


TULIPS—CLASSIFICATION: CULTURE.

OWARDS florists with their own particular flowers, grown less to make a garden gay than for their own intrinsic interest and fascinating beauties, the whole Floricultural Press is so kindly disposed, that though we are—perhaps because of our fewness and isolation—no longer in possession of our own little works, such as so largely were the *Midland Florist* and the *Gossip of the Garden*, yet no florist need lack an outlet for his inquiries, information, experience, joys, and sorrows. To go no further than these kindly pages, THE FLORIST is more than “Midland;” and Mr. Hepworth, writing about our Tulips, still loved with all the ardour of old times, though the wide floral world may not have lately noted it, makes me glad to join in the Tulip-talk with him.

No. 37. IMPERIAL SERIES.

Since we can remember Tulips, though he is a generation older than I, and Samuel Barlow, an elder brother, the White-Ground classes have risen with sharper contrast from, and among, each other; while the Yellow-Grounds, the Bizarres, have developed into two well-separated sets of marking, red and black.

In purity, shape, substance, colour, and decision of marking, all are much more near their projected standards of perfection. We have brighter scarlets in the Roses; and in the Byblœmens nearer approaches to the violet, chocolate, and black of this difficult and remarkable type; and purer whites in both. In these classes, all this has helped us to keep clear of those beautiful but perplexing flowers, the Rosy-Byblœmens, a marginal class in which a flower, opening not quite scarlet

enough for a Rose, never continues in one stay, and dies not quite dark enough for a Byblœmen. This confusion seems due to a mixture of red and violet shades. Where blue tints blend with black, as in a flower like Hardy's Talisman, the flower is a good Byblœmen; and where the red is brightened, as in vermilion, the resulting scarlets form brilliant varieties of the Rose class, such as are Modesty, Annie McGregor, or a feathered break of Kate Connor. (O, brother Barlow! let me treasure here the memory of the loved and only one that you and I ever had, and that was killed in an accident on a journey!)

There can be no doubt but that progress will continue to reward thoughtful perseverance with seedlings, and that, with flowers of the best form, will come the white that needs no bleaching, and colours of ripe intensity from the first.

I quite agree with the veteran Mr. Hepworth, that the Bizarres, the yellow grounds, have proved themselves deserving of the honour of distinction into two equally-valued classes, by virtue of the magnificent contrasts between our best bright reds, such as Storer's Dr. Hardy and Orion, and the raven-black of Masterpiece. This seems a natural division, which we only embarrass ourselves by ignoring. It is a distinction fully recognised in the Carnation in the difference between its scarlet and crimson bizarres; but in the Tulips it remains a difficulty, and one which a judge may keenly feel before two flowers running one another so close, that he may see no point for his decision but his own private preference for this or that colour in the flame and feather.

Points should be founded on settled merits, and not on floating tastes.

The scope for a grower's individual likings lies in his home collection. There, in the sanctity of his own garden, he may, if he be enough one-eyed and colour-blind, banish from his Tulip-beds the Scarlet Bizarre, and confine himself to nothing but black velvet in the ground-colours of his edged Aurienlas; but no such preferences should weigh in public against flowers that add to high worth in other points the very valuable one of some decided fresh break in colour.

In the shape of the florist Tulip, there are

several important properties besides the correct shortness of the cup, such as breadth, smoothness, and substance of the petals, and their evenness on the edge, and in their height. Where these are well combined, a little, and sometimes a good deal, of deviation from the standard length of the eup is practically allowable still. There are flowers at the Royal National Show, both old and new, that are certainly long in the eup; and we have had to bear with these, encouraged, however, by fine seedlings from such raisers as Dr. Hardy, Luke Ashmole, Storer, and others, flowers that show great advancement in this supreme point of form.

Planting-time has come and gone again. No one need fear for the welfare of his bulbs who can consign them to deep beds of strong, turfy, yellow loam. The Tulip naturally roots afresh about the third week in September, and therefore by the middle of October it begins to show evident signs that it longs to be underground. Where the beds are in no way protected, this is generally a safer month for the work than November, beyond the earlier part of which the operation should not be delayed. But planting is not such a matter of punctuality as taking up should be. Not that, like tubers of the Ranunculus, the Tulip is in danger of rooting again soon after dying down, but that there is certainly a happy moment for harvesting these bulbs during their closing life above ground. If taken up as soon as the stems will bend double without a sharp snap, and the foliage tips show that the sap is ebbing, it will be found both that the young bulb is perfectly formed, and also that though it may appear white enough to seem naked save for the worn-out shells of the old root, yet it is not really so. Its outermost layer is an exceedingly fine skin, which now will ripen closely round the young bulb, with most perfect fit and finish, and will encase it, for the whole period of its outward rest, in a bright transparent wrapper, apparently air-tight, and therefore of great use in keeping the bulb from loss by evaporation. But if the work of taking up be delayed till this stage of maturity is past, this protective covering thickens and darkens, and with the drying of the bulb will readily split and peel off. It is best to dress them over as soon as the old shells and old fibres are perfectly withered and dry, keeping off-sets, if possible, at their mother's side, or sheltered, if naturally loose, in one of the old shells in which they often lie.