‘ week his malady seemed alleviated ; in the
 ‘ second it was considerably diminished ; and,
 ‘ in the third, so entirely removed, that the pa-
 ‘ tient went into the bath of health, as a token
 ‘ that he no longer needed a physician.’

XVI. *On the Spikenard of the Ancients.* By Sir William Jones, Knt. *Vide Asiatic Researches : or, Transactions of the Society instituted in Bengal, for inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences, and Literature of Asia.* Volume II. 4to. Calcutta, 1790.

THE Indian Spikenard has long been a subject of uncertainty. All agree that it is an odoriferous plant, the best sort of which, according to Ptolemy, grew about Rangamritica, and on the borders of the country now called Butan. It is mentioned by Dioscorides ; but his description of it is very imperfect, and even Linnæus was not enabled to class it with certainty, though he supposed it to be a species of *Andropogon*. A similar opinion, as we have seen, has lately been adopted by Dr. Biane, in an ingenious essay on this subject* ;

* See vol. i, p. 153.

but

but Kœnig, a disciple of Linnæus, who died in India, assured the learned author of the paper now before us, that he knew not what the Greek writers meant by the Spikenard of India. Since the death of Kœnig he has consulted, he tells us, every botanist and physician, with whom he has been acquainted, on this subject; but all have confessed, without reserve, though not without some regret, that they were ignorant what was meant by the Indian Spikenard.

In order to procure information from the learned natives, it was necessary to know the name of the plant in some Asiatic language. The very word *Nard*, the author observes, occurs in the Song of Solomon, but the name and the thing were both exotic. The Hebrew lexicographers imagine both to be Indian, but the word, he tells us, is in truth Persian, and he has found it in a distich of an old poet, where it is not easy to determine whether *Nard* means the *stem* or the *pith*; but it is manifestly a part of a vegetable, and neither the *root*, the *fruit*, nor the *branch*, which are all separately named. Whatever it signified in old Persian, the Arabic *Sumbul*, which means an *ear* or *spike*, has long been substituted for it; and there can be no

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doubt,

doubt, he thinks, that by the *Sumbul* of *India*, the Muselmáns understand the same plant with the *Nard* of Ptolemy, and the *Nardostachys*, or Spikenard, of Galen, who was deceived by the dry specimens he had seen, and mistook them for roots.

A singular description of the *Sumbul*, by Abu'lfazl, who frequently mentions it as an ingredient in Indian perfumes, had for some time almost convinced our author that the true Spikenard was the *Cétaca*, or *Pandanus*. His words are, *Sumbul panj berg dâred, celâ dirâzii ân dab angoshtestu pahnâi seh*, or, “ The Sumbul has five leaves, ten fingers long, and three broad.” Our author was aware that the writer in question, not being a botanist, might easily have mistaken a thyrsus for a single flower. He had seen no blossom, or assemblage of blossoms, of such dimensions, except the male *Cétaca*; but what most confirmed his opinion, was the exquisite fragrance of the *Cétaca*-flower, which to his sense far surpassed the richest perfumes of Europe or Asia. Scarce a doubt remained, when he met with a description of the *Cétaca* by Forskohl, whose words are so perfectly applicable to the general idea,

idea, which we are apt to form of Spikenard, that he has thought it right to give us a literal translation of them: “ The *Pandanus* is an incomparable plant, and cultivated for its odour, which it breathes so richly, that one or two *spikes*, in a situation rather humid, would be sufficient to diffuse an odoriferous air for a long time through a spacious apartment; so that the natives in general are not solicitous about the living plants, but *purchase the spikes at a great price.*” Our author learned also that a fragrant essential oil was extracted from the flowers; and he procured from Banáres a large phial of it, which was adulterated with sandal; but the very adulteration convinced him, that the genuine essence must be valuable, from the great number of thyrsi that must be required in preparing a small quantity of it. Thus had he nearly persuaded himself that the true Nard was to be found on the banks of the Ganges, where the Hindoo women roll up its flowers in their hair after bathing; and he imagined, that the precious alabaster box mentioned in the scripture, and the small onyx, in exchange for which the poet offers to entertain his friend with a cask of old wine, contained an essence of the same kind

with the Nard he had procured ; but an Arab of Mecca, who saw in his study some flowers of the *Cétaca*, informed him that the plant was extremely common in Arabia, where it was named *Cádhi* ; and several Mahomedans of rank and learning have since assured him, that the true name of the India *Sumbul*, was not *Cétaca*, but *Jatámánsi*.

