



BEGONIA SOCOTRANA.

Native of the Island of Socotra.

Nat. Ord. BEGONIACEÆ.

Genus BEGONIA, Linn.; (*Benth. et Hook. f. Gen. Pl. vol. i. p. 841.*)

BEGONIA socotrana; sparse patentim hirsuta, erecta, foliis peltatis orbicularibus disco intruso infundibulariformi marginibus recurvis crenatis, floribus monoicis roseis masculis numerosis, perianthii segmentis 4 obovatis, staminibus in globum confertis, filamentis brevibus liberis, antheris clavatis recurvis apice rotundata postice dehiscentibus, floribus fœmineis solitariis, perianthii segmentis 6 elliptico-obovatis, stylis brevibus ramis patenti incurvis non tortis, stigmatibus cordatis linea papillosa conjunctis, ovario 3-gono 3-loculari, loculo dorsali alato, placentis integris.

B. socotrana, *Hook. f. in Gard. Chron.* 1881, p. 8, *cum ic. xylog.*

A beautiful species, of which tubers were brought by Dr. I. B. Balfour from the dry and hot island of Socotra, in the Indian Ocean, off the coast of Arabia, one of the last places in the world in which a *Begonia* could have been expected to occur. From the geographical position of that island the affinity of this discovery may be conjectured to be either Asiatic or African, and, upon the whole, though referable to none of the sixty sections of the genus, founded by Klotzsch and A. de Candolle, it must, I think, be placed in the African one of *Augustia*, from the characters of which it differs chiefly in the male perianth having four segments, in the shorter filaments, rounded top of the anther, in the six lobes of the female perianth (instead of five), and the untwisted arms of the style—characters all of which, except the last, occur in the Natal *B. geranioides*, Hook f. (*Bot. Mag. Tab. 5583*), to which *B. socotrana* is unquestionably closely allied. This is only one of the many most interesting plants brought by Dr. I. B. Balfour from an island which he alone has had the good fortune to explore, and the publication of the results of which explora-

tion are awaited with impatience by botanists no less than horticulturists.

The Royal Gardens are indebted to Dr. Balfour for tubers, which he liberally presented to that institution in April, and which flowered in December, a season when such a plant is doubly welcome to the cultivator, as the similar *Begonias* of the Andes, which make so magnificent a show in the conservatory during the summer and autumn months, are then all long past flowering. It is easily propagated by its tubers, and as the Kew plants continued in flower for two months in a warm conservatory, it will, doubtless, prove a great favourite.

DESCR. Erect, stout and succulent, sparingly branched, six to ten inches high, sparsely hairy all over the stem and leaves. *Leaves* orbicular, peltate, four to seven inches in diameter, centre with a funnel-shaped depression, margin recurved and crenate. *Flowers* monœcious, bright rose-pink, one female and several males on the same inflorescence. *Male flower* four inches in diameter; perianth-segments four, obovate. *Stamens* in a small globose head, filaments very short; anthers clavate, recurved, tip rounded. *Female flower* rather smaller than the male; perianth-segments six, oblong, obtuse. *Styles* very short, stigmas horse-shoe shaped, arms not twisted, united by a pappillose belt. *Ovary* three-angled, one angle winged; placentas entire.—*J. D. H.*

Fig. 1, ovary; 2, the same cut open transversely:—both enlarged.