



THE PEARLY ALOE.



Fig. 1.—LEAF OF THE VICTORIA REGIA.



Fig. 2.—THE VICTORIA REGIA.

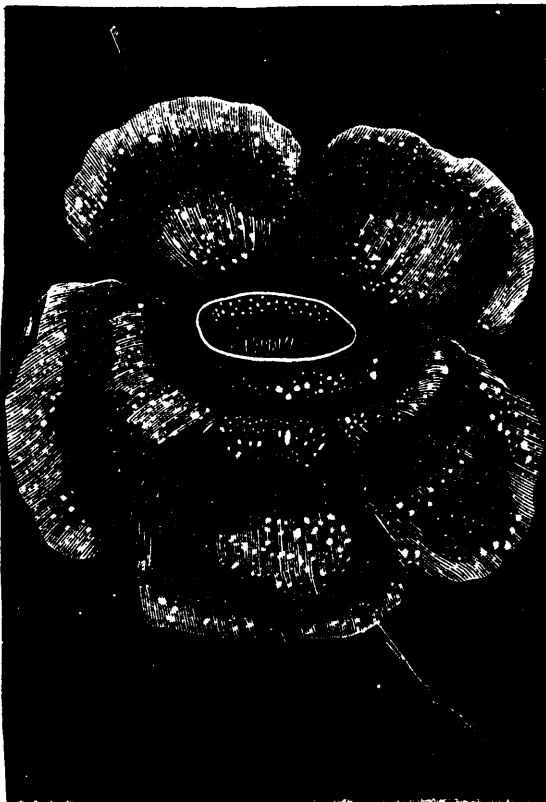
THE LARGEST FLOWER IN THE WORLD.

(See page 186.)

The wonderful flower represented in our engraving is that of the *Rafflesia Arnoldi*, a plant discovered by Dr. Arnold in the Island of Sumatra some sixty years ago. The various species now known are all parasitic, not, however, to the branches of other plants, but to the roots. Entirely destitute of leaves and green in color, these singular vegetables are provided with scales or bracts which conceal and envelope the flower previous to opening. A swelling beneath the bark of some huge surface-appearing root of a large tree announces the coming of a flower. Soon the bark splits, and the bud, resembling the head of a young cabbage, bursts, showing five great lobes which open and roll back slightly on the edges. Then a circular ring appears surrounding a deep cup, in the center of which is the ovary. Below the edges is a kind of gallery wherein are numerous stamens in which is located the pollen, the fecundating action of which it is impossible to comprehend unless it be assumed that insects intervene for its transportation.

The remarkable feature of the flower is its colossal size, the largest species, here represented, being 39 inches in diameter. The central cup holds six quarts of liquid, and the total weight of the flower is over 15 lbs.

The *Rafflesia patina* of Java is somewhat smaller in size. The brick red color of the perianthus, as well as the lighter spots which it is sprinkled, give to the flower a curious flesh like appearance. The cup and the central plateau carrying the stamens are of a dark red, while the odor of the plant is almost meat-like. In Java, the natives regard the flower as sacred, and the priests prepare from the tannin which it contains an astringent mixture useful in cases of hæmorrhage.



THE RAFFLESIA.