

NARCISSUS HISPANICUS MAXIMUS.

BY A. F. CALVERT, F.C.S.

ON what grounds should one recommend a flower or given variety of flower? What is the generally accepted criterion of excellence? Is it in form, line, proportion, colour or growth that we find our basis of comparison? And who is to be the arbiter of all these things in a daffodil?

What a wise provision it is that our tastes are not all alike; that whilst one may revel in absolute perfection of form, another may find his delight in the grace of a natural twist—a sort of froward rebellion in the flower of his choice. At any rate, in the flower of *Narcissus hispanicus maximus* this diversity of opinion is duly exemplified.

In the past, I have urged growers strongly, and I think rightly, to experiment with this variety on account of its magnificent colour.

But my advice has been adversely criticized and various reasons for this have been tendered, as for instance:—"The perianth is twisted," and "It is not liked by the markets."

Of course the perianth is twisted, yet, when this objection was made to a man who is admitted to be one of the best judges in Great Britain, he said:—"That is what I like so much about the flower." And further:—"But I am much impressed by the fine deep colour."

About three years back my son, Mr. R. F. CALVERT, exhibited about a hundred Maximus blooms at one of the R.H.S. shows, and although it was surrounded by blooms from bulbs costing from £5 to £10 each, the Maximus blooms attracted just as much attention from the public as the rarer blooms, and people came right across the Hall to see flowers of so fine a gold colour. That is why I recommend growers to test this variety, the bulbs of which cost only about 3d. each.

My opinion is not isolated, and I may quote no less an authority than Mr. P. D. WILLIAMS, who, when writing about Maximus in 1914, said:—"The form of Maximus that used, in the late Mr. BURBIDGE'S time, to come from Trinity College Gardens, Dublin, was considered superior to all others, but whether it was a special form or simply Pyrenean Maximus in rude health, I do not know."

We will consider the history of the bulb later.

To say that the flower is not liked on the market is contrary to the facts, for I can say that Maximus is liked and good prices are returned for it on account of its earliness; other good market points in its favour are its length of life and stem, and its colour. These are known market qualities that should be recognized by the market grower.

This variety in Mr. H. W. PUGSLEY'S recent Monograph of Ajax, as it is traced back, proves to be the *Narcissus hispanicus* described

by ANTONIUS GOUAN in 1773. It has been illustrated and described under other names, but GOUAN's name is the earliest in the binominal system of nomenclature.

It may be of interest to give the following list of some of the more important works in which this variety has been described:—

Plantarum seu Stirpium Historia.

MATTHIAS DE LOBEL. Antwerp, 1576.

Paradisus in Sole Paradisus Terrestris.

JOHN PARKINSON. London, 1629.

Theatrum Florae.

Paris, 1633.

Campi Elysii.

O. RUDBECK. Upsala, Sweden, 1701.

Illustrationes et Observationes Botanicae.

ANTONIUS GOUAN. Zurich, 1773.

Botanical Magazine.

WILLIAM CURTIS, 1793.

“ On the Cultivation of Rare Plants ” in Trans. Hort. Soc., London.

RICHARD ANTHONY SALISBURY, 1812.

Sammlung schönblühender Gewächse.

NEES & SINNING. Düsseldorf, 1831.

This flower has been illustrated in several works, including: Theatrum Florae, 1633 (fig. 31, B), RUDBECK's Campi Elysii, 1701 (fig. 31, C), HALES' Eden, 1757 (fig. 30, A), CURTIS' Botanical Magazine, 1793 (fig. 30, B), NEES SINNING, 1831 (fig. 32, B)—some of which I am able to reproduce. I am fortunate in having been able to get a copy of a drawing (fig. 30, C) by SALISBURY which is to be found in his collection of drawings and manuscripts in the British Museum (Natural History).

It is also of importance to try to fix the original location of this flower and therefore it will be useful to give a list of the places given by the various authorities who have written on the subject. They are as follows:—

In 1773 GOUAN said it came from the Pyrenees and Mount Calcaris in the Cevennes; in 1812 SALISBURY says it grows wild in the mountains of L'Esperou which is identical with the Mount Calcaris of Gouan; in 1837 Dean HERBERT gave its home as the hills near Limoges in the south west of France; and in 1861 WILLKOMM and LANGE said it came from the mountain region of the Pyrenees and Cantabria.

Mr. PUGSLEY says it would appear that it grows in south west France and is scattered over a great part of northern Spain from the Pyrenees to Galicia.

