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CURTIS'S
BOTANICAL MAGAZINE,

COMPRISING THE

Plants of the Royal Gardens of Kew,

AND

OF OTHER BOTANICAL ESTABLISHMENTS IN GREAT BRITAIN;
WITH SUITABLE DESCRIPTIONS;

BY

SIR JOSEPH DALTON HOOKER, M.D., C.B., K.C.S.I.,
F.R.S., F.L.S., ETC.,

D.C.L. OXON., LL.D. CANTAB., CORRESPONDENT OF THE INSTITUTE OF FRANCE.

VOL. XLVI. □

OF THE THIRD SERIES.

(Or Vol. CXVI. of the Whole Work.)



“ When the warm sun that brings
Seed-time and harvest has returned again,
’Tis sweet to visit the still wood, where springs
The first flower of the plain.”

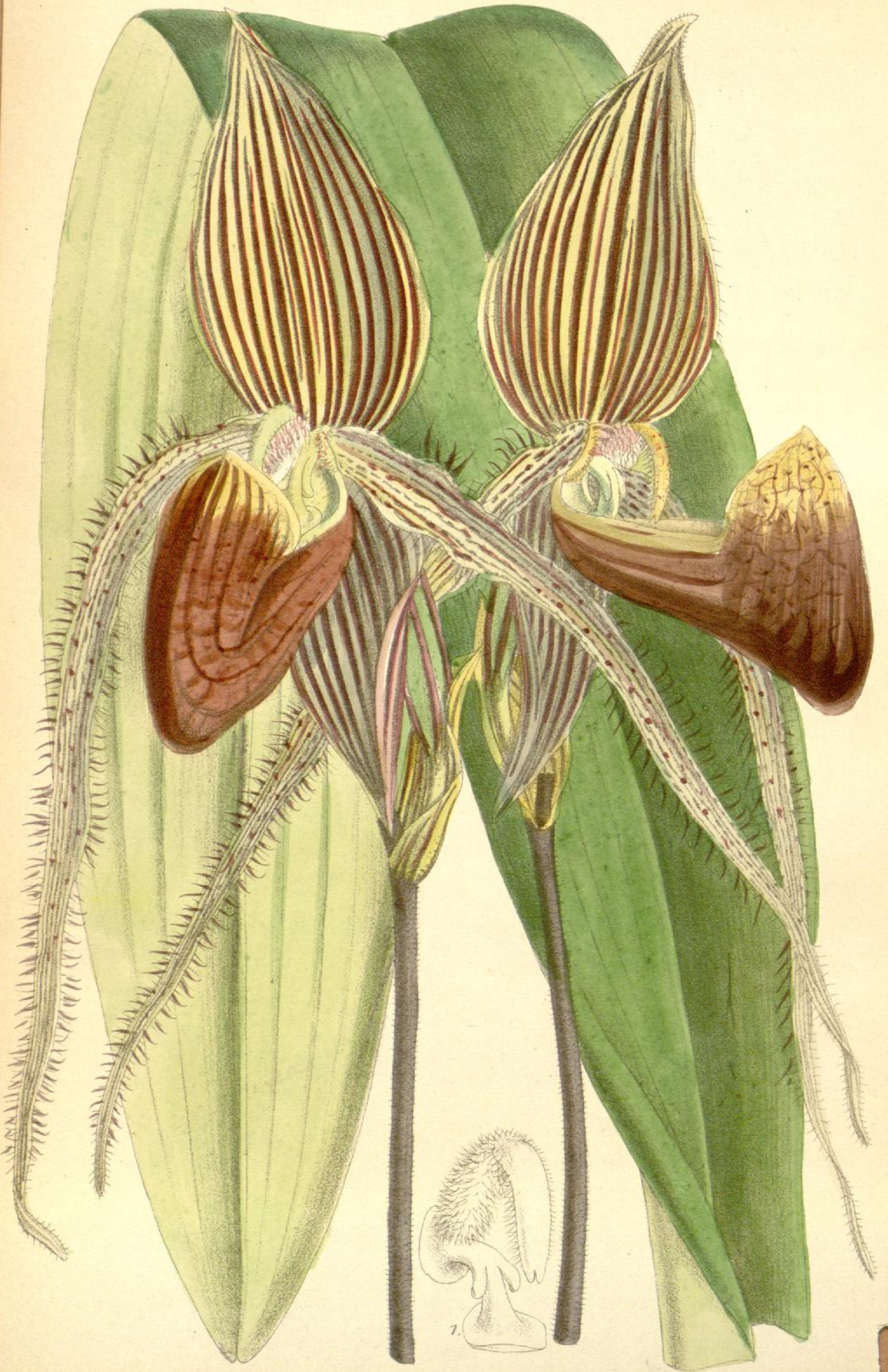
LONGFELLOW.

