



Mrs. Drake, del.

H. Oakes, sculp.

CYCNOCHES EGERTONIANUM.

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TAB. XL.

CYCNOCHES* EGERTONIANUM:

SIR PHILIP EGERTON'S CYCNOCHES.

TRIBUS: VANDEÆ.—LINDLEY.

CYCNOCHES *Egertonianum*; foliis vaginantibus undulatis lanceolatis acuminatis racemis multifloris nutantibus brevioribus; sepalis petalisque subæqualibus ovatis acutis, labello columnâ continuo obovato margine incurvo digitis 5 clavatis utrinque instructo epichilio lineari membranaceo digitis vix longiore.

Habitat in Guatemalâ.—SKINNER.

Description.

STEMS from half a foot to a foot long, bearing several membranous, wavy, lanceolate, sharp-pointed, sheathing LEAVES. RACEMES drooping, many-flowered, longer than the leaves, sometimes a foot and a half long. SEPALS and PETALS almost similar in size and form, ovate, acute, nearly an inch long, of a deep chocolate colour on the inner side, and greenish without. LIP exactly continuous with the column, contracted at the base, but spreading in a somewhat obovate form, the margins being turned inwards, and on either side puckered into five finger-like processes, which spread themselves out into a kind of circular wreath; the apex of the lip is prolonged into a membranous point about the length of the fingers; the ground colour of the lip is green, but the fingers are tinged with purple. COLUMN extremely clavate, longer than the petals, of a dark purple colour.

STRANGE things—and no less strange than true—have already been recorded of Orchidaceous plants, but the case which is represented in the accompanying Plate casts into the shade all former frolics of this Protean tribe. The facts are briefly as follow.

Among Mr. SKINNER's earliest Guatemala collections, attention was particularly directed to the specimens of a plant which to the habit of a *Cycnoches* joined the long pendulous stems of a *Gongora*, and for the possession of which, in a living state, no small anxiety was entertained. Some plants were speedily transmitted by Mr. SKINNER, but these, on flowering, proved to be merely the old *C. ventricosum*. A mistake was of course suspected, and Mr. SKINNER being again applied to, sent over a fresh supply of plants, for the authenticity of which he vouched; but these were scarcely settled in the stove, when flowers of *C. ventricosum* were again produced. Mr. SKINNER being importuned for the third time, and being then on the point of returning to this country, determined to take one of the plants under his special protection during the voyage, which, flowering on the passage, seemed to preclude the possibility of further confusion or disappointment. The specimens produced at sea were exhibited, and the plant itself placed in the stove at Knypersley, where it commenced growing with the utmost vigour. The season of flowering soon arrived, but brought with it a recurrence of the former scene of astonishment and vexation,

* *Suprà* sub. Tab. V.

for the blossoms, instead of those of the coveted novelty, were not distinguishable from the old *C. ventricosum*. These were still hanging to the stem when the inexplicable plant sent forth a spike of a totally different character, and which was, in fact, precisely similar to the specimens gathered in Guatemala, and to those produced on the voyage.

It is, at present, impossible to attempt any explanation of so strange a phenomenon, especially on the supposition that the two forms of flower are analogous to the male and female blossoms of other tribes, for *C. ventricosum* alone not unfrequently perfects seeds.

The species (if as such it may be regarded) was named in honour of Sir PHILIP EGERTON, before any of its eccentricities had been discovered, otherwise the compliment might have been deemed a dubious one.

For the tail-piece Lady GREY of Groby has kindly contributed a most ingenious device, compounded of divers Orchidaceous flowers, which, with very gentle violence, have been induced to assume the attitudes in which they appear below.*



——— "Nature breeds
Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things,
Abominable, unutterable, and worse
Than fables yet have feigned, or fear conceived,
Gorgons, and hydras, and chimeras dire."

MILTON.

* The hag came forth, broom and all, from a flower of *Cypripedium insigne*; her attendant spirits are composed of *Brassia Lauceana*, *Angraecum caudatum*, *Oncidium papilio*, &c. &c.; two specimens of *Cynoches* sail majestically on the globe below, on the right of which crawls *Megaclinium falcatum*. In the centre stands a desponding *Monachanthus*; on the left a pair of *Masdevallias* are dancing a minuet, while sundry *Epidendra*, not unlike the "walking leaves" of Australia, complete the group.