I have set out in the foregoing the various districts in which it has been stated that this variety has been found in the leading botanical works that have been published during the last 350 years in England, France, Belgium, Sweden, Germany and elsewhere.

Mr. PUGSLEY calls attention to the fact that the flowers of this plant grow to a height of from two to three feet, which he says, seems an enormous size for any wild species of the subgenus Ajax.

I am glad that he has called attention to this, as it is one of my reasons for feeling some uncertainty on the question of its wild origin.

I am also aware that efforts have been made during the last sixty years to locate this plant in various other districts where it has been stated to be found, but so far it has only been discovered in a naturalized or cultivated state in old gardens and orchards between Dax and Bayonne.

Apart from that I now find that Mons. G. ROUY, a distinguished French Botanist, in his *Flore de France* published in Paris, states that this variety is only known in France as a naturalized plant.

In his *Paradisus*, published in 1629, PARKINSON gave the following interesting description of the flower which he called *Hispanicus Maximus* :—

“ The roote of this kind of daffodil is reasonable great, and blackish
 “ on the outside, desiring to be deepe in the ground ; and therefore
 “ will runne downe, where it will then encrease into many of-sets, from
 “ whence rise up many thicke, long and stiffe leaves, of a greyish
 “ greene colour, among which riseth up a round strong stalke, some-
 “ times three foote high or better, bearing at the toppe one onely
 “ faire great yellow flower, standing forth right, and not pendulous,
 “ consisting of six short and somewhat broad leaves, with a very great,
 “ large, and long trunke, of an equal largenesse, but open at the mouth,
 “ and turning up the brimmes a little, which are somewhat crumpled ;
 “ after the flower is past, there cometh in the place a three square
 “ head containing round blacke seede, like unto other daffodils.”

A grower who is a great admirer of *Maximus* was very surprised when I told him the flower could be traced back for over 350 years, and had been known under various names such as *Hispanicus Major*, *Grandiflorus*, *Hispanicus Maximus*, etc., and it was not until I was able to show him the illustrations that had been published under those names, supplemented with the descriptions, all of which gave the same particulars as to the twisted perianth, deep golden yellow colour, details of the leaves, etc., that he expressed himself as satisfied.

This flower was illustrated in HALES' *Eden*, published in 1757 (fig. 30, A), and his description of it is as fine as the flower itself, for he said :—“ It resembles, when the flower is well nourished, a vase of beaten gold.”

Mr. R. A. SALISBURY in an article on “ The Cultivation of Rare Plants,” published in 1812 referring to *Narcissus Maximus* said :—“ This species grows wild plentifully in the mountains of L'Esperou, and is a noble plant, rarely seen in perfection near London ; for it delights in a shady exposure and deep rich loam. Two beds of it, nevertheless, were very flourishing many years in the moist hollow of a nursery on the Kilburn road ; and it used to be equally luxuriant in Mr. CURTIS' botanic garden at Lambeth ; but he complained to me that it did not thrive at all when removed to Brompton.”

It may be of interest to remark that Mr. SALISBURY described *Narcissus Maximus* as *Narcissus Grandiflorus*, but Mr. SALISBURY

invented his own names for the various flowers he described and these have not been adopted.

Mr. WILLIAM CURTIS in *The Botanical Magazine* of 1788, in referring to this variety, said :—"The present species of Daffodil is the largest of the genus and bears the most magnificent flowers, but, though it has long been known in this country, it is confined rather to the gardens of the curious. It is a native of Spain and flowers with us in April, as its roots produce plenty of offsets, it is readily propagated" (fig. 30, B).

Mr. W. O. OSBORNE and the Rev. C. WOLLEY-DOD claim to have found it in a naturalized state between Dax and Bayonne over fifty years ago. I have traced an article written by the Rev. C. WOLLEY-DOD in March, 1883, in which he refers to the gigantic Maximus which he says attains its greatest dimensions in the Gardens of Trinity College, Dublin, where it has flower stalks 3 feet high with flowers in proportion.

As so many people insist on describing Maximus as the old Trinity College (Dublin) Maximus, I was hoping to be able to fix the date when it was first introduced there and with that object in view I consulted Sir FREDERICK MOORE (who was Curator of the Trinity College Gardens until he was succeeded by Mr. F. W. BURBIDGE in 1879 after which he went to Glasnevin), Mr. S. G. WILD who worked with BURBIDGE and is still engaged at the Trinity College Gardens, Mr. J. W. BESANT, the present Curator of the Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin, Dublin, and several others.

