

in 1629, eight varieties. Now the varieties are very numerous, and they were still more numerous a century ago. Mr. Paul remarks that "it is interesting to compare the Hyacinths of 1629 with those of 1864, and to mark the improvement. Two hundred and thirty-five years have elapsed since then, and this simple flower serves well to illustrate the great fact that the original forms of nature do not remain fixed and stationary, at least when brought under cultivation. While looking at the extremes, we must not, however, forget that there are intermediate stages which are for the most part lost to us. Nature will sometimes indulge herself with a leap, but as a rule her march is slow and gradual." He adds that the cultivator should have "in his mind an ideal of beauty, for the realisation of which he works with head and hand." We thus see how clearly Mr. Paul, an eminently successful cultivator of this flower, appreciates the action of methodical selection.

In a curious and apparently trustworthy treatise, published at Amsterdam¹⁹⁶ in 1768, it is stated that nearly 2,000 sorts were then known; but in 1864 Mr. Paul found only 700 in the largest garden at Haarlem. In this treatise it is said that not an instance is known of any one variety reproducing itself truly by seed: the white kinds, however, now¹⁹⁷ almost always yield white hyacinths, and the yellow kinds come nearly true. The hyacinth is remarkable from having given rise to varieties with bright blue, pink, and distinctly yellow flowers. These three primary colours do not occur in the varieties of any other species; nor do they often all occur even in the distinct species of the same genus. Although the several kinds of hyacinths differ but slightly from each other except in colour, yet each kind has its own individual character, which can be recognised by a highly educated eye; thus the writer of the Amsterdam treatise asserts (p. 43) that some experienced florists, such as the famous G. Voorhelm, seldom failed in a collection of above twelve hundred sorts to recognise each variety by the bulb alone! This same writer mentions some few singular variations: for instance, the hyacinth commonly produces six leaves, but there is one kind (p. 35) which scarcely ever has more than three leaves; another never more than five; whilst others regularly produce either seven or eight leaves. A variety, called *la Coryphée*, invariably produces (p. 116) two flower-stems, united together and covered by one skin. The flower-stem in another kind (p. 128) comes out of the ground in a coloured sheath, before the appearance of the leaves, and is consequently liable to suffer from frost. Another variety always pushes a second flower-stem after the first has begun to develop itself. Lastly, white hyacinths with red, purple, or violet centres (p. 129) are the most liable to rot. Thus,

¹⁹⁶ 'Des Jacinthes, de leur Anatomie, Reproduction, et Culture,' Amsterdam, 1768.

¹⁹⁷ Alph. de Candolle, 'Géograph. Bot.,' p. 1082