

rated of a Malay sailor having been crushed to death by a python on the coast of Celebes. His comrades, hearing his shrieks, went to his assistance, but only in time to save the corpse from its living grave. They, however, killed the serpent. It had seized the poor man by the wrist, where the marks of the teeth were very distinct, and the body showed evident signs of having been crushed by coils round the head, neck, breast, and thigh. The length of the monster was "about thirty feet, and its thickness that of a moderate-sized man."

Mr. M'Leod, in the *Voyage of H. M. S. Alceste*, has minutely described the feeding of a python from Borneo, which was sixteen feet long, and observes that, at Whydah, in Africa, he had seen serpents "more than double the size" of this specimen; but it does not seem that they were measured.

The *Penang Gazette* of a late date says—"A monster boa-constrictor (python) was killed one morning this week by the overseer of convicts at Bayam Lepas, on the road to Telo' Kumbar. His attention was attracted by the squealing of a pig, and on going to the place he found it in the coils of the snake. A few blows from the chankolk of the convicts served to despatch the reptile, and, on uncoiling him, he was found to be twenty-eight feet in length, and thirty-two inches in girth. This is one of the largest specimens we have heard of in Penang."

Dr. Andrew Smith, in his *Zoology of South Africa*, records having seen a specimen of *Python Natalensis*, which was twenty-five feet long, though a portion of the tail was wanting. This is the largest specimen I know of, actually measured in the flesh by a perfectly reliable authority; and even here the amount to be added to the twenty-five feet can only be conjectured.

It may be interesting to compare these statements by setting them in a tabular form, indicating each specimen by some name that shall serve to identify it, and adding a note of the degree of credit due to each.

	feet	
Regulus.....	120	probably stretched.
Suetonius.....	75	ibid.
Diodoras.....	45	ibid.
Daniell.....	62	not reliable.
Ellis.....	50	conjectural.
Guiana.....	40	anonymous.
Bontius.....	36	reliable.
Bingley.....	36	perhaps stretched.
Shaw.....	35	ibid.
M'Leod.....	32	conjectural.
Celebes.....	30	vague.
Penang.....	28	perhaps reliable.
Smith.....	25	certainly correct.

Turning from the animal to the vegetable world, we find giants and colossi there which excite our wonder. There is a sea-weed, the *Nereocystis*, which grows on the north-west shores of America, which has a stem no thicker than whipcord, but upwards of three hundred feet in length, bearing at its free extremity a huge hollow bladder, shaped like a barrel, six or seven feet long, and crowned with a tuft of more than fifty forked leaves, each from thirty to forty feet in length. The vesicle, being filled with air, buoys up this immense frond, which lies stretched along the surface of the sea: here the sea-otter has his favourite lair, resting himself upon the vesicle, or hiding among the leaves, while he pursues his fishing. The cord-like stem which anchors this floating tree must be of considerable strength; and, accordingly, we find it used as a fishing-line by the natives of the coast. But great as is the length of this sea-weed, it is exceeded by the *Macrocystis*, though the leaves and air-vessels of that plant are of small dimensions. In the *Nereocystis*, the stem is unbranched; in *Macrocystis*, it branches as it approaches the surface, and afterwards divides by repeated forkings, each division bearing a leaf, until there results a floating mass of foliage, some hundreds of square yards in superficial extent. It is said that the stem of this plant is sometimes fifteen hundred feet in length.

Mr. Darwin, speaking of this colossal alga at the southern extremity of America, where it grows up from a depth of forty-five fathoms to the surface, at a very oblique angle, says, that its beds, even when of no great breadth, make excellent natural floating breakwaters. It is quite curious to mark how soon the great waves from the ocean, in passing through the straggling stems into an exposed harbour, sink in elevation, and become smooth.

Such an enormous length is not without parallel in terrestrial plants. Familiar to every one,—from the schoolboy, over whom it hangs in terror, upward,—as is the common cane, with its slenderness, its flexibility, and its shiny, polished surface,—how few are aware that it is only a small part of the stem of a palm-tree, which, in its native forest, reached a length of five hundred feet! These rattans form a tribe of plants growing in the dense jungles of continental and insular India, which, though they resemble grasses or reeds in their appear-

ance, are true trees of the palm kind. They are exceedingly slender, never increasing in thickness, though immensely in length; in the forest they trail along the ground, sending forth leaves at intervals, whose sheathing bases we may easily recognise at what we call joints, climb to the summits of trees, descend to the earth, climb and descend again, till some species attain the astonishing length of twelve hundred feet.