Sir FREDERICK MOORE says he does not remember when the bulbs first came to Trinity College, but BURBIDGE aroused his interest in them in 1880. He is, however, able to clear up two points of interest, viz. : that the Glasnevin and the late O'MAHONY'S stocks both came from Trinity College. Mr. WILD says they call it the "College Garden Maximus," but they now have very little of it.

Sir FREDERICK MOORE reminds me that it is difficult for him to fix the date as it is 55 years since he left the Gardens, and it is just as well that neither of us attempted to do so, as I have found a note published in "The Garden" of March 18, 1876, which says :—"Some parts of the College Botanic Gardens at Dublin are now quite gorgeous with the flowers of that noble Daffodil *Narcissus Maximus*, which attains a height of nearly two feet, and is, when grown in rich soil, so large that it more resembles a tropical than a hardy northern flower."

Again, HARTLAND, the well-known Irish Daffodil grower, and enthusiast, states in his 1895 catalogue :—"The flower is the admiration of every visitor, one of the first to expand and most lasting when cut." He goes on to enthuse :—"This Daffodil is quite the finest thing extant." HARTLAND claims to be the first to introduce it into commerce.

It may be as well if I add, to avoid confusion, that this variety has been described by F. W. BURBIDGE and other writers as *Maximus Superbus Longivirens*. The name *Longivirens* was added by HARTLAND on account, he states, of the peculiar habit the bulbs have of

retaining the foliage when all others have quite died down. He also included the word "superbus."

BURBIDGE writes about this bulb in May, 1903, in a note in "Gardening Illustrated" that:—"It is, so far, the finest and richest in colour of all self yellow varieties, and were it a better grower on all sorts of soil it would prove one of the very best of market garden flowers."

However, apart from the fact that well-known Daffodil experts have not only expressed some doubt as to the origin of Maximus, but also as to the time when it was introduced into Ireland, I certainly thought it was important to try and clear up this latter point in connection with a variety about which there is so much uncertainty.

I have traced an article written in 1903 by Mr. F. W. BURBIDGE in which he states that *N. Maximus Longivirens* or *N. Maximus Superbus* is a naturalized form of the old garden Maximus found by W. O. OSBORNE and the Rev. C. WOLLEY-DOD on the lands between Dax and Bayonne. It was described by HARTLAND in the list he issued in 1894 and I have already referred to the fact that he added the word *Longivirens* to the name.

Now Mr. HARTLAND having made this addition and having further claiming at the same time that he was the first to introduce it to commerce, complicates matters by adding "Hartland" after the name, which gives the impression that he was the raiser! But I think there is evidence enough to justify our treating that addition as a mistake, though HARTLAND may have added his name to indicate that he was the introducer.

Now, since Mr. F. W. BURBIDGE was Curator of Trinity College Botanical Gardens, Dublin, in 1879, and remained there until he died in 1905, his description and explanation is of value not only because he took a special interest in this flower and was far less likely than others to make mistakes, but also because he was well able to speak with an intimate knowledge of the subject, having been practically on the spot when it was first introduced into commerce in Ireland.

In an article in "The Garden" BARR used the name *superbus* in 1885. BURBIDGE in his letter questioned BARR's naming, but shortly after he also used the name and HARTLAND followed suit.

In 1888 BURBIDGE wrote to BARR expressing the opinion that the Trinity College Maximus was not the same as the Dutch Maximus, and he added that when he visited HARTLAND's place he was able to pick out the Trinity College variety from the Dutch, although HARTLAND thought he would not be able to do so.

This, in my opinion, is of interest, as it goes to show that there could not have been much difference between them, in fact one might even assume that any difference might only have been due to variations in growing conditions and locality.

Mr. BURBIDGE, when referring to this flower in the year 1890 as the finest and most stately and most golden of all, said:—"I believe it has been re-introduced from the Spanish or French frontier quite recently, but we must await further details, as there seems a doubt as



A



B



C

FIG. 50.—*NARCISSUS HISPANICUS MAXIMUS*.

A, from Hales Eden, 1757. B, from Curtis' Botanical Magazine, 1793. C, from a drawing by R. A. Salisbury, 1796.

