

LECTURE

- |     |            |     |  |
|-----|------------|-----|--|
| 1.  | III.       | 28. | Maquis - hillside near Ajaccio.                |
| 2.  | III.       | 31. | Cistus sp.                                     |
| 3.  | II.        | 3.  | Cistus sp.                                     |
| 4.  | III.       | 29. | Genista & Lavandula                            |
| 5.  | III.       | 27. | Genista sp.                                    |
| 6.  | II.        | 19. | Erica arborea.                                 |
| 7.  | II.        | 20. | Asphodelus sp. (nr. Calvi)                     |
| 8.  | I.         | 25. | " " (nr. Porto)                                |
| 9.  | II.        | 8.  | Allium pendulinum (nr. Calvi)                  |
| 10. | III.       | 33. | " W (nr. Ajaccio)                              |
| 11. | I.         | 4.  | Pointe de Parata - maquis-covered hillside     |
| 12. | III.       | 32. | Serapias lingua - pale pink form group         |
| 13. | III.       | 20. | " " - red form                                 |
| 14. | III.       | 24. | " " - " " c.u.                                 |
| 15. | III.       | 25. | " cordigera - group                            |
| 16. | III.       | 26. | " " - c.u.                                     |
| 17. | III.       | 23. | " neglecta                                     |
| 18. | III.       | 22. | " " - c.u.                                     |
| 19. | IV.        | 2.  | " " X cordigera                                |
| 20. | IV.        | 3.  | " " " - c.u.                                   |
| 21. | III.       | 36. | " " " - c.u.                                   |
| 22. | III.       | 25. | Pointe de Parata - coastline - Romulea habitat |
| 23. | III.       | 34. | Senecio leucanthemifolius ?                    |
| 24. | IV.        | 10. | Tour de Parata                                 |
| 25. | IV.        | 12. | Iles Sanguinaires                              |
| 26. | IV.        | 11. | Narcissus tazetta                              |
| 27. | IV.        | 9.  | Silene sp.                                     |
| 28. | IV.        | 13. | Pointe de Parata - Matthiola habitat           |
| 29. | IV.        | 4.  | Matthiola tricuspidata                         |
| 30. | IV.        | 6.  | " " "  |
| 31. | IV.        | 7.  | " " "  |
| 32. | II.        | 2.  | Porto - Hotel du Pont                          |
| 33. | I.         | 21. | Capo d'Orte - Cytisus in foreground.           |
| 34. | I.         | 16. | Valley below Capo d'Orte                       |
| 35. | I.         | 7.  | Cyclamen repandum                              |
| 36. | I.         | 8.  | Aroid  |
| 37. | I.         | 11. | Helleborus argutifolius                        |
| 38. | I.         | 31. | Rosmarinus officinalis form                    |
| 39. | Ektachrome | "   | " " " - c.u.                                   |
| 40. | I.         | 15. | Tour de Porto across river                     |
| 41. | I.         | 13. | Euphorbia wulfenii ?                           |
| 42. | I.         | 19. | Digging Romuleas above Porto                   |
| 43. | I.         | 18. | " Pancratium illyricum                         |
| 44. | I.         | 6.  | Road to Ota                                    |
| 45. | I.         | 22. | Lunch !  |
| 46. | I.         | 24. | Mule   |
| 47. | I.         | 29. | Porto gorge below Ota                          |
| 48. | I.         | 28. | Ota  |

- |     |      |                  |  |
|-----|------|------------------|--|
| 49. | II.  | 28.              | Calvi - the harbour.                     |
| 50. | II.  | 9.               | Romulea requienii                        |
| 51. | II.  | 11.              | Orchis morio                             |
| 52. | II.  | 12.              | " "                                      |
| 53. | II.  | 14.              | Saprophyte                               |
| 54. | II.  | 29.              | Pointe de la Revellata - from east       |
| 55. | II.  | 30.              | " " " "                                  |
| 56. | II.  | 31.              | Erodium corsicum                         |
| 57. | II.  | 15.              | Orchis morio - colony                    |
| 58. | II.  | 16.              | Muscari comosum                          |
| 59. | II.  | 21.              | Labiata                                  |
| 60. | II.  | 22.              | Road to Bonifato valley $\frac{1}{2}$    |
| 61. | II.  | 26.              | Ornithogalum exscapum                    |
| 62. | II.  | 23.              | " "                                      |
| 63. | II.  | 24.              | Digging Ornithogalum                     |
| 64. | II.  | 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ | Sedum coeruleum                          |
| 65. | III. | 15.              | { Corsican interior from Calvi to Bastia |
| 66. | II.  | 34.              |  |
| 67. | III. | 19.              | Monte d'Oro                              |
| 68. | III. | 5.               | Road from Petranera to Accualta          |
| 69. | III. | 3.               | Anemone hortensis                        |
| 70. | III. | 1.               | " " " - c.u.                             |
| 71. | III. | 12.              | Ophrys sphegodes                         |
| 72. | III  | 13.              | Photographing Ophrys                     |
| 73. | III. | 14.              | Coming down to Erbalunga from Cap Corse  |
| 74. | III. | 8.               | Sunset over Bastia                       |

