

buried in the mud, retained its vitality, and when the water returned fresh leaves burst forth. The natives spoke of it as tenacious of life, and said that whenever the earth around even the smallest portion of it remained moist, that portion would put forth leaves again when covered with water. This plant is not only extremely curious, but also very valuable to the natives, who at certain seasons of the year, gather it as an article of food—the fleshy root, when cooked, yielding a farinaceous substance resembling the yam. Hence its native name *ouvirandrano*, literally, yam of the water,—*ouvi*, in the Malagasy and Polynesian languages, signifying yam, and *rano* in the former signifying water. The *ouvirandra* is not only a rare and curious, but a singularly beautiful plant, both in structure and colour. From the several crowns of the branching root growing often a foot or more deep in the water, a number of graceful leaves, nine or ten inches long, and two or three inches wide, spread out horizontally just beneath the surface of the water. The flower-stalks rise from the centre of the leaves, and the branching or forked flower is curious; but the structure of the leaf is peculiarly so, and seems like a living fibrous skeleton rather than an entire leaf. The longitudinal fibres extend in curved lines along its entire length, and are united by thread-like fibres or veins, crossing them at right angles, from side to side, at a short distance from each other. The whole leaf looks as if composed of fine tendrils, wrought after a most regular pattern, so as to resemble a piece of bright green lace, or open needlework. Each leaf rises from the crown on the root like a short delicate-looking pale green or yellow fibre, gradually unfolding its feathery-looking sides, and increasing its size as it spreads beneath the water. The leaves in their several stages of growth pass through almost every gradation of colour, from a pale yellow to a dark olive green, becoming brown or even black before they finally decay; air bubbles of considerable size frequently appearing under the full-formed and healthy leaves. It is scarcely possible to imagine any object of the kind more attractive and beautiful than a full-grown specimen of this plant, with its dark green leaves forming the limit of a circle two or three feet in diameter, and in the transparent water within that circle presenting leaves in every stage of development, both as to color and size. Nor is it the least curious to notice that these slender and fragile structures, apparently not more substantial than the gossamer and flexible as a feather, still possess a tenacity and wiriness which