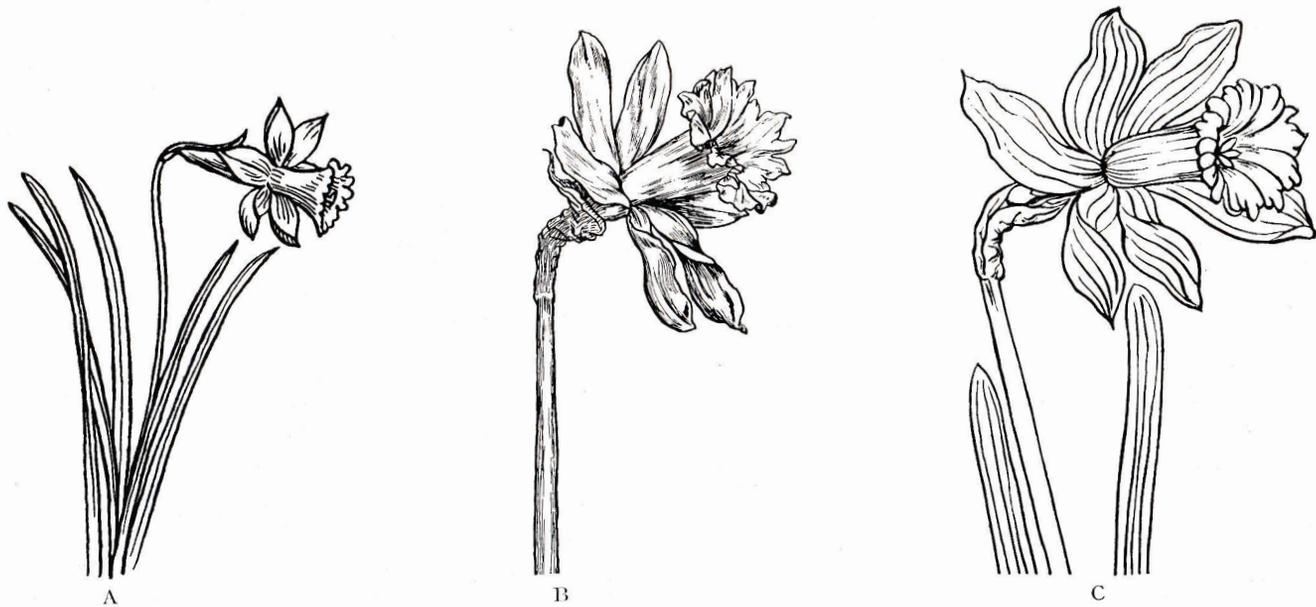


FIG. 31.—*NARCISSUS HISPANICUS MAXIMUS*.
A, from Matthias de Lobel, Antwerp, 1576. B, from *Theatrum Florae*, Paris, 1633. C, from Rudbeck's *Campi Elysii*, Sweden, 1701.