During late March and early April of  
this year, I spent a pleasant, if  
somewhat hectic, three weeks chasing  
around the Mediterranean island of  
Corsica in a search for some of the  
many bulbs and orchids which inhabit  
this wild, rugged, — almost enchanted —  
island. ||

This evening, I should like to  
try to give you some impression of the  
<sup>country</sup> many charms of ~~Corsica~~ <sup>this island</sup> and I hope  
that you will enjoy coming with  
me in search of plants around  
Corsica's northern shores. ||

Most ~~much~~ of this island is  
covered with a dense and matted  
overgrowth of shrubby vegetation  
— the maquis — ~~once~~ whose  
paths once trodden by the ill-famed  
Corsican bandits are now frequented

only by the goats and cattle of the peasants.

~~This one of the houses of the beautiful~~

Sometimes it is <sup>in many places</sup> only knee-high but elsewhere it may overtop a tall-man and all too often it forms an unfriendly - sometimes impenetrable - barrier, for those who wish to journey ~~in~~ through it for the traveller.

The shrubs which form the backbone of vegetation vary with the district and with the altitude but most frequently it was the *Cistus* species which commanded the scene.

~~of them is particular~~ ~~was~~ ~~is~~ ~~much~~ ~~in~~ ~~evidence~~. This one <sup>is</sup> *Cistus monspeliensis* - a tall-growing shrub of anything up to 8 ft. with profuse ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> dark and narrow, sticky leaves and ~~an abundance~~ <sup>numerous</sup> of white flowers, which one forgives for their small size because of their abundance.

The other was ~~probably~~ *C. origia* a much lower-growing plant with ~~much~~ larger flowers — a very fine thing. It had soft almost woolly leaves as opposed to *C.* on the <sup>dark</sup> shiny ones of *C. manspessulana*. We also found another taller growing *Distis* with leaves similar to those of *C. corsicus* but with large flowers of crumpled rose-pink satin — a lovely if somewhat <sup>groggery thing</sup> ~~ferese~~ plant, which stubbornly refused to be photographed. Whenever we found it the flowers were either in bad condition or in an inaccessible position. On the one occasion when we <sup>located</sup> ~~found~~ <sup>in a</sup> ~~single~~ photographable <sup>specimen</sup> <sup>bloom</sup> and Janette Stephen, who incidentally took ~~all~~ the transparencies you will see tonight, had all the inevitable paraphernalia set-up and ready for action, action came unexpectedly in the form of a gust of wind which blew every petal off the flowers. For the same reason I was unable to secure

a presentable herbarium specimen and so I cannot supply you with the <sup>definite</sup> name of this <sup>C. villosus</sup> prostrate plant although it was almost certainly

In considering some of the Corsican *Cistus* species, I may as well mention some more of the more obvious members of the island's flora so that you can have a background against which to set the more individualistic species, which we found on our travels. As I said the tangled maquis may be composed of a <sup>variety</sup> ~~varying~~ number of plants and just as the *Cistuses* are often much in evidence, here a golden *Genista* <sup>predominates with an imperial</sup> and the royal purple lavender, *Lavandula stoechas*. The *Genista* was often really laden with flowers and here a heavily gold-encrusted branch ~~as~~ arches ~~before a steady grey sky~~ <sup>into the sky</sup> over Ajaccio's bay. Another typical plant of the Corsican maquis is *Erica arborea*, the tree heath, ~~a plant~~ no doubt well-known to most of you. It is,

However, a plant of the lower altitudes and its place is taken higher up by the dwarfed Corsican Heath, *Erica stricta*, an endemic species. It is a magnificent plant to my mind and I have never ~~had~~ <sup>seen</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>against its</sup> colour of its flowers which tend to appear as a dirty greyish white when viewed from a distance. Its assets for outweigh its liabilities: the plumes of mossy-green foliage and its ~~upward~~ <sup>upward</sup> ~~after~~ <sup>upward</sup> ~~spring~~ <sup>spring</sup> branches are always a delight to me in winter and the ~~secret~~ <sup>of honey</sup> of the massed thousands of tiny blooms is heady and exotic. ~~Concern~~ <sup>the honey</sup> of the Corsican magpie are ~~famous~~ <sup>deservedly famous</sup> and at least one, perhaps the finest, from Callenymagan <sup>near Callor</sup> in the north owes its delicacy of flavour to the plant. I feel <sup>an affection</sup> ~~grateful~~ for *Erica arborea* on yet another count: ~~the~~ a valuable artefact is fashioned from the hard, woody roots of the shrub, called by the French, *bruyère*; the same anglicized gave us the word briar, <sup>the briar</sup> of briar pipes. The type plant is not always

altogether hardy, but I grow <sup>the dwarf</sup> a Spanish  
form *Erica arborea alpina* and have found it  
indestructibly hardy in even the most severe  
East of Scotland winter.



