

CATTLEYA* SKINNERI:

MR. SKINNER'S CATTLEYA.

TRIBUS: EPIDENDREÆ.—LINDLEY.

CATTLEYA. *Lindley, Gen. et Sp. Orch.* 116.

PERIANTHIUM explanatum. Sepala patentia, æqualia. Petala sæpiùs majora. Labellum cucullatum, columnam involvens (rarissime liberum) trilobum vel indivisum. Columna clavata, elongata, semiteres, marginata, cum labello articulata. Anthera carnosa, 4-ocularis, septorum marginibus membranaceis. Pollinia 4, caudiculis totidem replicatis.—Herbæ Americanæ epiphytæ. Folia coriacea. Flores speciosissimi, sæpe e spathâ magnâ erumpentes.

CATTLEYA *Skinneri*; pseudo-bulbis valdè incrassatis compressis diphyllis foliis oblongis duplo longioribus; racemo denso brevi multifloro. Sepalis lineari-lanceolatis acutis, petalis ovalibus undulatis duplo latioribus: labello integro infundibuliformi emarginato obtuso, columnâ nanâ 4-plo longiore.

Habitat in Guatemalâ.—SKINNER.

Description.

Pseudo-bulbous STEMS very much incrassated, jointed, compressed, about a foot long, terminated by two oblong fleshy LEAVES, from four to six inches long. RACEME short, issuing from a large SPATHE, composed of from four to twelve flowers, clustered together. SEPALs linear-lanceolate, acute, two inches long, of a rich rosy hue. PETALS broadly oval, twice the width of the sepals, waved at the edges, and rose-coloured. LIP entire or very obscurely three-lobed, funnel-shaped, folded closely over the column, of which it is more than four times the length; towards the middle the lip is bent downwards, and very much constricted, but spreads open at its upper extremity; externally it is of the same hue as the petals, but all round its interior edges there is a band of the most intense crimson, which passes, towards its disk, into a dirty white; one small elevated ridge traverses, longitudinally, its entire length. COLUMN dwarf, about one third of an inch in length.

UNTIL within the last few years, the extensive province of Guatemala had continued quite a "terra incognita" to the admirers of Orchidaceæ, who were ready, nevertheless, to regard it as a rich storehouse of their favourite plants, in consequence of the known beauty of the tribe in Mexico and Panama,—the two extremities of that remarkable Isthmus, of which Guatemala is itself the centre. The small number of European, and almost total absence of English, residents, had rendered the attainment of any precise information as to its natural history, all but impossible; and to have dispatched a botanical collector on a mission to a country whose Flora possessed only a conjectural interest, was too wild a speculation, even for *Orchido-mania* to venture on. Things might still have remained in this tantalizing state, had we not accidentally heard that some insects had been received in Manchester from a gentleman of the name of SKINNER, the owner of extensive estates in Guatemala, and the partner in a flourishing mercantile firm in the same country.† This piece of intelligence immediately brought with it a faint gleam of hope; for, as entomology and botany are kindred sciences, we were at no loss to persuade ourselves that he who had done so much for the one, might possibly be tempted to lend a helping hand to the other. We accordingly addressed a letter to MR. SKINNER, in which we frankly described the circumstances of the case, and humbly craved his assistance. This letter, addressed as it was to an entire stranger, and on a troublesome errand, we could scarcely expect to see otherwise than coolly received, if not altogether disregarded;—that such, at least, is the fate of most epistles of its class, a host of disappointed suitors will bear us out in asserting; must we add, that even the promises of zealous aid, which the more fortunate applicants receive, are not unfrequently lost sight of amid the difficulties that oppose their fulfilment, or are dissolved under the enervating rays of a tropical sun! But with MR. SKINNER the case was far otherwise. From the moment he received our letter, he has laboured almost incessantly to drag from their hiding places the forest treasures of Guatemala, and

* So called by Professor Lindley in honour of the late Mr. Cattley, of Barnet, one of the earliest, most zealous, and successful cultivators of the Orchidaceæ.

