

## NATURAL HISTORY.

## THE TULIP MANIA.

When the Tulipomania infected Holland, and single roots were sold for many hundred pounds we are told—

“People who had been absent from Holland, and whose chance it was to return when this folly was at its maximum, were sometimes led into awkward dilemmas by their ignorance. There is an amusing instance of the kind related in Blainville's *Travels*. A wealthy merchant, who prided himself not a little on his rare tulips, received upon one occasion a very valuable consignment of merchandise from the Levant. Intelligence of its arrival was brought him by a sailor, who presented himself for that purpose at the counting-house, among bales of goods of every description. The merchant, to reward him for his news, munificently made him a present of a fine red herring for his breakfast. The sailor had, it appears, a great partiality for onions; and seeing a bulb very like an onion lying up on the counter of this liberal trader, and thinking it no doubt very much out of its place among silks and velvets, he slyly seized an opportunity, and slipped it into his pocket as a relish for his herring. He got clear off with his prize, and proceeded to the quay to eat his breakfast. Hardly was his back turned when the merchant missed his valuable *Scaber angustus*, worth three thousand florins, or about £280 sterling. The whole establishment was instantly in an uproar; search was every where made for the precious root, but it was not to be found. Great was the merchant's distress of mind. The search was renewed; but again without success. At last some one thought of the sailor. The unhappy merchant again sprang into the street at the bare suggestion. His alarmed household followed him. The sailor, simple soul! had not thought of concealment. He was found quietly sitting on a coil of ropes, masticating the last morsel of his ‘onion.’ Little did he dream that he had been eating a breakfast whose cost might have regaled a whole ship's crew for a twelvemonth; or, as the plundered merchant himself expressed it, might have sumptuously feasted the Prince of Orange and the whole court of the Stadtholder. Anthony caused pearls to be dissolved in wine to drink the health of Cleopatra; Sir Richard Whittington was as foolishly magnificent in an entertainment to King Henry V.; and Sir Thomas Gresham drank a diamond, dissolved in wine, to the health of Queen Elizabeth, when she opened the Royal Exchange: but the breakfast of this roguish Dutchman was as splendid as either. He had an advantage, too, over his wasteful predecessors: their gems did not improve the taste or the wholesomeness of their wine while his tulip was quite delicious with his red herring. The most unfortunate part of the business for him was, that he remained in prison for some months on a charge of felony, preferred against him by the merchant.—Another story is told of an English traveller, which is scarcely less ludicrous. This gentleman, an amateur botanist, happened to see a tulip-root lying in the conservatory of a wealthy Dutchman. Being ignorant of its quality, he took out his penknife, and peeled off its coats, with the view of making experiments upon it. When it was by this means reduced to half its original size, he cut it into two equal sections, making all the time many learned remarks on the singular appearances of the unknown bulb. Suddenly the owner pounced upon him: and with fury in his eyes, asked if he knew what he had been doing? ‘Peeling a most extraordinary onion,’ replied the philosopher. ‘Ah!’ said the Dutchman, ‘it's an Admiral *Van der Eyck*.’ ‘Thank you,’ replied the traveller, taking out his note-book to make a memorandum of the same; ‘are these admirals common in your country?’ ‘Death!’ said the Dutchman, seizing the astonished man of science by the collar; ‘come before the syndic, and you shall see.’ In spite of his remonstrances, the traveller was led through the streets followed by a mob of persons. When brought into the presence of a magistrate, he learned, to his consternation, that the root upon which he had been experimentalising was worth four thousand florins; and, notwithstanding all he could urge in exte-

nation, he was lodged in prison until he found securities for the payment of the sum.

“The example of the Dutch was imitated to some extent in England. In the year 1636 tulips were publicly sold in the Exchange of London; and the jobbers exerted themselves to the utmost to raise them to the fictitious value they had acquired in Amsterdam. In Paris also the jobbers strove to create a tulipomania. In both cities they only partially succeeded. However, the force of example brought the flowers into great favour; and amongst a certain class of people tulips have ever since been prized more highly than any other flowers of the field. The Dutch are still notorious for their partiality to them, and continue to pay higher prices for them than any other people. As the rich Englishman boasts of his fine race-horses or his old pictures, so does the wealthy Dutchman vaunt him of his tulips. In England, in our day, strange as it may appear, a tulip will produce more money than an oak. If one could be found *rara in terris*, and black as the black swan alluded to by Juvenal, its price would equal that of a dozen acres of standing corn. In Scotland, towards the close of the seventeenth century, the highest price for tulips, according to the authority of a writer in the supplement to the third edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, was ten guineas. Their value appears to have diminished from that time till the year 1769, when the two most valuable species in England were the *Dou Quevedo* and the *Valentinier*; the former of which was worth two guineas, and the latter two guineas and a half. These prices appear to have been the minimum. In the year 1800, a common price was fifteen guineas for a single bulb. In 1835, so foolish were the fanciers, that a bulb of the species called the *Miss Fanny Kemble* was sold by public auction in London for seventy-five pounds. Still more astonishing was the price of a tulip in the possession of a gardener in the King's Road, Chelsea. In his catalogues it was labelled at two hundred guineas! A flower which was surpassed by the abundant roses of the garden, a nosegay of which might be purchased for a penny,—was priced at a sum which would have provided an industrious labourer and his family with food, and clothes, and lodging for years! The common prices for these flowers at the present time vary from five to fifteen guineas, according to the rarity of the species.”

TEACHING CHILDREN TO WALK TOO YOUNG. — Some fond parents disregarding the fact that the bones are comparatively soft and pliable in infancy, in their hurry to see the little objects walk without support, are continually soliciting attempts at standing or walking long before the bones have acquired sufficient power of resistance, and the muscles sufficient power of contraction, to cope with the laws of gravitation. The natural consequence is a curvature of the bone, which yields just like an elastic stick bending under a weight. The ends approach nearer to each other than they ought to do; and, to accommodate themselves to the change, the muscles become shorter on one side, and perhaps longer on the other, each losing part of its efficiency in the unnatural change it undergoes. From this view, it will be seen how hurtful leading-strings, must be. In the first place, by their mechanical force, they compress the chest, and impede respiration; and in the second, by preventing the body from falling to the ground, or rather by preserving an upright position, they cause more of the weight to fall on the bones of the spine and lower extremities than these parts are fitted to carry. From this obnoxious practice, flatness of chest, confined lungs, distorted spine, and deformed legs, often originate.—*Dr. Andrus Combe's Principles of Physiology.*

Vain glory blossoms, but never bears.

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