From the shrubs of the <sup>can</sup> margins, we turn to the most common plant of the meadows and open spaces **||** *Asphodelus cerasiferus*. which often grows in a fantastic profusion. Here in a ~~of~~ meadow near Cahin it grows much as one imagines the *Asphodel* <sup>violet</sup> <sup>stone</sup> ~~should~~ grow in the Elysian fields of the Greek heroes. It is an attractive plant with great <sup>stony</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>ground</sup> <sup>and</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>heavy</sup> <sup>clay</sup> <sup>and</sup> <sup>cattle</sup> <sup>droppings</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>pasture</sup> <sup>-</sup> <sup>land</sup> **||** The candelabra ~~of~~ flower-stems reach 5 or 6 ft. in height and the flowers are pale-pink with a brown stripe down the middle of each segment. It would make a fine border-plant but is not always absolutely hardy. I did, however, collect a very similar *Asphodel* <sup>at this summer</sup> at about over 7,000 ft in the H. Atlas mountains of Morocco and this would surely be hardy anywhere in Britain.

**||** The most common Corsican bulb is indisputably *Allium penicillium* the French <sup>herb</sup> = 5 ~~fr~~ <sup>fr</sup> <sup>min</sup>.

call it simply 'ail sauvage' - wild garlic -  
 and it has the typical strong smell of the  
 genus but <sup>this is evident</sup> only when the ~~base~~ plant is  
 crushed so, as gardeners do not make a  
 habit of trampling down their plants, I can  
 see no reason to reject it on this count.

It is <sup>very</sup> closely related to *Allium triquetrum* with  
 and in fact <sup>of the</sup> some botanists of the same  
 the Edinburgh Botanic Garden tell me to  
 include it under this species, <sup>three correspond</sup>  
 but <sup>it cannot bring myself to do so</sup> from the gardeners viewpoint it is  
 quite distinct with far larger flowers and it  
 is reputed to be not in the least rampant  
 in cultivation. In Caxica it often grows  
 in great quantity as here by the sea near Calix  
 sheltered by the giant stems of the bamboo-  
 like *Arundo donax*. It is a plant of the  
 ditches, stream sides and damp hollows  
 and will appreciate some moisture <sup>and a little</sup> in shade  
 cultivation also. It will grow from anything  
 between 3 inches ~~and~~ to over 1 ft in

8.

Height // ~~You can get some idea of the plants  
beauty from this small specimen which I  
brought back from Corsica and which flowered  
last week. The elegantly pointed segments  
are striped centrally with a neat green line  
and the flowers are quite large for an  
Allium)~~

that  
// you have some impression of what  
is most apparent among the Corsican <sup>vegetation</sup> plants,  
I should like to take you with us to have a  
look <sup>at</sup> some of plants that inhabit the  
maquis itself. // We shall start our journey  
at Ajaccio, the islands capital and more  
of a market town than an industrial  
centre. // West of the town a promontory  
projects out into the sea, the Pointe de  
la Parata and this was our collecting area  
and the home of many rare and very beautiful  
species. // It is clothed with the usual  
maquis and it was on this very hillside  
that we found a number of Serapias species

growing in profusion. Serapias are of  
 tuberos rooted terrestrial orchids and in  
 my opinion by far the most beautiful of the  
 orchid family to be found in Europe. Their curious  
 name is derived from that of ~~the~~ <sup>an</sup> ancient  
 Egyptian deity, \_\_\_\_\_, which  
 the ~~ancient~~ <sup>strange</sup> flowers are ~~to~~ said to resemble

This one is the most common species, Serapias  
 lingua, a <sup>very</sup> variable plant. This is not a good  
 form <sup>of a rather mixed pink</sup> but the photograph shows very well how  
 these plants grow among grasses and ~~are~~  
~~associated with water bushes~~. All the plants  
 in this group are identical and it is obvious  
 that ~~they are all~~ <sup>as</sup> everyone is derived  
 vegetatively from ~~the~~ single original ancestor.

— quite a remarkable process, considering the  
 low <sup>increase of</sup> ~~the~~ plant, and the clump must be very old.

Serapias lingua, though not the most  
 spectacular species can be a very lovely  
 plant and ~~this is a~~ <sup>very</sup> good form of it with  
 a deeply coloured lip. <sup>the</sup> flowers can vary

from pure white or buff yellow shading through pinks to a deepish wine colour. I found a little group of all <sup>pure</sup> albino form growing in a solid red clay higher up the hill from this plant but the flowers were small and the tubers <sup>too tiny</sup> ~~small~~ and weak. I feel that this deeply coloured form cannot be bettered.