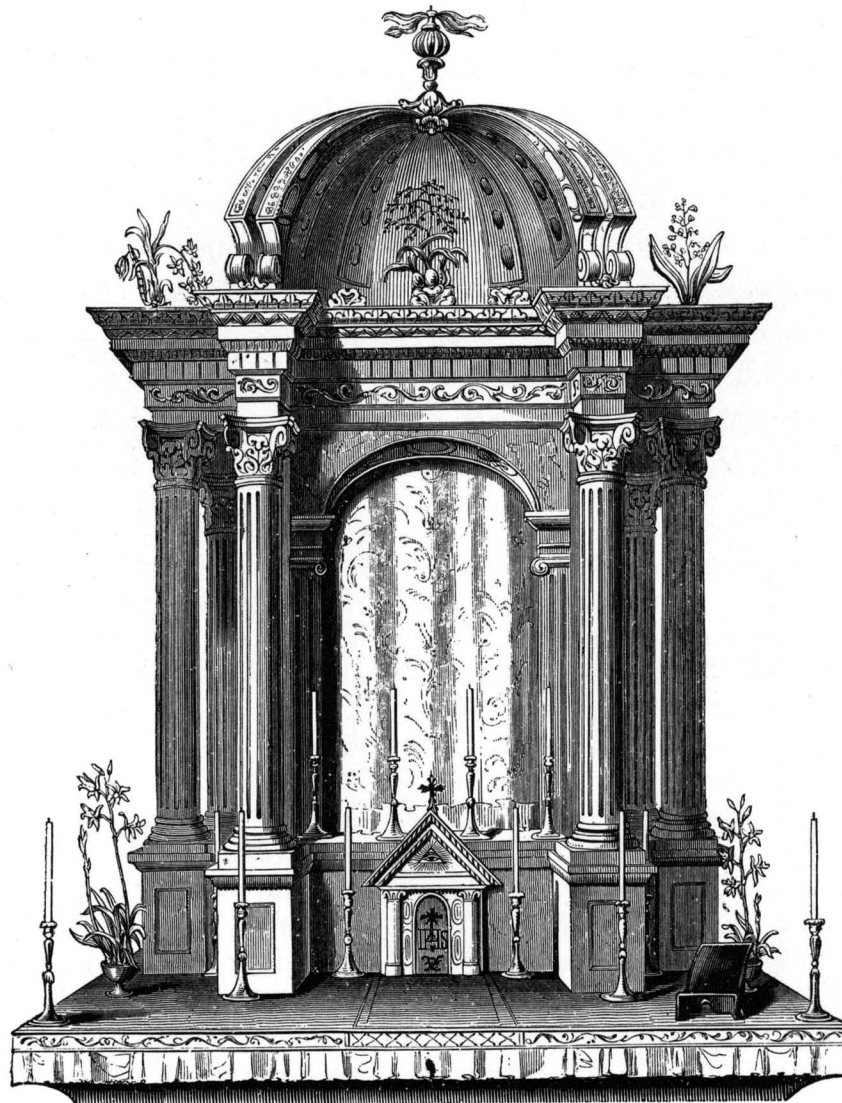
† Mr. Skinner is the son of the Rev. John Skinner, Episcopal Clergyman at Forfar, and the grandson of Bishop Skinner, an eminent divine and excellent scholar, as his numerous works abundantly testify.

transfer them to the stoves of his native land. In pursuit of this object, there is scarcely a sacrifice which he has not made, or a danger or hardship which he has not braved. In sickness or in health, amid the calls of business or the perils of war, whether detained in quarantine on the shores of the Atlantic,* or shipwrecked on the rocks of the Pacific, he has never suffered an opportunity to escape him of adding to the long array of his botanical discoveries! And, assuredly, he has not laboured in vain, for he may truly be said to have been the means of introducing a greater number of new and beautiful Orchidaceæ into Europe, than any one individual of his own or any other nation. As the channel through which his discoveries have found their way into his mother country, it would ill become us, in this place, to enlarge upon the generous, kind, and spirited manner in which he has uniformly acted towards us; we must, therefore, without further preface, request his acceptance of the only acknowledgments which it is in the power of the science he has so much befriended, to bestow. Unfortunately, there is already a Peruvian *genus* called (but not after our friend) *Skinneria*; we can, therefore, do no more than select some *species* which may not do discredit to his name, and we confess we are unable to conceive one better fitted for our purpose than the magnificent *Cattleya* represented in the accompanying Plate.

The colour of *Cattleya-Skinneri* (for we must henceforth call it by its title) is that of the most brilliant and intense rose, and there is a delicacy about it which is not surpassed by any plant with which we are acquainted. It is easily grown, and produces its flowers freely in the month of March; but, when they first expand, they are of a very pale hue, and not more than half the size to which they attain in the course of a day or two. We mention this circumstance, which, though rare, is by no means peculiar to the species, to prevent others feeling as much disappointed as we did ourselves, at the appearance of its blossoms while in a state of immaturity. Some of the imported specimens have borne upwards of twelve flowers, that we think it probable that this number may eventually be exceeded in cultivation. The present species is readily distinguished from all the *Cattleyas* as yet known, by the extreme shortness of its column, which is not more than one quarter the length of the lip.

MR. SKINNER found this plant almost exclusively in the warmer parts of Guatemala, and along the shores of the Pacific. Its familiar appellation is "Flor de San Sebastian," and like MR. SKINNER'S other namesake (the beautiful *Epidendrum Skinneri*), it is eagerly sought for, when in season, by the people of the country, as an ornament for the temples and shrines of their favourite saints.

The Vignette is copied from a drawing, obligingly procured for us by MR. M^c KLEE (MR. SKINNER'S partner), and furnishes a view of the Altar of a Church in Guatemala, which arrested MR. SKINNER'S attention by the beauty of the Orchidaceæ with which it was adorned.†



"Ite igitur pueri, linguis, animisque faventes,
Sertaque delubris, et farra imponite cultris,
* * * * *
* * * * * graciles ubi parva coronas
Accipiunt fragili simulacra nitentia cerâ."

JUVENAL, *Sat.* xii. 83.

* Mr. Skinner was detained in quarantine at the Castle of St. Philip, in the Bay of Dulcé, for more than a fortnight, on his return from England in 1837; to his detention there we owe some valuable plants: and, to his subsequent shipwreck on the coast of the Pacific, we owe many more. When thrown (after the loss of his good ship the "Spartan,") upon an inhospitable shore, his first care was not, as some might have supposed, to ascertain whether the strange spot produced any food, but whether it produced any *plants*!

† In the wood-cut the Orchidaceæ are represented with their pseudo-bulbs attached, but it is much more usual to see the flower-spikes only.

