

XVII. *On the Reproduction of Buds.* By Thomas Andrew Knight,
Esq. F.R.S. In a Letter to the Right Hon. Sir Joseph Banks,
K. B. P. R. S.

Read May 23, 1805.

MY DEAR SIR,

EVERY tree in the ordinary course of its growth generates, in each season, those buds which expand in the succeeding spring; and the buds thus generated, contain, in many instances, the whole of the leaves which appear in the following summer. But if these buds be destroyed during the winter or early part of the spring, other buds, in many species of trees, are generated, which in every respect perform the office of those which previously existed, except that they never afford fruit or blossoms. This reproduction of buds has not escaped the notice of naturalists; but it does not appear to have been ascertained by them from which, amongst the various substances of the tree, the buds derive their origin.

DU HAMEL conceived that reproduced buds sprang from pre-organized germs; but the existence of such germs has not, in any instance, been proved, and it is well known that the roots, and trunk, and branches, of many species of trees will, under proper management, afford buds from every part of their surfaces; and therefore, if this hypothesis be well founded, many millions of such germs must be annually generated in every large tree; not one of which in the ordinary course of

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nature will come into action : and as nature, amidst all its exuberance, does not abound in useless productions, the opinions of this illustrious physiologist are, in this case, probably erroneous.

Other naturalists have supposed the buds, when reproduced, to spring from the plexus of vessels which constitutes the internal bark ; and this opinion is, I believe, much entertained by modern botanists : it nevertheless appears to be unfounded, as the facts I shall proceed to state will evince.

If the fruit-stalks of the sea cale (*crambe maritima*) be cut off near the ground in the spring, the medullary substance, within that part of the stalk which remains attached to the root, decays ; and a cup is thus formed in which water collects in the succeeding winter. The sides of this cup consist of a woody substance, which in its texture and office, and mode of generation, agrees perfectly with the alburnum of trees ; and I conceive it to be as perfect alburnum, as the white wood of the oak or elm : and from the interior part of this substance, within the cup, I have frequently observed new buds to be generated in the ensuing spring. It is sufficiently obvious that the buds in this case do not spring from the bark ; but it is not equally evident that they might not have sprung from some remains of the medulla.

In the autumn of 1802, I discovered that the potatoe possessed a similar power of reproducing its buds. Some plants of this species had been set, rather late in the preceding spring, in very dry ground, where through want of moisture they vegetated very feebly ; and the portions of the old roots remained sound and entire till the succeeding autumn. Being then moistened by rain, many small tubers were generated on

the surfaces made by the knife in dividing the roots into cuttings; and the buds of these, in many instances, elongated into runners which gave existence to other tubers, some of which I had the pleasure to send to you.

I have in a former Paper remarked, that the potatoe consists of four distinct substances, the epidermis, the true skin, the bark, and its internal substance, which from its mode of formation, and subsequent office, I have supposed to be alburnous: there is also in the young tubes a transparent line through the center, which is probably its medulla. The buds and runners sprang from the substance which I conceive to be the alburnum of the root, and neither from the central part of it, nor from the surface in contact with the bark. It must, however, be admitted, that the internal substance of the potatoe corresponds more nearly with our ideas of a medullary than of an alburnous substance, and therefore this, with the preceding facts, is adduced to prove only that the reproduced buds of these plants are not generated by the cortical substance of the root: and I shall proceed to relate some experiments on the apple, and pear, and plumb-tree, which I conceive to prove that the reproduced buds of those plants do not spring from the medulla.

Having raised from seeds a very considerable number of plants of each of these species in 1802, I partly disengaged them from the soil in the autumn, by digging round each plant, which was then raised about two inches above its former level. A part of the mould was then removed, and the plants were cut off about an inch below the points where the seed-leaves formerly grew; and a portion of the root, about an inch long, without any bud upon it, remained exposed to the air

and light. In the beginning of April, I observed many small elevated points on the bark of these roots, and, removing the whole of the cortical substance, I found that the elevations were occasioned by small protuberances on the surface of the alburnum. As the spring advanced, many minute red points appeared to perforate the bark: these soon assumed the character of buds, and produced shoots, in every respect similar to those which would have sprung from the organized buds of the preceding year. Whether the buds thus reproduced derived any portion of their component parts from the bark or not, I shall not venture to decide; but I am much disposed to believe that, like those of the potatoe, they sprang from the alburnous substance solely.