The lip in *Serapias lingua* is always fairly narrow and pointed and much of the attractiveness is provided by these <sup>veined</sup> coloured leaves, the <sup>bracts</sup> ~~spikes~~ which sheath the flower spike. A more spectacular species is *Serapias cordigera* which has a larger heart-shaped lip like a floppy velvety pocket handkerchief. It is not such a variable plant <sup>as S. lingua</sup> ~~as S. lingua~~ and the lip is always of this deep, pure crimson.

When one finds these breathtaking orchids growing in such profusion in Corsica it is difficult to believe that they are among the world's rare plants. I hardly doubt if

there is any part of the world <sup>where</sup> in which they could be seen growing in such quantities. These are only five species in the genus <sup>restricted to</sup> the Mediterranean Basin and we found the three most decorative on the area West of Ajaccio, the other two *Serapias nemorosae* and *Serapias parviflora* are rather squinky-flowered species and do not merit much attention. Botanically *S. cordigera* is distinguished by the broad heart shaped lip ~~and the~~ and this characteristic, it shares with the only species which I have not mentioned so far, *S. neglecta*. This is the rarest of the genus, and I did not expect to see this species during our stay.

However, I was ~~down~~ searching about in the among the low *Cistus* bushes for good colour forms of *Serapias lingua*, while Janette was busy photographing these plants. When I suddenly noticed something different resting low in the

grass! Closer inspection revealed this most  
 exquisite orchid. It was undoubtedly *Serapias*  
*neglecta*. This party is restricted to a very few  
 stations in the South of Italy, the south of  
 France and the Ionian islands but is becoming  
 increasingly ~~rare~~ <sup>insrequent in its occurrence</sup> on the mainland. A diligent  
 search revealed one other <sup>specimen</sup> plant, so I did not feel  
 too guilty about collecting this one and I am  
~~now~~ glad to say the new tuber is now poking  
 up a tentative new shoot with me at home. It  
 is quite distinct from all the other *Serapias* in  
 the huge flowers and their colour, which is usually  
 a little more suffused with brick-red on the lip.  
 After finding *Serapias neglecta*, I thought that the  
 genus had no more excitements in store for me.  
 How wrong I was! The following day, we  
 collected again on the Pointe de Parata but  
 further west this time. I intensely dislike having  
 to walk along roads while out collecting so on  
 noticing a narrow grassy path branching off <sup>obliquely</sup>

we made our way along it.

obviously

the main road, It had not been used for many years and swung round <sup>through the maples</sup> between banks of lotus bushes back towards Yuccio. No sooner had we turned the corner than a most remarkable

sight met our eyes. The ground before us was dotted about with numerous spikes of the most beautiful *Serapias* imaginable. Each one was slightly different from the next, from ~~and~~ <sup>they varied</sup> orange and buff colours to wine-reds and crimson lying like little piles of brilliant velvet on the green grass. They certainly set a puzzle for me for a moment until I regarded the plants

objectively as possible and searched for their distinguishing characteristics. The minute speckling <sup>at the base of the stem</sup> of crimson labelled them as *S. cordigera* but

this they certainly were not. All at once I realized the obvious: they were natural hybrids between *S. cordigera* with its red velvet lip and *S. neglecta*, the dwarf and large-flowered variety. The *Serapias* species do cross readily between themselves and in this instance



the results of their <sup>intercourse</sup> promiscuity, far exceeded  
 either of the parents in beauty. The finest  
 of all these hybrids was the most sumptuous  
 plant I have ever seen. It had two spikes of  
 the one overtopping the other which gave it a  
 most resplendent air. Robust as these hybrids  
 may appear their tubers were very small  
 and I fear that they may be even more  
 difficult to grow than the other *Serapias*  
 species. These tuberous orchids of the Mediterranean  
 are not easy to cultivate in the wet climate  
 of Britain. They sorely miss the summer  
 baking of their native habitats; they answer so in  
 alpine-house or cold frame cultivation. In  
 winter they should only receive a little water;  
 as the rosette of leaves appears in  
 autumn and they tend to rot off at the  
 collar in our cold wet winters if they  
 are overwatered. When the days warm  
 up in spring more water can be given

and when the flower spike is developing you really cannot overwater; a little liquid manure given at weekly intervals helps the next year's tuber to develop. As soon as flowering is over ~~one~~, the ~~pot~~ soil should be dried-off gradually until the plant has died back completely. From then onwards, you cannot wake the pot of soil too much until late September when a little water should be given to start them into growth again. The whole secret is in carefully controlled watering. However they are temperamental beauties and it is difficult to keep them for long in cultivation, though once the plants have settled down they start to increase slowly by producing offset tubers. The main trouble is that we have no <sup>satisfactory</sup> ways of propagating available plants and the only way of replenishing ones plants is to by collecting them abroad. This practise is to be

much deplored wherever the plants are rare <sup>over a large esp. sensitive</sup> though ~~for~~ gardeners' collecting activities ~~are~~ would make little ~~more~~ impression on most ~~large~~ orchid colonies; the real enemies are now various "development projects", such as land drainage, re-forestation, dam construction and building. With the increase of such activities the terrestrial orchids of Europe are becoming increasingly rare and are being pushed into a few wild corners of the continent like the Caspian maquis where I hope they will long survive in their secluded splendour.

