

MELONS AND THEIR CULTURE.

THE melon belongs to the order *Cucurbitaceæ* of which there are over three hundred species, most of which have long slender vines and tendrils by means of which they climb, but some have neither vines nor tendrils, and are bunchy and bush-like in appearance,

"The melon is an annual with palmately lobed leaves, and bears tendrils. It is monœcious, having male and female flowers on the same plant. The flowers have deeply five-lobed campanulated coroleas and three stamens. Naudin a French botanist observed, that in some varieties (e. g. of Cantaloups) fertile stamens sometimes occur in the female flowers."

It is a native of the South of Asia. It is found growing wild from the foot of the Himalayas down South to Cape Comorin, but is now cultivated in the temperate and warm regions of the whole world. It is excessively variable both in diversity of foliage and habit, but much more so in the fruit, which in some varieties is no larger than an olive, while in others it rivals the ponderous fruits of the gourd (*Cucurbita Maxima*). The fruit may be globular, ovoid, spindle-shaped, or serpent-like, netted or smooth skinned, ribbed or furrowed, various coloured externally, with white, green, or orange flesh when ripe, scented or scentless, sweet or insipid, bitter or even nauseous. Hence it is said to be "a most polymorphic species." It embraces all the numerous varieties of pumpkin, squash, vegetable marrow, gourds and melons.

Cucurbitaceæ embraces many varieties which are used in medicine; and chief among these is the *Colocynth*

gourd, about the size of an orange, or as it is sometimes called, bitter apple, or bitter cucumber. The *Colocynth* of commerce is made from the dried pulp of that gourd, which is grown in Asia, Africa and Spain—the latter place supplying the largest quantity to the trade.

The species, Melon, of which we would speak is not a disagreeable medicine, but a delightful fruit, which is used in large quantities in nearly all warm countries, and grown as an expensive luxury by artificial means in the colder portions of our earth.

As already stated it came originally from Asia. It is supposed to have been brought from there to Rome in the 16th century. The origin of some of the chief modern races, such as the Cantaloup, etc., and probably the netted sorts is due to Persia and the neighboring Caucasian regions. It is supposed to have been brought to America by Columbus—so it should have become pretty well naturalized during these four hundred years. The date of its cultivation goes away back almost to pre historic times. It was one of the good things of Egypt for which the Israelites mourned in the wilderness. About 3400 years ago they said:—"We remember the cucumbers and the melons."

The melons raised in this country are chiefly of two kinds musk and Water melons with many sub-varieties of these. Probably the latter is more largely grown, because of its good keeping and shipping qualities; and certainly it is cooling and refreshing during the warm weather.

But we shall chiefly treat of the cultivation of the Musk melon as it is by far the finer of the two and perhaps