Our author now abandoned his first opinion, and began to enquire eagerly for the *Jatámánsi*. A fresh plant was soon brought to him, and appeared, on inspection, to be a *cyperus*, the root of which had a pungent taste, with a faint aromatic odour ; but no part of it bore the least resemblance to the drug known in Europe by the name of Spikenard ; and a Muselmán physician from Dehli assured him the plant was not *Jatámánsi*, but *Súd*, as it is named in Arabic, which the author of the *Tohfatu'l Múmenín* particularly distinguishes from the Indian *Sumbul* :
 “ *Súd*, says that writer, has a roundish olive-
 “ shaped root, externally black, but white in-
 “ ternally, and so fragrant as to have obtained
 “ in Persia the name of *subterranean musk* : its
 “ leaf has some resemblance to that of a leek,
 “ but is longer and narrower, strong, some-
 what

“ what rough at the edges, and tapering to a
 “ point. 2. *Sumbul* means a *spike* or *ear*, and
 “ was called *Nard* by the Greeks. There are
 “ three sorts of *Sumbul*, or *Nardin*; but when
 “ the word stands alone it means the *Sumbul* of
 “ India, which is an herb *without flower* or
 “ *fruit*, (he speaks of the drug only) like the
 “ tail of an ermine, or of a small weasel, but
 “ not quite so thick, and about the length of a
 “ finger. It is darkish, inclining to yellow, and
 “ very fragrant. It is brought from *Hindustan*,
 “ and its medicinal virtue lasts three years.”

A specimen of the dry *jatámánfi* was pro-
 cured, and found to correspond exactly with the
 above description of the *Sumbul*; and our au-
 thor farther learned, that the merchants brought
 this drug from the mountainous country to the
 North East of Bengal; that it was the entire
 plant, not a part of it, and received its Sanscrit
 names from its resemblance to *locks of hair*; as
 it is called *Spikenard*, he supposes, from its
 resemblance to a spike, when it is dried, and
 not from the configuration of its flowers. The
 Persian author describes the whole plant as re-
 sembling the tail of an ermine; and the *Jatá-
 mánfi*, which is manifestly the *Spikenard* of our
 druggists, has, it seems, precisely that form,
 con-

consisting of withered stalks and ribs of leaves, adhering in a bundle of yellowish brown capillary fibres, and constituting a spike about the size of a small finger. We may, on the whole, we are told, be assured, that the *Nardus* of Ptolemy, the *Indian Sumbul* of the Persians and Arabs, the *Jatámánsi* of the Hindus, and the Spike-nard of our shops, are one and the same plant.

Hitherto the *Jatámánsi* has not been found growing in any part of the British territories in India. Mr. Saunders, who met with it in Buthan, where, as he was informed, it is very common, and whence it is brought in a dry state to Rangpur, supposed it to be a species of the *Baccharis*; but our author has reason to think that the plant which Mr. Saunders saw was not the *Jatámánsi*, and having traced the Indian Spikenard, by this name, to the mountains of Népál, he requested his friend Mr. Law, who then resided at Gayá, to procure some of the recent plants by the means of the Nepalese pilgrims. Many young plants were accordingly sent to Gayá, where they have blossomed. From one of these plants a drawing (for an engraving of which we must refer our readers to the work itself,) was made by Mr. Burt, a gentleman in whose accuracy our author expresses the most

most perfect confidence, and by whose account he has been enabled to give a botanical description of the plant. But before he proceeds to this description, he endeavours to remove a prejudice, in regard to the *natural order* of the Spikenard; which they, he observes, who are addicted to swear by every word of their master Linnæus, will hardly abandon, and which he himself, he confesses, has abandoned with some difficulty. *Nard* has been generally supposed to be a *grass*; and the word *stachys*, or *spike*, which agrees with the habit of that natural order, gave rise, perhaps, to the supposition. There is a plant in Java, it seems, which most travellers and some physicians call *Spikenard*; and our author has been informed by the governor of Chinsura, that a Dutch author pronounces it a *grass like the cyperus*, but insists that what is called the *spike* is the fibrous part above the root, as long as a man's little finger, of a brownish hue inclining to red or yellow, rather fragrant, and with a pungent, but aromatic, scent. From this account of it our author would have supposed, he tells us, the plant in question to be the *Jatámansi*, if a well-informed man, who had seen it in the island, had not assured him that it is a sort of pimento, and consequently a species.