After ~~collecting~~ <sup>finding</sup> the Scirpus we made our way back down to the sea-shore and progressed along the coast along the little areas of sea-washed turf which the French botanists aptly call "prairies maritimes" these <sup>are</sup> the homes of a number of *Romulea* spp, <sup>small relatives of the Crocuses,</sup> and the patch two species grew in close association among the grasses. When we located them only the seed capsules remained but when

they

were in flower earlier in the year, the ground must have changed to violet with the first warm rays of the February sun. Of course, I have <sup>no</sup> little idea which species we collected here until they flower in cultivation but I suspect that the taller of the <sup>two</sup> was the pale mauve flowered ~~one~~ *R. jordanii* and the other the deep violet *R. atrovirens*. We spent several hours grovelling about on the grass on our hands and knees collecting the seeds and cotyledons of these plants and I shall be sending some seed of these two into the A. G. S. distribution so that I hope some of you may be encouraged to try ~~to grow~~ these lovely little things which are almost unknown in cultivation. They are easy to raise from seed <sup>but</sup> I admit none too easy to flower, though they are worth every effort.

It was becoming late when we finally decided we had collected sufficient

Remuleas so off we set on the five miles  
 back to Ajaccio. On the seaward side  
 of us grew occasional bushes of this beautiful  
 silvery shrub *Senecio leucanthemifolius*, <sup>light</sup>  
 and we collected the lovely dwarf blue, frosty-leaved,  
 glinting silver, in the late afternoon sun.  
<sup>Superbly</sup> ~~growing~~ <sup>growing</sup> flat on the gravelly ground  
 I had been anxious to reach the

farthest promontory of the Pointe de Parata,  
 where several interesting plants grow, but  
 as usual our collecting activities prevented  
 our progress. However, on our last day in  
 Ajaccio we <sup>discovered</sup> a bus service had started to  
 operate once daily out to the point. <sup>The timetable</sup>  
 buses are seem to be regarded as state secrets  
 and no-one ever knows just when they are  
 going to run but we eventually boarded the  
 right vehicle. The driver drove <sup>at an high speed</sup> with the usual  
 disregard for both his passengers and any other  
 road users who dared to approach him from the  
 opposite direction & we were soon out of the  
 Pointe de Parata. Our driver, then devoted  
 a gay & handsome if somewhat greasy fellow

the next few hours to the three other passengers; or more particularly to a young the daughter of the family, who seemed to be on holiday with papa and maman. In fact relations seemed to have progressed so well that on the return journey he had to stop the bus to present them with a sprig of myrtle each in memory of Corsica. While the driver directed his attentions to the said young lady, we directed our attentions to the surrounding country. Before us lay this tower, the Tour de Corata. It is one of a series of such towers which ring Corsica's coasts. They were built by the Genoese, who occupied the island for many years, as a warning system against the attacks of the Barbary pirates who came across from north Africa to pillage and plunder. The towers are so arranged that a single fire lit on one is visible <sup>to others</sup> round the island. Beyond the tower stretched the Les Sanguinaires, a cluster of pink

granite islands which often lie like  
 blood red jewels in the sunset although  
 when we saw them on a bleak, grey  
 afternoon they were rather uninteresting.

Out here at the *Iles Sanguinaires*,  
 live many very interesting plants and was  
 anxious to collect one in particular,  
 the stemless form of a little Stock,  
*Matthiola trispicata*. We went north  
 from the tower along the western tip of the  
 point. Soon *Narcissus tazetta* appeared  
 growing here and there among the rocks.