We are accustomed to consider the various species of *Cactus* as potted plants for our green-house shelves and cottage-windows; yet, in our larger conservatories, there are specimens which astonish us by their size. A few years ago there were at the Royal Gardens at Kew, two examples of *Echinocactus*, like water-butts for bulk; one of which weighed upwards of seven hundred pounds, and the other about two thousand pounds.

The species of *Cereus* which with us appear as green, succulent, angular stems, and bear their elegant, scarlet blossoms, adorned with a bundle of white stamens, grow, in the arid plains of South America, to thick lofty pillars or massive branching candelabra. Travellers in Cumana have spoken with enthusiasm of the grandeur of these rows of columns, when the red glow of sunset illumines them, and casts their lengthening shadows across the plain.

A kindred species in the Rocky Mountains of the northern continent has been thus described by a recent traveller:—

"This day we saw, for the first time, the giant cactus (*Cereus giganteus*); specimens of which stood at first rather widely apart, like straight pillars ranged along the sides of the valley, but, afterwards, more closely together, and in a different form—namely, that of gigantic candelabra, of six-and-thirty feet high, which had taken root among stones and in clefts of the rocks, and rose in solitary state at various points.

"This *Cereus giganteus*, the queen of the cactus tribe, is known in California and New Mexico under the name of Patahaya. The missionaries who visited the country between the Colorado and the Gila, more than a hundred years ago, speak of the fruit of the Patahaya, and of the natives of the country using it for food; and they also mention a remarkable tree that had branches, but no leaves, though it reached the height of sixty feet, and was of considerable girth. . . . The wildest and most inhospitable regions appear to be the peculiar home of this plant, and its fleshy shoots will strike root, and grow to a surprising size, in chasms in heaps of stones, where the closest examination can scarcely discover a particle of vegetable soil. Its form is various, and mostly dependent on its age; the first shape it assumes is that of an immense club standing upright in the ground, and of double the circumference of the lower part at the top. This form is very striking, while the plant is still only from two to six feet high, but, as it grows taller, the thickness becomes more equal, and when it attains the height of twenty-five feet, it looks like a regular pillar; after this it begins to throw out its branches. These come out at first in a globular shape, but turn upward as they elongate, and then grow parallel to the trunk, and at a certain distance from it, so that a cactus with many branches looks exactly like an immense candelabrum, especially as the branches are mostly symmetrically arranged round the trunk, of which the diameter is not usually more than a foot and a half, or, in some rare instances, a foot more. They vary much in height; the highest we ever saw, at Williams' Fork, measured from thirty-six to forty feet; but, south of the Gila, they are said to reach sixty; and when you see them rising from the extreme point of a rock, where a surface of a few inches square forms their sole support, you cannot help wondering that the first storm does not tear them from their airy elevation. . . .

"If the smaller specimens of the *Cereus giganteus* that we had seen in the morning excited our astonishment, the feeling was greatly augmented, when, on our further journey, we beheld this stately plant in all its magnificence. The absence of every other vegetation enabled us to distinguish these cactus-columns from a great distance, as they stood symmetrically arranged on the heights and declivities of the mountains, to which they imparted a most peculiar aspect, though certainly not a beautiful one. Wonderful as each plant is, when regarded singly, as a grand specimen of vegetable life, these solemn, silent forms, which stand motionless, even in a hurricane, give a somewhat dreary character to the landscape. Some look like petrified giants, stretching out their arms in speechless pain, and others stand like lonely sentinels, keeping their dreary watch on the edge of precipices, and gazing into the abyss, or over into the pleasant valley of the Williams' Fork, at the flocks of birds that do not venture to rest on the thorny arms of the Patahaya; though the wasp and the gaily variegated woodpecker may be seen taking up their abode in the old wounds and scars of sickly or damaged specimens of this singular plant."

In the island of Teneriffe there still exists a tree which is an object of scientific curiosity to every visitor, the Dragon-tree of Orotava. It