species of myrtle. The resemblance already mentioned between the Indian *Sumbul*, and the Arabian *Sud* or *Cyperus*, has led him to suspect that the true Nard was a *grass* or a *reed*; and, as Bengal abounds in odoriferous grasses, he began to collect them from different quarters. From Colonel Kyd he received two plants with sweet smelling roots; and, as they were known to the Pandits, he soon found their names in a Sanscrit dictionary: one of them is called *gandhâsât'hi*, and is used by the Hindus to scent the red powder of *Sapan* or *Bakkam* wood, which they scatter in the festival of the vernal season. The other has many names, and among them *Nagaramastac* and *gônarda*, the second of which means *rustling in the water*; for all the Pandits, it seems, insist, that *Nard* is never used as a noun in Sanscrit, and signifies, as the root of a verb, *to sound*, or *to rustle*. Soon after, Mr. Burrow brought him, from the banks of the Ganges, near Heridwâr, a very fragrant grass, which in some places covers whole acres, and diffuses, when crushed, so strong an odour, that a person, he says, might easily have smelt it, as Alexander is reported to have smelt the Nard of Gedrosia, from the back of an elephant. From Mr. Blane, of *Lucnow*,
he

he received a fresh specimen of the same plant. This is the species of *Andropogon* which Dr. Blane, as we have seen *, supposed to be the true *Nardus Indica* of the ancients. Lastly, Dr. Anderson, of Madras, favoured our author with a complete specimen of the *Andropogon Nardus*, one of the most common grasses on the coast, and flourishing most luxuriantly on the mountains, never eaten by cattle, but extremely grateful to bees, and containing an essential oil, which is extracted from it in many parts of Hindustan, and used as an *atar*, or perfume. He added, we are told, a very curious philological remark, that, in the *Tamul* dictionary, most words beginning with *nâr* have some relation to fragrance, so that not only the *Nard* of the Hebrews and Greeks, but even the *copia narium* of Horace, may be derived from an Indian root. On this point, however, the learned author has thought it right to observe that he has not met with any such root in Sanscrit, the oldest polished language of India, and that in Persian, which has a manifest affinity with it, *nâr* means a pomegranate, and *nârgil* a cocoa-nut, neither of which has any remarkable fragrance.

* Vol. i, p. 158.

None of these grasses bear any resemblance to the *Jatamansi*, which, our author conceives, to be the true *Nardus* of the ancients. He is not, indeed, of opinion that the *Nardum* of the Romans was merely the essential oil of the plant, from which it was denominated; but he is strongly inclined, he tells us, to believe, that it was a generick word, meaning what we now call *âtar*, and either the *âtar* of roses from Cashmir and Persia, that of Cétaca or Pandanus, from the western coast of India, or that of Aguru, or aloe-wood, from Asam, or Cochinchina, the process of obtaining which is described by Abu'lfazl, or the mixed perfume, called *âbir*, of which the principal ingredients were yellow sandal, violets, orange flowers, wood of aloes, rose water, musk, and true spikenard: all those essences and compositions, he observes, were costly; and most of them being sold by the Indians to the Persians and Arabs, from whom, in the time of Octavius, they were received by the Syrians and Romans, they must have been extremely dear at Jerusalem, and at Rome. There might also have been a pure *nardine oil*, as Athenæus calls it, but *Nardum*, our author thinks, probably meant (and Kœnig, he adds, was of the same opinion)

opinion) an Indian essence in general, taking its name from that ingredient, which had, or was commonly thought to have, the most exquisite scent.

After these preliminary observations the author gives the following natural characters of the Jatamanli.

AGGREGATE.

Cal. Scarce any : *margin*, hardly discernible.

Cor. One petal. *Tube* somewhat gibbous. *Border* five cleft.

Stem. Three *anthers*.

Pist. *Germ* beneath. One *style* erect.

Seed solitary, crowned with a pappus.

Root fibrous.

Leaves hearted, fourfold; *radical* leaves petioled.

It appears therefore, our author observes, to be a species of valerian, which, in the language of Linnæus he would describe, "VALERIANA JATA'MA'NSI *floribus triandris*, "*foliis cordatis quaternis radicalibus petiolatis*."

The radical leaves, rising from the ground, and infolding the young stem, are plucked up,
we

we are told, with a part of the root, and being dried in the sun, or by an artificial heat, are sold as a drug, which from its appearance has been called *spikenard*; though, as the Persian writer, already quoted, observes, it might be compared more properly to the *tail of an ermine*; when nothing remains but the dry fibres of the leaves, which retain their original form, they are said to have some resemblance to a *lock of hair*, from which the Sanscrit name, as we have seen, is derived.

Two mercantile agents from Butan, on the part of the Dvraj, or Sovereign, were examined at our author's request by Mr. Harington, and informed him that the drug which the Bengalese call *jatamanfi*, " grows erect above
 " the surface of the ground, resembling in colour an ear of green wheat; that, when recent, it has a faint odour, which is greatly
 " increased by the simple process of drying it;
 " that it abounds on the hills, and even on
 " the plains, of Butan, where it is collected and
 " prepared for medicinal purposes." From Mr. Purling, who made inquiries for it among the merchants of Butan, our author had before learned that the living plant could not be obtained without an order from the Dvraj.