This lovely <sup>and very variable</sup> plant whose origins are most  
 obscure is ~~very~~ identical to the *Tazetta* *Narissi*  
 which ~~is~~ force so admirably for Christmas-  
 flowering in bowls. It grows in many places  
 around the Mediterranean and the Near  
 East, in fact all the way from Spain  
 and Morocco to Kashmir. All the same it  
 was pleasant to meet such a familiar  
 friend in its own home. Nearby the

large, tattered leaves of the weird shrub,  
*Heliconia muscivora*, hung  
out from under a shrub but it would  
have needed a pick and shovel to  
extract the massive tubers so we had  
to pass it by. \* A charming little *Silene*

~~grew in the rock crevices. ~~This~~ probably  
S. , though ~~we~~ ~~and~~ the flowers  
shaded from pale blush-pink to quite  
a deep rose and the habit was quite prostrate  
We have such so many good *Silenes* in  
cultivation, though, that this one though  
quite pleasant was not desperately exciting  
and did not merit collection. ~~I~~ ~~the~~ continued  
along the rocky coast and I suddenly  
noticed ~~one~~ the plant which we searching  
for lying <sup>flat</sup> on the ground. ~~I~~ *Matthiola*  
*tricuspidata*. This form, however, was  
just a little leafy and not compact  
enough for my liking. I knew that  
there must be better ones in the area~~



Eventually, I found their home and quite  
 an extraordinary habitat it was, a steep  
 slope banked down on to the ~~rock~~ sea.  
 It was composed of <sup>very stiff</sup> clay mixed with  
 sharp flakes and lumps of granite and  
 all over it were dotted the flowers of the  
 Matthiola. It was a rather awkward  
 place to collect in as the slope <sup>at an angle of about</sup> gave way  
 70% and sent showers of gravel tumbling  
 down <sup>over a sheer drop</sup> onto the sea below with every  
 movement I made. I believe I am ~~just~~  
 visible as a black speck in this photograph  
 and just after ~~the~~ Janette had taken it  
 the rock of which I was balancing disengaged  
 itself and shot <sup>30 ft</sup> down the bank only managing  
 to avert a long drop on to the jagged  
 rocks of the sea below by a chance grab at  
 a piece of projecting granite. Notwithstanding  
 such minor excitements, I did manage to  
 collect a small number of Matthiola.

seedlings with the roots intact. The ten nine plants were sent to three of our leading amateur alpine gardeners and I know that at least one plant has settled down and actually produced a couple of flowers last August, so that I do hope we shall be able to add it to our collections of alpine house plants <sup>at</sup> sometime in the future. It is such a very beautiful thing: the light rosettes of ~~stinked~~, fleshy, notched leaves are woolly and grey and on this little cluster sit the very large ~~one~~ four-petalled flowers, ~~of~~ absolutely stemless. These are of a pure ~~pale~~ pale mauve and of a crystalline texture, much the same colour as the famed *Spinkaea heldreichii* ||

From Giaccio, we made our way we travelled north along the spectacular Corsican coast to Porto. The bus was as rickety as ever and we rattled and swung along the

ever

all too

N4. ~~188~~

- twisting road. Soon darkness began to fall and <sup>heavy</sup> rain came with it. The headlights of the bus barely pierced the surrounding gloom - how the driver found his way I shall never know but he seemed to know every turn of the tortuous road intimately. I began to get ~~rather~~ concerned as we had no hotel bookings in Porto and it was going to be difficult to find anywhere in a small village in the darkness and pouring rain. Help came in the form of our driver. His son-in-law, he said, owned a hotel in Porto, - it was, of <sup>course,</sup> a good one and we should be sure of a couple of rooms at that time of year. We willingly clutched at this straw and were eventually installed in our rooms, which though simple <sup>were and room</sup> surprisingly fresh and clean. We had no <sup>for the night</sup> idea of what <sup>it was</sup> or where exactly we were staying <sup>in</sup> but the next morning we found ourselves in the most charming inn imaginable.

We were situated one mile from ~~the sea~~  
~~and~~ from the tourist hotels of the second  
 Porto by the sea. In front of us the  
~~subject~~ we could look across from our  
 windows to the rugged peaks across the  
 valley of the river Porto and behind our  
 inn towered the jagged ~~tower~~ of La  
 Rianetta. It was not a high mountain  
 but rises almost straight up from the sea  
 to 2,600 ft. It was, ~~however~~, the most  
 fascinating mountain I have ~~seen~~ known;  
 its changes of mood were ~~so~~ sudden and  
 violent. In morning, <sup>and evening</sup> mists drifted mysteriously  
 around its towers and its colour was ever  
~~transitory~~ from ~~an~~ sullen smoky grey to  
 misty blues and glazing oranges as the  
 setting sun lit its pink granite ~~from~~ with  
~~within~~ an inward glow. It was to me a  
 fairy tale mountain on whose peak I was  
 always expecting to see a strange castle <sup>or tower</sup>

pending. On the north side of the mountain a valley lay and it was up this cleft we made our way <sup>along</sup> up the goat paths among the maquis. I had a desire to reach the screes and cliffs high up this valley but we never did. The paths

eventually disappeared and the maquis <sup>grows</sup> thick and impassible but I think that I shall always have a vague desire to know this mountain better and to penetrate what appeared to me as a cloak of mystery.

