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## Botanical notes

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## MISCELLANEOUS.

## BOTANICAL NOTES.

*Odontites verna*, Reich., and its allies.—In the course of a very short tour in the eastern Pyrenees during the past autumn, I did not fail to observe the forms of this group which happened to come in my way, especially with a view to distinguish the plant which I have described in a recent number of this Journal as *O. Bertolonii*; I failed however to find any forms which should not be referred to *O. verna*. The state of the latter plant which I found abundantly in cultivated land in the mountainous region of northern Catalonia, has larger fruit than it is usually found to possess, but the form of the capsule and calyx-segments is quite normal, and does not approach to my *O. rotundata*. I have recently received from M. Jordan of Lyons specimens of three forms of this group detected by that accurate observer in the neighbourhood of Lyons, and named by him respectively *Euphrasia verna*, Bell., *E. serotina*, Lam., and *E. divergens*, Jordan. The first of these agrees with the common European *Odontites verna*; the second is the more slender plant which I have distinguished as var. *elegans*, and which is not in my opinion specifically distinct; the third is a plant with which I was not previously acquainted, and which appears to have strong claims to rank as a distinct species. In habit, and in the size and form of the capsule, it resembles *O. Bertolonii*, but the leaves, instead of being ovate and distinctly toothed, are almost linear, with one or two scarcely perceptible teeth, those of the branches being usually entire; the calyx-segments are short (one-third of its length) and triangular, as in *O. rotundata*, and M. Jordan observes that they are adpressed to the ripe capsule, which is not the case in the common species. This latter character it is difficult to verify in dried specimens, but it appears to be likewise characteristic of *O. rotundata*. The flowers are too imperfect for description in M. Jordan's specimens of *O. divergens*, but they appear to be much smaller than in the other allied species.

*Rhinanthus major* and *R. angustifolius*.—In the tenth volume of DeCandolle's 'Prodromus,' Mr. Bentham enumerates England amongst the native localities of both the above-named species of *Rhinanthus*, although the former alone has hitherto been enumerated as a British plant. If, as Mr. Bentham seems to consider, the character derived from the presence or absence of a membranous edge to the seeds be not trustworthy, it is difficult to assign any more constant character by which to distinguish these species; but such has not been the result of my observations, so far as they have extended. I shall briefly note the forms with which I am acquainted:—

*R. major*, Ehrh.?, Benth. in DeC. Prod. Hairy calyces and broadly winged seeds. France, Switzerland, Italy, Germany and Hungary. (J. B. spec. in herb.).

*R. major*, *β. alpina*, Benth. Calyces nearly or quite glabrous, segments more acute, broadly winged seeds. Alps, Apennines, Riesengebirge, and Carpathians. (J. B. spec. in herb.).

A specimen without ripe fruit from the herbarium of the late Pro-

fessor Graham, marked 'Durham, 1836,' seems to me to agree with this form, but I have not seen any undoubted English specimens.

*R. angustifolius*, Gmel. Calyces glabrous, with acute segments, leaves very narrow, seeds nearly or quite wingless. Scotland (Fort George, Professor Balfour; corn-fields in Nairn, Mr. Stables).

This plant appears to me to be rare on the continent of Europe. I have found it near Cracow; but though Mr. Bentham says, "in Europæ mediæ et præsertim australioris pascuis," I have never seen specimens from the south of Europe. It is true that if the character derived from the seeds be not permanent, it is very difficult to distinguish this from *R. major*,  $\beta$ . *alpina*, Benth., as the latter plant has frequently very narrow leaves; but as I have already observed, I am not able to confirm the asserted variableness of the form of the seeds, which are constantly winged in all the specimens of *R. major* which I have examined.

It may be suspected that two other described species, *R. buccalis*, Wallr., and *R. Reichenbachii*, Drejer, constitute between them a variety of *R. angustifolius*, having the same relation to that plant that the common European *R. major* has to the variety  $\beta$ . *alpina* of Bentham.

J. BALL.

#### ECHINORHINUS SPINOSUS.

Falmouth, Dec. 7, 1849.

SIR,—I send a short description of a splendid specimen of the "*Echinorhinus spinosus*," Blainv., caught yesterday a few miles from the harbour by one of Mrs. Chard's trawl-boats—for your Journal, should you consider it worth insertion.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

*R. Taylor, Esq.*

W. P. COCKS.

*Description*.—Head depressed; eyes bright, copperish; nose obtuse; mouth large; teeth in both jaws broad and low, the edge nearly horizontal. Body thick, 2 feet in depth and 7 in length (from snout to commencement of caudal fin); pectoral fins small, truncated; dorsal two, placed very far back, opposite to abdominal fins.

Surface of skin polished and covered with strong bony spines of various sizes and heights, arising from circular bases from  $\frac{1}{8}$ th to  $\frac{1}{4}$ ths of an inch in diameter.

*Colour*.—Back and sides dark leaden gray; abdomen, throat, &c., dirty yellowish white, clouded all over with light gray and brown; base of fins brownish.

A white line extended from the base of the pectoral fins to commencement of the caudal. Five large branchial apertures.

It weighed more than 200 lbs.

#### *On the Presence of Entophyta in healthy living Animals.*

By Dr. LEIDY.

From the opinion so frequently expressed, that contagious diseases and some others might have their origin and reproductive character through the agency of cryptogamic spores, which, from their minuteness and lightness, are so easily conveyed from place to place through