

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1887.

## THE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY.

THE Horticultural Society of London was founded in 1804, among the first members being Sir Joseph Banks. Its objects were "to collect every information respecting the culture and treatment of all plants and trees, as well culinary as ornamental," and "to foster and encourage every branch of horticulture, and all the arts connected with it." The Earl of Dartmouth was the first President. The Society was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1809. In 1820 the Society purchased 21 Regent Street, which was its London home for forty years. In 1822 it obtained a lease of the present Gardens at Chiswick, which have been cultivated and embellished under the Society's auspices for upwards of sixty-five years.

At the conclusion of the war in 1815 the Society began to import plants from abroad, and this country owes to its early exertions many of the beautiful camellias, azaleas, peonies, roses, and chrysanthemums which are natives of the East, and among other plants the *Wistaria (Glycine) sinensis*, a lovely creeper now quite at home in England. Indeed, one cannot take a day's ride anywhere through the country without meeting some of the beautiful introductions of the Society. Among the collectors sent out by the Society was Douglas, to whose enterprise the country owes *Pinus Lambertiana*, *P. insignis*, *P. ponderosa*, *P. nobilis*, *P. Douglasii*, &c.

Dr. Lindley, one of the most eminent botanists this country has ever produced, was appointed Assistant Secretary in 1822, and continued connected with the Society until his death in 1865. No account of the early days of the Society would be complete without a record of the fruits of Fortune's journeys, under its auspices, in China. Not only did he send innumerable valuable plants home, but his travels in the Chinese tea-country were the direct cause of the introduction of tea-cultivation into India.

In 1839 the Duke of Devonshire was elected President, on the death of Mr. Andrew Knight, who had been President for twenty-seven years, and to whom the Society owed much. In January 1858 the Duke of Devonshire died, and H.R.H. the Prince Consort graciously consented to succeed him. The establishment of the Society at South Kensington, under H.R.H.'s guidance and direction, is so comparatively recent an event that it is not necessary to refer to it at length. At first the prospect was promising, and had not the Prince Consort's life been cut short, the result might have been very different from what it has proved. But the money expended on the buildings and the gardens at South Kensington, from the funds of the Society, was little short of £100,000—a sum which, with the experience we now have, no one would dream of devoting to such purposes. This enormous expenditure hung like a millstone round the neck of the Society, which soon found itself unable to pay the interest on the money borrowed to meet it. The result was that, under a clause of the Society's agreement with the Commissioners of the 1851 Exhibition, the latter body resumed possession of the Gardens six years ago, and the money spent upon them by the Society was swept away at a blow.

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Nevertheless the horticultural work of the Society has been carried on with undiminished energy. This surely is the proper and legitimate work of such a Society. Every departure it takes from its true functions alienates the sympathy and support of those to whom it properly looks, and to promote whose objects it exists. Since the Society has been established at South Kensington, its activity in horticultural work has been as marked as even in its most prosperous times. Many thousands of new plants, fruits, and vegetables have been submitted to the examination and the verdict of the Society's Fruit and Floral Committees, which consist of practical men, of the greatest knowledge and experience in their several departments. The value attaching to "First-Class Certificates" is shown by the care nurserymen take to record them in their catalogues. At Chiswick a long series of elaborate trials and experiments have been carried on with fruit, vegetables, and plants, whereby useful and profitable varieties have been selected and their qualities established, and inferior varieties ear-marked.

Although the Society has been unable to hold great shows owing to the loss entailed by them, it has held fortnightly shows in summer and monthly shows in winter, at which a vast number of new plants and new introductions have been seen for the first time. Such shows, though small, are often far more interesting to horticulturists than the big shows which were the fashion formerly.

It may well be asked why, if the Society can give so good an account of itself, it should be in any difficulty? The answer is that its troubles are due to its connection with South Kensington. It cannot be said that the Commissioners of the 1851 Exhibition have behaved with any conspicuous liberality to the Society. Perhaps they could not do so, as they have said that it was necessary for them to make an income out of the Royal Horticultural Gardens. But the connection with South Kensington has made it necessary for the Society to meet the views of local subscribers, who were not horticulturists; and, moreover, it has led to the Society being saddled with a charter, which prevents its expansion and adaptation to altered times and circumstances.

The views of the Council are set forth in general terms in the statement and appeal which we print elsewhere. The interest in horticulture in the United Kingdom grows and spreads without check. Surely the horticulturists of the wealthiest country in the world will gladly provide the very moderate sum required for the maintenance of a Society which has done much for them, is still doing much, and has before it untold possibilities of usefulness.

## BALBIN'S QUATERNIONS.

*Elementos de Calculo de los Cuaterniones, &c.* Por Valentin Balbin, Doctor en Ciencias, &c. (Buenos Ayres: imprenta de M. Biedma, 1887.)

ALL praise is due to the Argentine Republic for its institution of a University in which the Faculty of Sciences is endowed with a chair of the higher mathematics.

The book before us is the outcome of one of the courses of lectures which the holder of that chair, Dr.

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