The space, however, in the annual root, between the medulla and the bark is very small; and therefore it may be contended that the buds in these instances may have originated from the medulla. I therefore thought it necessary to repeat similar experiments on the roots and trunks of old trees, and by these the buds were reproduced precisely in the same manner as the annual roots: and therefore, conceiving myself to have proved in a former Memoir,* that the substance which has been called the medullary process does not originate from the medulla, I must conclude that reproduced buds do not spring from that substance.

I have remarked in a Paper, which you did me the honour to lay before the Royal Society in the commencement of the present year, that the alburnous tubes at their termination upwards invariably join the central vessels, and that these vessels, which appear to derive their origin from the alburnous tubes, convey nutriment, and probably give existence to new

* Phil. Trans. of 1803.

buds and leaves. It is also evident, from the facility with which the rising sap is transferred from one side of a wounded tree to the other, that the alburnous tubes possess lateral, as well as terminal, orifices: and it does not appear improbable that the lateral as well as the terminal orifices of the alburnous tubes may possess the power to generate central vessels; which vessels evidently feed, if they do not give existence to, the reproduced buds and leaves. And therefore, as the preceding experiments appear to prove that the buds neither spring from the medulla nor the bark, I am much inclined to believe that they are generated by central vessels which spring from the lateral orifices of the alburnous tubes. The practicability of propagating some plants from their leaves may seem to stand in opposition to this hypothesis; but the central vessel is always a component part of the leaf, and from it the bud and young plant probably originate.

I expected to discover in seeds a similar power to regenerate their buds; for the cotyledons of these, though dissimilar in organization, execute the office of the alburnum, and contain a similar reservoir of nutriment, and at once supply the place of the alburnum and the leaf. But no experiments, which I have yet been able to make, have been decisive, owing to the difficulty of ascertaining the number of buds previously existing within the seed. Few, if any, seeds, I have reason to believe, contain less than three buds, one only of which, except in cases of accident, germinates; and some seeds appear to contain a much greater number. The seed of the peach appears to be provided with ten or twelve leaves, each of which probably covers the rudiment of a bud, and the seeds, like the buds of the horse-chesnut, contain all the leaves and apparently

all the buds of the succeeding year: and I have never been able to satisfy myself that all the buds were eradicated without having destroyed the base of the plumule, in which the power of reproducing buds probably resides, if such power exists.

Nature appears to have denied to annual and biennial plants (at least to those which have been the subjects of my experiments) the power which it has given to perennial plants to reproduce their buds; but nevertheless some biennials possess, under peculiar circumstances, a very singular resource, when all their buds have been destroyed. A turnip, bred between the English and Swedish variety, from which I had cut off the greater part of its fruit-stalks, and of which all the buds had been destroyed, remained some weeks in an apparently dormant state; after which the first seed in each pod germinated, and bursting the seed-vessel, seemed to execute the office of a bud and leaves to the parent plant, during the short remaining term of its existence, when its preternatural foliage perished with it. Whether this property be possessed by other biennial plants in common with the turnip or not, I am not at present in possession of facts to decide, not having made precisely the same experiment on any other plant.

I will take this opportunity to correct an inference that I have drawn in a former Paper,* which the facts (though quite correctly stated) do not, on subsequent repetition of the experiment, appear to justify. I have stated, that when a perpendicular shoot of the vine was inverted to a depending position, and a portion of its bark between two circular incisions round the stem removed, much more new wood was generated on the lower lip of the wound become uppermost by the

* Phil. Trans of 1803.

inverted position of the branch, than on the opposite lip, which would not have happened had the branch continued to grow erect, and I have inferred that this effect was produced by sap which had descended by gravitation from the leaves above. But the branch was, as I have there stated, employed as a layer, and the matter which would have accumulated on the opposite lip of the wound had been employed in the formation of roots, a circumstance which at that time escaped my attention. The effects of gravitation on the motion of the descending sap, and consequent growth of plants, are, I am well satisfied, from a great variety of experiments, very great; but it will be very difficult to discover any method by which the extent of its operation can be accurately ascertained. For the vessels which convey and impel* the true sap, or fluid from which the new wood appears to be generated, pass immediately from the leaf-stalk towards the root; and though the motion of this fluid may be impeded by gravitation, and it be even again returned into the leaf, no portion of it, unless it had been extravasated, could have descended to the part from which the bark was taken off in the experiment I have described. I am not sensible that in the different Papers which I have had the honour to address to you, I have drawn any other inference which the facts, on repetition of the experiments, do not appear capable of supporting.

I am, &c.

THO^S. ANDREW KNIGHT.

Elton,
May 12, 1805.

* Phil. Trans. of 1804,