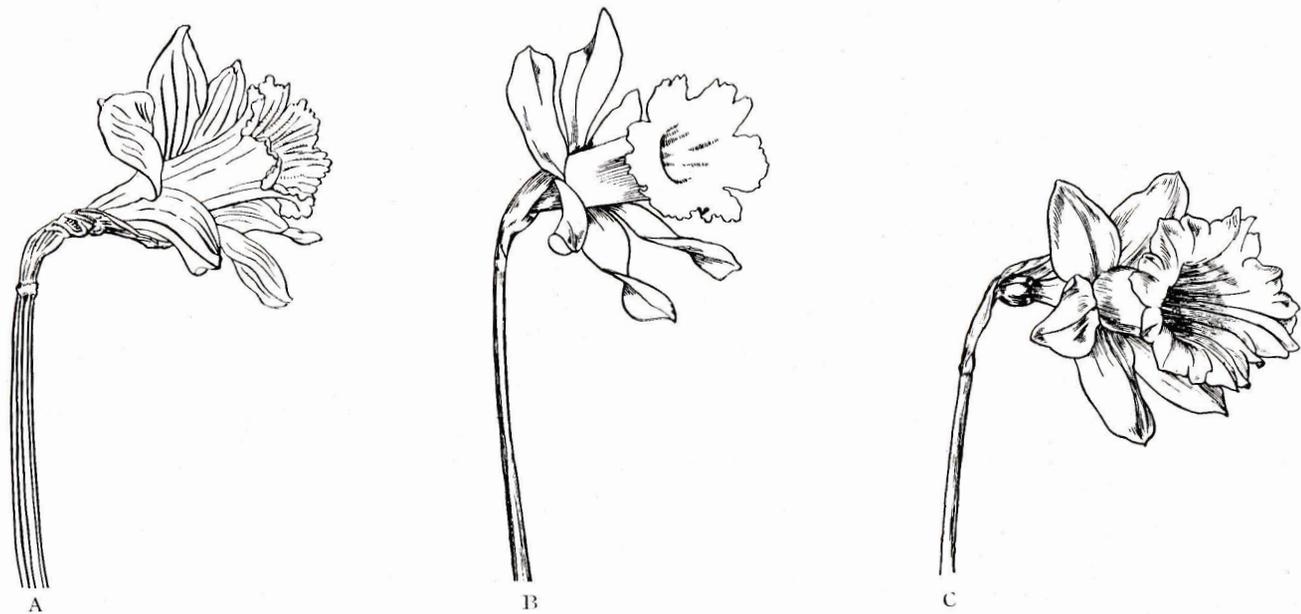


FIG. 32.—A, *NARCISSUS MAXIMUS* as grown in Holland (from *Botanical Magazine* 1810).
B, *N. maximus* of Nees & Sinning, Dusseldorf, 1831. C, *N. maximus superbus* of Edward Leeds, 1851.



FIG. 33—THE TRINITY COLLEGE MAXIMUS.
(Grown by Mr. R. F. Calvert, Coverack, Cornwall.)

to whether the bulbs were collected from a wild habitat or from a cultivated one."

When Mr. R. F. CALVERT first exhibited Maximus grown by him at Coverack (fig. 33), it attracted as much attention as some of the more modern varieties, so much so that several exhibitors and visitors placed orders with small firms who said they could supply this variety. Some of these buyers have since told him that what was delivered to them was quite different.

There may be climatic difficulties of cultivation, though I doubt it. Of some growers who are successful with the type, Mr. WILLIAMS says:—"They probably are as ignorant of the reason of their success as their friends are of the cause of their failure." Yet I still recommend growers to try it, noting that the bulb has a preference for soil composed of disintegrated granite similar to that of parts of Cornwall where the bulb and flower both flourish to a large degree.

It may be of interest to state here that the present large stock of Maximus at Coverack, Cornwall, was raised from bulbs from Trinity College, Dublin, sent by Mr. BURBIDGE to Mr. P. D. WILLIAMS over thirty years ago.

HARTLAND, in 1903, pursued his trend of thought and idea in regard to Maximus by sending some flowers for inspection to the members of the Narcissus Committee of the R.H.S. These flowers, he said, were produced by bulbs collected in 1886, and, he further stated that the wild bulbs improved under cultivation whereas the Dutch stocks of this Daffodil generally died out after two or three years garden culture.

The Committee placed on record the fact that they recognized these flowers sent in by HARTLAND as representing the Pyrenean form of Maximus.

Yet, about 1890, the Rev. C. WOLLEY-DOD made a tour of the Pyrenees hoping to find *N. maximus* as a wild plant, but failed in his quest—only finding it in old gardens and orchards.

In his very interesting and valuable work on Narcissus, Mr. E. A. BOWLES deals very fully with Maximus, and says that the illustration (see fig. 30, B) "in the *Botanical Magazine* 1793, represents the true Maximus with its dark yellow flowers, long, twisted perianth segments, a widely expanded, deeply gashed corona, and glaucous, spirally twisted leaves." He goes on to suggest that this flower should become *N. hispanicus* var. *maximus* and I consider this an admirable suggestion; in fact I do not see how it can be improved.

With regard to the names by which it has been known in the past, it is a simple matter to dispose of the word "longivirens" because we have the admission of HARTLAND that he added it.

The word "superbus" was in the first place applied by Mr. E. LEEDS to a seedling he had raised from Maximus which was fully described by Mr. THOMAS MOORE, the Curator of the Physic Garden at Chelsea in 1851 and from the drawing of it that I am able to reproduce (fig. 32, c), it will be seen that it is quite different from Maximus, with which it is clear that it has been confused. Although the whole of the Leeds collection was supposed to have gone to BARR, he

and BURBIDGE both formed the opinion that the Maximus bulbs had escaped out of the Leeds garden.

Assuming this to have been the case, some of them may have found their way to Ireland, both to Trinity College and to HARTLAND. This is the best explanation I can offer, and if this were the case it might explain the confusion, but in any case the term Maximus superbus was incorrect and ought never to have been used. It is clear that it will now have to be corrected and will doubtless lead to more confusion.

It is perhaps of interest to record that old Mr. PETER BARR left a note referring to the visit of the Rev. C. WOLLEY-DOD to the Pyrenees in search of Maximus, and his meeting with the woman who had been selling the flower to Lady Osborne and Madame Dupony. He formed the opinion that the woman only took WOLLEY-DOD to a place where there were a few growing, and he added Mr. BARNAART of Holland must have been over the same ground.

