

CRYPTONEMIACEÆ.

GYMNOGONGRUS DILATATUS, *Turner?*

A few young and barren, apparently this species.

On the Plant yielding Latakia Tobacco.
By W. T. THISELTON DYER, M.A., B.Sc., F.L.S.

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DURING the course of last year my attention was attracted by a plant labelled "Latakia Tobacco," in the collection of Economic Plants at Kew. It supplied the materials for the figure published by Dr. Hooker in the Botanical Magazine, tab. 6207, under the name of *Nicotiana Tabacum*, var. *fruticosa*. I found, however, that there was some uncertainty as to whether it really represented the kind of tobacco cultivated at Latakia. The plant was raised from seed sent from Jamaica, and purporting to have been the produce of authentic Latakia seed received from Kew. There was, however, some possibility that in Jamaica this and other kinds of tobacco seed might have become confused together.

In all accounts which I have seen of the sources of tobacco, that of Latakia is stated to be produced by *Nicotiana rustica**, a species largely cultivated on the coast of the Mediterranean, and which undoubtedly yields *Turkish tobacco*. It is extremely distinct from *N. Tabacum*, and is known at once by its greenish yellow flowers with a rather short cylindrical corolla-tube and roundish obtuse limb-segments. Turkish tobacco, as imported into this country, consists of the leaves, which are comparatively small in size, ovate, and distinctly stalked. They are done up into small parcels, tied together by their stalks. Their colour is a pale brownish-yellow.

On examining the samples of Latakia tobacco in the Kew Museum, I was surprised to find that authentic commercial examples consisted of compressed bundles of short flowering shoots with flowers and capsules†. These are tied up with string (probably of goat's hair), and have a very dark and grimy

* See Pereira's 'Materia Medica,' vol. ii. p. 1421; Flückiger and Hanbury's 'Pharmacologia,' p. 422.

† One of these bundles bore the note, "Guibili—finest, sown for Viceroy."

appearance. I soaked a portion of one of these bundles in boiling water, and was able to obtain specimens sufficiently complete to ascertain with certainty that they did not belong to *Nicotiana rustica*, but to some variety of *N. Tabacum*.

I applied to Mr. G. J. Eldridge, Consul-General at Beyrout, with a view of getting some authentic seed of the plant cultivated at Latakia. This, with the greatest kindness, he was good enough to obtain, although he was unable to send me the seed for some months, owing to the existence of quarantine. The packet, if sent, would have had to be pricked for the purpose of fumigation; and all the seed would have run out of the holes thus made.

He was further good enough to inform me that "this kind of tobacco owes its peculiar black colour and aromatic flavour to its being submitted, during seven or eight months, to fumigation of the wood of a shrub that grows wild in the Ansaryeh mountains, called, locally, Elez'r," and belonging to *Amentaceæ*.

I wrote to Mr. Eldridge to ask for some further information about this plant; and he was good enough to consult Dr. Post, the Professor of Botany at the Syrian Protestant College at Beyrout. He writes:—

"The plant alluded to under the name of 'el Ezr,' is probably the tree called 'el Arz.' Such transpositions of letters are very common in the colloquial Arabic. In classical use 'el Arz' refers to the famous Cedar of Lebanon, *Larix Cedrus*; but in the mouths of uneducated Syrians it designates one of the pines, *Pinus halepensis*, which grows in great numbers on the mountains."

I therefore conclude that Latakia tobacco is produced by a different species from the Turkish, and that, as imported into this country, it consists of the flowering twigs made up into bundles which have been smoked with pine-wood.
