

ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY BULLETIN.

or four inches high, with big waxy flowers of a soft clear almond blossom pink, or *Calceolaria Darwinii* in Southern Patagonia—a group of thirty or forty blossoms like dwarf big-flowered orchids on three inch stems, or gnomes with swollen orange, crimson-speckled bellies scowling at one from a mossy bank at eye level—a plant so astounding that one felt there could not really be plants like that. And so on, and so on:—Impossible to choose.

CLARENCE ELLIOTT.

The finest Alpine in the mountains I have seen is *Gentiana verna*; to see them in their myriads, carpeting the top of Galibier Pass in early July is a magnificent sight. The finest Alpine in the garden which gives me the greatest satisfaction over the longest period is *Omphalodes Luciliae*. Some old plants tucked into the rocks on a north slope continue all summer to be covered with Eton blue flowers on a background of soft grey-blue foliage.

F. C. STERNE.

“The finest alpine?” No, Mr. Editor. You have asked me a question I cannot answer. Beauty makes strange appeals, and is easily confused and contorted. Rarity, and success in overcoming cultural difficulties, lead many a grower astray; the rare and difficult plant is not necessarily beautiful. When my memory reverts to many “a supreme moment” spent amongst the “little people of the Hills,” where they bejewel a setting which none can copy, I dare not offend those I love so well by singling out a finest or a favourite—they might hear me.

ERNEST BALLARD.

THE FAIRY NARCISSI.

By P. L. GIUSEPPI, M.D., LOND., F.R.C.S., F.R.G.S.

It is with very great pleasure that I accede to the Editor's request to write these notes on the “Fairy Narcissi”, to elaborate the accompanying pencil drawings of Miss Wrinch. Certainly no photographs could show so well the daintiness, charm and fascination of these little plants of the Portuguese Sierras. These three Narcissi were part of the rich reward which I received in the course of a long and tiring journey over the then well-nigh impassable roads of Portugal. So bad were these roads that often enough a speed of 5 miles per hour was all that could be attained. The mud-filled holes on the main road to Lisbon were so deep that the pigs wallowing in the coolness of the mud showed only their backs, and our car, time and again, had to be dragged out of from the fastnesses of these swamps by bullocks, horses or donkeys. Often enough I felt seasick from the continual shaking



Narcissus scaberulus. (p. 299).

The sketches of dwarf Narcissus which illustrate Dr. Giuseppi's article have been drawn to full scale by Miss Wrinch, and bring out clearly the diminutive charm of these small species.

one had perforce to endure. It speaks extremely highly for the progress of this little country that, on those selfsame roads, I have recently attained speeds of 30 to 40 miles per hour.

The mountains of Portugal are almost all granitic, the flora of even the highest of their peaks hardly attains the dignity of an Alpine one. It is a curious fact how poor is the flora of granitic mountains. Were it not for the numberless bulbs of Portugal the mountains would indeed be a disappointment to the plant collector. These bulbs, however, grow in such countless thousands that they provide a great colour treat to weary eyes. The family most represented is that of the *Narcissus*, and it is almost true to say that Portugal is the country of the miniature *Narcissus*, and of the miniature *Narcissi* the three of which I propose to write are the most delightful.

The little *Narcissus scaberulus* is to be found on only one granitic down at Oliviera da Conde. This mountain does not exceed 5,000 ft. in height, and by no process of exaggeration can one say that it supports an Alpine flora. Its only plant that can be truly said to fill every qualification of an Alpine is our little *Narcissus*. This is found growing in the granitic detritus of the mountain. In the spring and early summer months the detritus, which seldom has a depth of more than a few inches before solid granite is reached, is very damp. In the summer it is baked solid. It is in this medium that our *Narcissus* is found, and for a wonder it is easy to extract the bulbs from the soil. The bulbs are tiny, dark and oval. In the spring there rise two small leaves, grey-green in colour, their upper surfaces slightly grooved, which lie almost horizontally upon the ground. This horizontal position of the leaves is, as far as I know, unique among the *Narcissi*. The flower stalk springs up vertically from between these two leaves, and bears, as a rule, one or two delightful little flowers of the deepest orange. So tiny are these little gems that the gardener of one of my friends on seeing the plant in flower for the first time said that it could not be a real flower. It is extremely rare even in its own home. The bulbs divide easily but only once has seed set. (Plate p. 291)

The second *Narcissus* illustrated is *aurantiacus* var. *pallidulus*, and was found, quite accidentally by me on a sloping bank above the Rio Ferrétra, whilst searching for *Narcissus cyclamineus*. This *Narcissus* is very rare, and the locality in which I found it is the only one at present known. There it grows in the turf, producing its dark green leaves, from which, in the early spring rise the extraordinarily beautiful orange flowers with recurved perianth



Narcissus aurantiacus var. *pallidulus*. (p. 299).

and a cup constricted at its mouth. The delicacy and purity of its shape make it a gem for the alpine house. This plant is a very free seeder, and year by year a plentiful supply of fertile seed is obtained. The seedlings flower regularly in their third year. (Plate p. 292)

The third of these little Narcissi, *juncifolius rupicola* has, unlike its two sisters, a widespread distribution. It is found from the Guadarramas in Spain, right across the peninsula, to the northern mountains of Portugal. Its resemblance to the type *juncifolius* is great, the main distinction being the beautiful yellow cup, which lies so flat on the flower and which is so large that, with the slightest pressure of the thumb, it can be made practically to overlap the spreading perianth. Here again is a lover of the granitic mountains. The flowers appear in the early spring, and grace the rockery with their beauty. The plant is an easy doer and seeds freely. The bulb divides easily. (Plate p. 297)

It is curious how these three little Narcissi vary in their distribution. *Narcissus scaberulus* does not grow above an altitude of 5,000 ft. and is sub-alpine. Its limited distribution is probably due to the fact that the mountain, on which it is found, is not connected with any of the surrounding mountains, all of which are comparatively far away. *Narcissus aurantiacus* var. *pallidulus* is a plant of the valleys, and *Narcissus juncifolius* var. *rupicola* is a high alpine, growing at heights of 6,000 and 7,000 ft. where I have found it just coming through the melting snows. It is interesting to note that its distribution to the north east adjoins that of *Narcissus juncifolius*, whereas on the west it adjoins the distribution of its two sisters. It is to be hoped that, in the years to come, these three delightful little miniatures will be more generally grown, and thus add to the beauty of the alpine house.



Narcissus rupicola. (p. 300).