LONDON :

L. REEVE & CO., 5, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

1890.

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CYPRIPEDIUM ROTHSCHILDIANUM.

Native of New Guinea.

Nat. Ord. ORCHIDÆ.—Tribe CYPRIPEDIÆ.

Genus CYPRIPEDIUM, *Linn.*; (*Benth. et Hook. f. Gen. Pl.* vol. iii. p. 634.)

CYPRIPEDIUM *Rothschildianum*; foliis 1-1½ pedalis late loratis obtusis glabris, scapo pedali 1-3-floro pubescente luride purpureo, bracteis ovario multo brevioribus spathaceis rubro-purpureo fasciatis, floribus maximis, sepalo dorsali amplo erecto ovato albo lineis ad 15 rubro-purpureis latis striato, sepalis lateralibus in unum dorsali minorem ovato-lanceolatum 9-striatum connatis, petalis sepalo dorsali duplo longioribus albis lineis purpureis 7 striatis ciliatis et sanguineo-maculatis, labello calceiformi apice saccato sacco gibboso et decurvo extus roseo v. albo purpureo venoso intus pallido, staminodio lineari uncinatim recurvo villosa, ovarii viridis costis rubro-purpureis.

C. Rothschildianum, *Reichb. f. in Gard. Chron.* 1888, i. 457 and 554; *Veitch Man. Cypriped.* 45.

C. neo-guineense, *Linden (name only)*, *Gard. Chron.* 1888, 505 (advertisement).

This superb *Cypripedium* was received for figuring under the above name from Messrs. Sander and Co., of St. Albans, who imported it from New Guinea, and at whose request Professor Reichenbach dedicated it to Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, a munificent patron of Horticulture. It comes so near the subsequently imported *C. Elliottianum*, O'Brien, also introduced by Messrs. Sander, but which is reported to be a native of the Philippine Islands, that Mr. Rolfe, of the Kew Herbarium, believing the two to be forms of one species, is in doubt under which to place it.

These Malayan *Cypripedia* present several points of great interest, of which one is their variability, which may be taken into consideration with the facility with which they hybridize. Thus of such hybrids Messrs. Veitch in their Manual enumerate no fewer than sixty definite forms, besides less marked ones. Another conclusion arrived at by Messrs. Veitch (Manual, p. 2) is that the individual species throughout the genus, American and Indian, must have at one time existed in much greater numbers than they do now, and that the genus is "suffering gradual extinction." In support of this opinion the

chief arguments are the view of the great antiquity of the genus, held by Mr. Darwin, who, alluding to the anomalous characters of the flowers, regards *Cypripedium* as "the record of a former and more simple state of the great Orchidean Order;" and the great rarity of many of the Malayan species. Now it is not an easy thing to prove the rarity of species in individuals, and in little explored tropical and mountainous islands it is impossible. I have myself felt convinced of the rarity of an Orchid as to which, as I afterwards heard, had I strayed right or left of the locality in which I had collected it, I should have found it abundant over a large area; and I know of more than one noble Orchid (*Arachnanthe Cathcartii* is one), long supposed to be most rare in the country where I first found it, becoming abundant after a change in its environments. This is, as I am informed, the case with our own *C. Calceolus* in one of its English localities, a species cited as an instance of approaching extermination in England. Nor must it be forgotten that *C. Calceolus* inhabits the whole of North Europe and North Asia; just as the American *C. macranthum*, or a very close ally, stretches throughout the entire length of the Himalayan range. If there be any truth in the assumption of the species dying out, Messrs. Veitch's suggestion that this is due to the paucity of insects suitable for their fertilization is a plausible one, and one which may be eventually followed up in the case of *C. Rothschildianum* by some fever-proof individual who will spend hours on the damp ground in the forests of New Guinea on the remote chance of capturing its insect visitors, and thus discovering if these or their visits are rare.

The subject of the antiquity of a genus or group of plants is a very attractive one, and far too complex to enter on here. Such antiquity, when leading to extinction, is supposed to result in fixity of type, in rarity of individuals, and in the restriction of these in area. In respect of it I may allude to the singular fact that though *Cypripedium* is one of the few tropical genera of Orchids that inhabit both the eastern and western hemispheres, it has not hitherto been found in Africa or Madagascar, countries which have on plausible grounds been held to have been the most recently peopled with plants.—*J. D. H.*