In the lower reaches of this valley, thinly wooded with an undergrowth of maquis, grow thousands of *Cyclamen repandum*. Clustering in the deep shade and <sup>growing in</sup> the <sup>moist</sup> leaf mould. It is a most typical Corsican plant, which the <sup>Corsicans</sup> ~~notices~~ themselves take a delight in. They can be seen on Sundays clutching little bunches of the scented, carmine flowers. The species is distributed throughout the island but for all its ubiquity it is remarkably choosy regarding its habitat and in this valley

21.

it grew only on the west-facing side of the valley; the conditions on the opposite slope appeared more or less identical but only the odd straggles appeared. On both sides *Cyclamen neapolitanum* leaves were much in evidence. It is the autumn-flowering counterpart of *C. repandum* and likewise carpets the woodlands with pink. ~~and~~ The rare pure-white form of *C. repandum* is found only in Corsica. I had hoped to collect a few but the comms were not flowering as well as they should have done on account of the dry season and we certainly saw no ~~white~~ white-flowered plant among the thousands near Porto.

Rocks bordered the woodland path and in narrow humusy crevices grew a strange little arid. I <sup>now</sup> have to offer Janette's apologies and explanation for the over-exposed photograph. Like the transparency of *Cyclamen repandum*, it was taken with flash in the dark woodland but in this instance the plant

58. With  
was growing in a little cove among the rocks. The  
angle of the flash reflector the light ~~heads~~ bounced  
off the wet granite rocks with ~~result~~ <sup>the</sup> that the exposure  
they acted as double reflectors and overlit the  
subject, however, so it is the only <sup>colored</sup> photograph we  
have of the plant we decided to include it.

The botanists have not quite definitely identified  
this it yet — they think that it is probably a  
*Biarum* sp. of some sort and I think that it is  
certainly a variety or subspecies of *Muscarrum vulgare*.  
Anyhow it is a captivating little <sup>plant</sup> ~~species~~ with an  
~~almost impertinent, peculiar~~ <sup>amusingly</sup> ~~or~~ almost  
melancholy air about the flowers. The spadix  
curves round and droops sadly from the green and  
white striped spathe in a way that cannot but  
arouse a certain sympathy for the poor little fellow.  
Around us in the woodland, the leaves of *Muscarrum*  
*comosum* and *Allium pendulinum* lay about and on  
one grassy bank beneath some broom we found the  
spotted leaves of *Orchis provincialis*. We were soon  
out of the woodland though and came abruptly

on an area of rocky <sup>moor</sup> pastureland enclosed by dry stone dykes and with a few similarly constructed shelters.

It was obviously a ~~refuge~~ <sup>refuge</sup> ~~where the cattle for the~~ wintering the cattle of the peasants. The animals graze all summer on the young growth of the 'maquis' shrubs and as many of these are aromatic a most delicate flavour is imparted to their flesh. Often we would hear the tinkling of the bells around the animals necks but, as they ~~merged~~ <sup>merged</sup> among the thick growth, but we saw a cow only once. The place was deserted but <sup>here and there</sup> all over it grew clumps of the Corsican Hellebore ~~Helleborus~~ *Helleborus argutifolius*. Each one was a magnificent plant bearing several hundred of the large apple-green blossoms. We had already seen it lower down in the maquis where it grows tall and awkward, among the surrounding shrubs. There it may reach anything up to 7ft. in height but it ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> a mere caricature of these plants. A lot of you will have this plant and I hope <sup>that</sup> those of you who don't will waste no time <sup>before</sup> procuring it because it is



by far the best of the *Helleborus* species. Those Some  
 of you who do grow it will no doubt have it  
 as *H. roseus* but ~~it is now to be referred to as~~ <sup>we must now refer to it</sup>  
*H. argutifolius*, if we want to keep up with Joneses.  
 But 'what's in a name' - I shall not complete  
 the much-quoted lines! In any ~~instance~~ case,  
 this plant is a really good one - the dark green  
 leaves are ever a source of pleasure to the  
 discriminating gardener and the flower-spikes  
 provide a decorative feature for eight months of the  
 year, ~~appearing~~ <sup>appearing</sup> ~~freshly~~ <sup>freshly</sup> with in ~~chartruse~~ <sup>chartruse</sup>-green with  
 the month of February ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> slowly changing <sup>in period</sup> to hang  
 papery and parchment-coloured until September ~~and~~;  
 never in any instance touched by frost or wind or  
 rain. If we want to grow a compact many-flowered  
 clump like this the answer lies before us. <sup>These</sup>  
 specimens were growing right out in the open but  
 every one grew from under the base of a  
 large granite boulder where the soil would  
 always be cool and damp. The soil of the pasture  
 was very heavy stony clay and was covered with

it in a heavy soil with as much humus as possible

cattle droppings. In other words, plants ~~at~~ where the roots are always cool and moist but where it can reach its head into the sun. These plants were never touched by the cattle, as the animals know their poisonous properties all too well and leave them strictly alone.

