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### Linnæan Society

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5thly, That in some of the poor and ill-consolidated coals, particularly in the upper zone, the traces of vegetable organization are so distinct, that even the generic and specific characters of the plants can be recognised in the coal itself.

Lastly, That wherever the mountain limestone has been interpolated between the bottom coal grits and the old red sandstone, it can invariably be traced to thin out and disappear within a very small area; and hence it is inferred, that as calcareous matter appears never to have been elaborated in these regions, except at wide intervals and in minute quantities, mighty convulsions are not necessary to account for the absence of the mountain limestone through such large carboniferous tracts.

The coal-field of Oswestry is not included in the application of these inferences; for, like the great coal basin of South Wales, it has been deposited upon a thick girdle of carboniferous limestone.

#### LINNÆAN SOCIETY.

March 3rd and 17th.—Read a paper by the Rev. Patrick Keith, F.L.S., on the Classification of Vegetables,—or *Taxonomy*, as the writer proposes to call it. After noticing the limited and imperfect use of artificial methods of classification, as pointed out by Linnæus himself, whose well-known maxim is “*Methodus naturalis ultimus botanices finis est erit.*” Mr. Keith insists on the superiority of an arrangement founded on general structure rather than number of parts; and gives his opinion that there is but one system which is natural, and that that system is Jussieu’s. After enumerating some of the principal supporters of this system, he mentions our celebrated countryman Brown as at the head of those by whom it has been elucidated and perfected;—paying at the same time a deserved tribute to the merits of Mr. Don. He then proceeds to comment upon writers who in his judgement have innovated upon Jussieu’s nomenclature and arrangement; and, after some observations on Professor Lindley’s *Nixus Plantarum*, and the *circular* arrangements, concludes with a tabular sketch intended to adapt the system of Jussieu to the present state of botanical knowledge, without innovating upon its principles.

April 7th.—Read a communication by George Bentham, Esq., F.L.S., entitled, “On the *Eriogonææ*, a tribe of the order *Polygonææ*.”

This group, which is exclusively American, is distinguished from the rest of the order by the presence of an involucre, and by the entire absence of the sheathing stipules from the leaves. The *Eriogonææ* agree with *Rheum* and *Oxyria* in having a straight embryo placed in the axis of the albumen. The group consists of three genera, namely, *Eriogonum*, distinguished by its many-flowered involucre; *Chorizanthe*, a genus proposed by Mr. Brown, and distinguished from the former by having a single-flowered involucre; and lastly, *Mucronea*, characterized by its bidentate involucre, composed of two confluent bracts. Mr. Bentham describes twenty-four species of *Eriogonum*, eleven of *Chorizanthe*, mostly from Chile, and one of *Mucronea*. The great accession of new species is chiefly the result of the labours of the late Mr. Douglas in California, and of Mr. Cuming in Chile.

April 21.—Read “Observations on the Species of *Fedia*.” By Joseph Woods, Esq. F.L.S.

This genus was included by Linnæus in *Valeriana*, and several of the species were combined by him under the denomination of *V. Locusta*, erroneously considering them as forming but varieties of one species. The genus is distinguished from *Valeriana* by habit, and by the structure of its fruit, which is always destitute of the feathery crown peculiar to the former. The far greater part of the species are natives of Europe, and Mr. Woods in the paper before us gives the character of twenty-one species, arranged according to the divisions proposed by De Candolle, and he has united with them the *Fedia Cornucopiæ* separated by De Candolle as a distinct genus, from its corolla being furnished with a lengthened filiform tube and an irregular limb.

The paper is illustrated by figures of the fruit of the various species.

#### ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

[Continued from p. 230.]

October 14, 1834.—A letter was read, addressed to the Secretary by Sir Robert Ker Porter, Corr. Memb. Z.S., dated Caraccas, July 24, 1834. In reference to the *Tortoises* (*Testudo Carbonaria*, Spix.) presented to the Society by the writer in the spring of the present year (see Lond. and Edinb. Phil. Mag. vol. v. p. 233), it stated that they are regarded as a great delicacy at Caraccas, and sold as such in the market.

A letter was read, addressed to the Secretary by the Hon. Byron Cary, dated His Majesty's ship Dublin, Sept. 25, 1834, giving some particulars relative to a large specimen of the *Tortoise* from the Gallapagos Island, presented by the writer to the Society. The specimen weighs 187 lbs. and measures in length, over the curve of the dorsal shell 3 feet 8½ inches, and along the ventral shell 2 feet 3½ inches, its girth round the middle being 6 feet 3¼ inches. It is consequently much smaller than several specimens of the *Indian Tortoise* from the Seychelles Islands which have at different times been exhibited in the Society's Garden; the weight and measurements of one of which are given in our report of the Society's Proceedings on the 9th of July 1833; Lond. and Edinb. Phil. Mag., vol. iii., p. 300. The lateral compression of the anterior part of the dorsal shell, and the elevation of its front margin, by which the *Gallapagos Tortoise* is distinguished from the *Indian*, are in this specimen strongly marked.

Some notes by Mr. Martin of the dissection of a specimen of the *Mangue* (*Crossarchus obscurus*, F. Cuv.) were read.

“The dissection was strongly confirmatory,” Mr. Martin observed, “of the justice of the position claimed for the animal, notwithstanding its plantigrade mode of progression, between the *Ichneumons* and the *Suricates*. To the latter indeed it bears in its general external aspect and characters a marked affinity; in both we find the pupil circular, and the muzzle elongated, pointed, and moveable. Nor is there much less correspondence in their general anatomy.” The details are given in the ‘Proceedings’ of the Society.

A collection was exhibited of skins of *Birds*, formed by B. H. Hodgson, Esq., Corr. Memb. Z.S., in Nepal, and presented by him