Mr. PETER R. BARR tells me that in 1902 he wrote to young BARNAART on the subject and received a reply as follows:—

“ I am sorry I cannot give you any information of *N. maximus* growing in a wild state. I found it myself in an old garden of a country house and bought a few thousand bulbs from the owner at a high price. He told me that he had got them about 20 or 25 years previously from an old woman who sold flowers of this Daffodil every year in the market of Pau. Where she got them from he did not know. Anyhow, I tried year after year to find where they grew, but failed.”

The above goes to support the opinion I have expressed, but which has not been accepted, that even what is known as the Dutch variety also came from the Pyrenees. Although they appear to be different, I suggest it was because they did not thrive in Holland and became shy bloomers (fig. 32, A, B).

Mr. BARR also tells me that Mr. ALFRED W. TAIT, of Oporto, sent him bulbs of what he called his “ Extra Early Maximus ” which was named and registered as “ A. W. Tait,” but he found this variety on flowering to be identical with the Pyrenean Maximus; here again it will be seen there is further confusion.

Mr. H. W. PUGSLEY, who has devoted so much time to the study of the subject, writes me that he thinks:—“ It is evident from the pre-Linnean works that the Dublin variety is practically identical with the older plant, which probably came from the Pyrenees or adjacent regions, though there is no definite record of its first introduction.”

It would appear that fifty years ago the old Daffodil growers were very critical; in the course of my researches I have come across some very amusing and interesting articles. On one occasion Mr. ENGLEHEART made the late PETER BARR very angry by referring to his stock of Maximus as though it were lost; Mr. BARR said that was not so, and all who were interested in this really distinct and beautiful Daffodil could see it by visiting Tooting in April, 1886.

When Mr. BARR exhibited this flower at the Daffodil Conference in 1884, Mr. ENGLEHEART appears to have said that he had a similar flower in his gardens at Appleshaw and he took Mr. BARR's flower home to compare "with what he supposed to be the same variety in his garden and promised to convince me that both were alike; but instead of the flower I received a letter saying that his specimen was out of character and he promised to send it the following Daffodil season; the 1885 Daffodil season came, but not the flower. I presumed from this that Mr. ENGLEHEART was convinced of his error."

"In passing it may be remarked that it would be an interesting feature in our Daffodil Shows to see contributions from the Appleshaw garden; we could then judge of the richness and variety of Mr. ENGLEHEART'S collection."

My only observation in regard to this is that if fifty years ago Mr. ENGLEHEART was anything like the man he is to-day, he would have been amused at this bold challenge, and would and, indeed, did go on producing his new and marvellous flowers as and when it suited him; in due course Mr. BARR must have had plenty of opportunities of judging of the value of his collection.

A Mr. BROCKBANK was next criticised by Mr. BARR because his name had been associated with *Narcissus Maximus*. He seemed to be under the impression that if Mr. BROCKBANK had this variety it must have come from the stock of Mr. LEEDS which he had purchased.

There then briefly is the history of this fine flower, which has always aroused keen interest and attention and always will where it is successfully grown. I maintain that I am fully justified in suggesting it as a suitable type for market work and one with which growers can be confident in growing in suitable areas. It is not a small thing to discard a bulb which will throw a stem three feet in height, which will last in water at least three weeks, quite apart from the rich colouring of the bloom, and of which we were able to pick blooms on January 3rd last from plants grown in the open at Coverack, Cornwall.

As the result of my investigations I venture to suggest that:—
Maximus was known in and has been described since 1576.

Although it has been claimed that it has been found wild, there is no reliable evidence of this.

It is stated on the highest authority in France that it now only exists in that country as a naturalized plant.

It appears to have been introduced into England about 1788 and later into Holland, but did not thrive and in most cases became a shy bloomer and died out.

Introduced into Ireland somewhere about 1850 where it thrived at Trinity College Gardens, Dublin, but for some reason there is very little left in those gardens.

Some bulbs sent from Trinity College Gardens to Cornwall, thrived and the finest and largest stock in existence is now to be found there.

That the name suggested by Mr. BOWLES, viz.: *N. hispanicus* var. *maximus* should now be adopted, although many of the present growers will doubtless continue to call it Maximus Superbus.

The name of Maximus Superbus is incorrect, as this was selected by Mr. E. LEEDS in 1850 for a seedling from Maximus raised by him.



FIG. 34.—NARCISSUS HISPANICUS MAXIMUS.
As figured by W. BAYLOR HARTLAND of Cork in 1890.