, when the weather is dry, once in a week or ten days; but when there is much rain, they should be sheltered from it, or they will be apt to rot. If the weather be mild, they may be placed where they may receive the fresh air in the day-time for a month after they are housed; after that the windows should be closed. They should not be put into large pots, but should be removed into fresh earth every year, which should be done in July. As much of the earth should be shaken away as possible, the roots opened with the fingers, and such as are decayed taken off; but great care must be taken not to