

fruit, and vegetables which were then cultivated with some excellent drawings made a hundred and fifty years previously, was struck with surprise at the great improvement which had been effected; and remarks that these ancient flowers and vegetables would now be rejected, not only by a florist but by a village gardener. Since the time of Buffon the work of improvement has steadily and rapidly gone on. Every florist who compares our present flowers with those figured in books published not long since, is astonished at the change. A well-known amateur,⁸³ in speaking of the varieties of *Pelargonium* raised by Mr. Garth only twenty-two years before, remarks, "What a rage they excited: surely we had attained perfection, it was said; and now not one of the flowers of those days will be looked at. But none the less is the debt of gratitude which we owe to those who saw what was to be done, and did it." Mr. Paul, the well-known horticulturist, in writing of the same flower,⁸⁴ says he remembers when young being delighted with the portraits in Sweet's work; "but what are they in point of beauty compared with the *Pelargoniums* of this day? Here again nature did not advance by leaps; the improvement was gradual, and if we had neglected those very gradual advances, we must have foregone the present grand results." How well this practical horticulturist appreciates and illustrates the gradual and accumulative force of selection! The *Dahlia* has advanced in beauty in a like manner; the line of improvement being guided by fashion, and by the successive modifications which the flower slowly underwent.⁸⁵ A steady and gradual change has been noticed in many other flowers: thus an old florist,⁸⁶ after describing the leading varieties of the *Pink* which were grown in 1813, adds, "the pinks of those days would now be scarcely grown as border-flowers." The improvement of so many flowers and the number of the varieties which have been raised is all the more striking when we hear that the

⁸³ 'Journal of Horticulture,' 1862, p. 394.

⁸⁴ 'Gardener's Chronicle,' 1857, p. 85.

⁸⁵ See Mr. Wildman's address to the

Floricult. Soc., in 'Gardener's Chronicle,' 1843, p. 86.

⁸⁶ 'Journal of Horticulture,' Oct. 24th, 1865, p. 239.