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THE
ORCHID ALBUM

CONTAINING
COLOURED FIGURES AND DESCRIPTIONS
OF
NEW, RARE, AND BEAUTIFUL
ORCHIDACEOUS PLANTS.

CONDUCTED BY
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THE COLOURED FIGURES BY JOHN NUGENT FITCH, F.L.S.
MISSOURI
BOTANICAL
GARDEN. 

VOLUME VIII.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY B. S. WILLIAMS,
AT THE
VICTORIA AND PARADISE NURSERIES, UPPER HOLLOWAY, N.



J. Nugent Fitch del

B.S. Williams. Publ'r

CYPRIPEDIUM FITCHIANUM

CYPRIPEDIUM FITCHIANUM.

[PLATE 350.]

Garden Hybrid.

A terrestrial plant, with distichous, oblong acute leaves, which are some six inches in length, and one and a half inches in breadth, ground colour greyish green, conspicuously marbled and blotched with deep olive-green. *Scape* erect, eight or nine inches high, densely clothed with short woolly hairs of a purple hue, one-flowered. *Dorsal sepal* ovate, acute, greenish white, boldly streaked with lines of deep green; *lateral sepals* similar in colour to the dorsal, but much smaller, and, like it, downy on the outside; *petals* ligulate, obtuse, spreading, upwards of two inches long, and half an inch broad, nearly uniform in breadth throughout, undulated on both edges, basal portion bright green, strongly veined with deeper green, passing upwards into dull purplish red, and ornamented on both margins, with a few large black hairy wart-like spots; *lip* oblong, obtuse, shortly unguiculate, large, and bold, pale yellowish green, veined with deep green, and suffused with dull purple, the inner side covered with a profusion of crimson dots, which show through to the exterior. *Staminode* somewhat reniform, with a small umbo, centre greenish yellow, reticulated with deep green.

CYPRIPEDIUM FITCHIANUM, *supra*, *Williams' New Plant Catalogue*, 1888, p. 20.

At the present time the genus *Cypripedium* is exceedingly popular, and new forms are continually appearing through importations from abroad, as well as from the work of the hybridiser at home; indeed, the crossing and re-crossing of the different species and varieties appears to be a favourite pursuit with amateur growers, as well as those connected with the trade in orchidaceous plants, and from the result of whose work many excellent, new, and beautiful varieties have emanated, whilst from the experience gained in previous experiments, many other and superior forms may be confidently anticipated. *Cypripediums* are amongst the easiest of plants in the whole order to fertilise, and for this reason they have been taken in hand by the many; they also come freely from seed, and in most instances are robust in constitution, and produce flowers in a young state, so that it is little wonder that they are very popular, especially as many of them produce showy flowers, although in a different degree of excellence, which continue long in full perfection. Many beautiful species and varieties of this genus have already appeared in the *Orchid Album*, but there are many more which we hope to introduce in the same manner to the notice of our readers.

The accompanying figure is that of a plant which we had the pleasure to introduce to commerce in the spring of the present year, and which we have named

in honour of our artist, Mr. John Nugent Fitch. It is the result of a cross between *Cypripedium Hookeræ* and *C. barbatum*; it is a very free grower, and also a prolific blooming plant, thoroughly distinct, both in foliage and flower, from any other kind known to us.

Cypripedium Fitchianum is a distinct and pretty variety, and compact in its habit. The leaves are oblong acute, from four to six inches in length, by about one and a half inches in breadth, and prettily variegated; the ground colour is greyish green, marbled and spotted with deep olive-green. The scape rises well above the foliage, and bears a single large and handsome flower. Dorsal sepal somewhat ovate cuneate, white, conspicuously veined with bright green, the lower sepal being similar in colour, but smaller; petals long and strap-shaped, with blunt ends, green towards the base, the apical portion and the margins being suffused with deep red, and bearing a few black hairy warts on the edge; lip large, dull red, veined in front with green, the inner surface profusely covered with dots and spots of red. It blooms in the winter months, and continues in perfection for fully six weeks.

We think this variety of Slipper Orchid thrives best in the East India house, as may have been anticipated by a knowledge of its parents, which are both natives of warm places in the east, but we find that this, and the majority of the other members of this genus, succeed best when shaded from the direct rays of the sun during the hotter part of the day, although they enjoy full exposure to the light, and we have recently observed great improvement in the health of the plants in one or two collections, where these plants have been subjected to a greater amount of shade from the sun than was formerly given them. Perfect drainage is essential to the health and well-being of *Cypripediums*, as during growth they enjoy copious supplies of water to their roots, which, however, requires to be passed away quickly; a slight syringing overhead in the morning, and again in the afternoon during the growing season, will be found highly advantageous. The potting material should consist of good peat fibre, and living sphagnum moss. These plants do not require a lengthened period of rest, but during this time syringing must cease, and a considerable reduction made in the quantity of water supplied to the roots, but even at this season they must not be dried, or evil results will follow.

Insects should be carefully watched for, and speedily destroyed if they make their appearance on the *Cypripediums*, or their leaves will quickly become marred and disfigured, and the plants fall into a sickly condition. Black thrips and red spider are amongst their worst enemies, but these may be effectually kept in abeyance by steaming the house occasionally with tobacco juice from the Thanatophore.
