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IV. Remarks on Boucherie's Method of Preserving Timber

Professor Balfour

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the petal should fold upon itself, and its edges become united. We have also, by this theory, a good explanation of what becomes of the nectary, for we may surely expect to find it in some shape or another in plants nearly allied to the *Ranunculus*.

"In reference to *Parnassia palustris*, each fringed glandular scale has a very considerable resemblance to the enlarged nectary, not only in position of attachment to its petal, but also in shape, with this difference, that, while the one is lobed to so great an extent as to become fringed, the other is only slightly lobed. This abnormality, therefore, seems to support the view that the scales are enlarged nectaries, which would be a sufficient reason for not finding them alternating with the petals as we might expect them to do were they either an inner row of petals modified, or an altered state of the stamens."

III. *Notice of the occurrence of Chara syncarpa in Scotland.*

By W. NICHOL, M.D.

Dr Nichol observed :—"In August 1856, when crossing, by Glen Turrit, the hills which separate Crieff from Loch Tay, I observed some specimens of *Chara* growing in Loch Turrit which seemed to differ from *Chara flexilis*. The same form occurred pretty abundantly also in Loch-na-Ghat, on Ben Lawers, at an elevation of nearly 2000 feet. These, on examination, seemed to be *Chara syncarpa*; and in this I have been confirmed by Mr Babington, to whom specimens from both localities were sent."

IV. *Remarks on Boucherie's Method of Preserving Timber.*

By Professor BALFOUR.

Dr Balfour gave a short account of the various modes adopted for preserving of timber, and then proceeded to notice the method proposed by Boucherie about fifteen or twenty years ago, and which has since been improved. He referred particularly to the use of a solution of sulphate of copper, in the proportion of 1 lb. of the sulphate to 100 of water, as a preservative. He detailed the plan adopted by the Permanent Way Company, and illustrated the method by drawings. He pointed out the importance of removing

fermentescible sap from recent wood, and substituting a substance not liable to undergo chemical changes; and he dwelt on the importance of having timber well seasoned and exposed to a current of air when employed in building. The results of the trials made of Boucherie's plan in France were given, and the report of the commission appointed to examine the subject. The conclusions drawn from these data were favourable to the employment of sulphate of copper for the prevention of decay in timber.

The author concluded by exhibiting a piece of wood affected with dry rot, and reading the following letter from Mr Cousin, the city architect, regarding it:—

“The specimen of dry rot affords a rather striking example of that disease. The timber was new and of good quality, and had not been fixed in its place more than twenty months before the rot had committed the ravages which you see. It was in a floor of a shop in Princes Street, and the rot commenced at the top; indeed, the *floor-boarding* was the first part infected, and the disease gradually crept downwards.

“The deafening in this case consisted of dry furnace ashes, covered with a coating of lime, the whole depth being about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

“The timber was all new when put into its place, and although it had got the ordinary amount of exposure to the air, or ‘seasoning,’ as it is called, the natural sap could not be entirely dried up.

“Now, all this is just what happens in every new building, without exception, and therefore dry rot must be explained as arising from some other cause.

“In my humble opinion, it arose from the following cause:—So soon as the premises were finished, the first thing the tenant of the shop did was to cover the entire surface of the floor, except under the counters and side cases, with “*Kamptulicon*,” as it is called, or a kind of floor-cloth, composed principally of India-rubber, and forming a perfectly *air-tight* and compact body.

“The floor-boarding speedily showed indications of rot, by yielding under the foot on passing over it; and on the floor-cloth being removed, the boards were found to be covered over with a white fungus, and completely decayed.

"The portions of the deals under the counters and along the side walls, were not decayed to the same extent, though to some degree."

V. *Recent Botanical Intelligence.* By Professor BALFOUR.

Dr Balfour read a letter from Mr L. P. Capewell, Ballarat, Victoria, accompanying specimens of *Stemonites fasciculata*, Pers., on a Eucalyptus. Mr Capewell had also sent a gathering of Diatomaceæ, which was examined by Dr Greville, who observes:—"Mr Capewell's gathering is a very interesting one, not as containing anything new, but because every form in it is British. It is quite a nest of *Epithemiæ*; the predominant form is *E. gibba*; then come *E. turgida*, *Westermanni*, and *ventricosa*. The remaining form is *Diatomella Balfouriana*, only recently discovered and described in this country. How strange that it should next be found at the antipodes, in company, too, with a colony of British species!"

Dr Balfour stated that his friend, Professor Smyth, who had lately visited Teneriffe, had occasion to examine the famous Dragon tree (*Dracæna Draco*) of the Canaries, a drawing of which is given in Humboldt's large work. The drawing in that work does not give a correct representation of the form and size of the tree. Dr Balfour explained, on a large drawing, the errors which had been committed by Humboldt's artist.

Dr Balfour then gave a *resumé* of Cohn's researches on the reproduction of *Spheroplea annulina* and of Pringsheim's on *Ædogonium ciliatum*. Dr Balfour also referred to Dr Hilgard's explanation of the law of phyllotaxis, which he refers to the numerical genesis of cells.—(*Edin. Phil. Jour.*, v. 375-6.)

Dr Balfour exhibited a specimen of *Sycomorus antiquorum*, presented by Mr G. S. Lawson, and taken from the famous Sycomore near Heliopolis. He also stated that the peculiar partitioned wood presented to the Museum some time ago by Mr Daw, appeared to be the produce of *Cecropia peltata*. Principal Dawson, of McGill College, Montreal, was disposed to think that it threw light on the structure of *Sternbergia*.