From the meadow of the Hellebores we <sup>went</sup> ~~crossed~~ straight across to the opposite side of the valley descending <sup>to cross a ravine</sup> and then climbing up through dense, high maquis full of brambles and a pernicious, spiny Aristolochia which tore at our clothes and arms as we struggled through. Eventually we came out on to an open, massive boulder slide, which we chambered up to the pink granite cliffs at the top. There before us an amazing plant draped down the cliffs before us, ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> clothing it with a 30 ft curtain of pure deep blue. It was *Rosmarinus prostratus*, a most extraordinary species. The strangest thing about our discovery was that <sup>we did not see</sup> there ~~was not~~ another similar

specimen either in the immediate area or in the whole Porto district. The plants habit ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> absolutely prostrate and the stems rooted down the crevices in the rock all along their length. The colour of the flowers was a pure, deep blue not anything like the dismal colour produced by the Kodachrome film. Ektachrome gives a better colour-rendering but this is still not quite ~~right~~ intense enough. However you can get some idea of the beauty of ~~the thing~~ <sup>these</sup> ~~for~~ <sup>for</sup> these <sup>bright</sup> deep blue flowers dotting the waxy branches as they cascaded 30 ft down the pink granite <sup>of the</sup> cliff. We made our way slowly down over the boulder slide and down the valley to our little inn where the usual handsome meal awaited us. As a matter of fact, we spent two days collecting birds and herbarium specimens in the valley on La Pianetta before turning to another area. We decided to take the main coast road back towards the south. This took us along the side

of the Estuary of the River Pato. Below us we could see the Tour de Pato, a similar structure to the one on the Paruta near Yacoo, and beyond the red-roofed houses of the part of Pato down by the sea. In the background stretched the ~~hazy~~ mass of the Punta Bianca, hazy blue in the morning sunshine. I thought that the scrub-covered, silted up River-mouth would be a good collecting area and we climbed down to it. A magnificent plant of *Euphorbia wilferii*, fully 7 ft. high greeted us when we emerged from the shrubby slope. We found it to be far more common farther up the valley where we went there the next day but nowhere did we find such a fine specimen as this. It grew in the fine, rich alluvial sand of the old river bed and I have no doubt it sent its roots down to tap some underground supply of water, percolating

beneath the surface. It is a plant of the utmost value in ~~the~~<sup>a</sup> garden, where its tall stems with ~~that~~<sup>chartreuse</sup> yellow ~~and~~<sup>flowers</sup> and blue-green leaves can provide an arresting architectural feature if properly sited. It should be planted where it can display its character to perfection, not jumbled up with herbaceous plants but at the end of a sweeping lawn or curving paving; backed by a grey stone wall or rising before a group of shrubs.

Apart from the Euphorbia we found little of interest in the river-bed only the deep green, white-splashed leaves of *Arum pictum* commanded our attention. Disappointed after much unrewarding searching, we turned to the rocky, north-facing bank of the estuary. Here we found evidence of many interesting plants, though only *Cyclamen repandum* was in flower. The steep slope was covered with giant angular slabs of granite and ~~covered~~<sup>dotted</sup> with a sparse

The leaves of growth of magnus, *Orchis provincialis* and a *Serapias* species appeared here and there with the dry-leaves of *Glycymeris apollinarum* and in one or two crevices on the giant boulders grew clumps of *Romulea* leaves. *Romulea* foliage is fine and grass-like <sup>and</sup> as the corns often grow associated with grasses it is all too often <sup>indistinguishable</sup> ~~invisible~~ to the unpractised eye. ~~For the sake of used to see with each other us to who could spot the largest number~~ However, once one acquires the technique, if it can be called such, one seldom passes a *Romulea* by. Here, I am collecting the tiny corns from a humus filled pocket where they filled the narrow crevices with their grass. I think that it worth my while to point out the location of these corns: the slope is facing north-west and the sunlight is filtering down from behind through the surrounding shrubs. The situation is typical. In a recent note in the *Gardener's Chronicle*, the writer referred to the genus being

native to the sun-baked slopes of the Mediterranean  
 the statement could not be further from the <sup>truth</sup> <sup>in my experience</sup> <sup>regarding</sup> <sup>Romuleas</sup> or in fact <sup>almost</sup> any other  
 bulbs. North, east and west-facing slopes are  
 the places in which to search for bulbous plants;  
 dry, south-facing slopes are almost invariably  
 very unremunerative. Romuleas are usually either  
 plants of slightly shaded rock crevices or of <sup>clayey</sup>  
 damp pasture land, although one does find the  
 odd species which grows in dry, gravelly soil.

Another plant of the larger crevices here  
 was *Pancreatum illyricum*. The massive  
 bulbs do not flower until May but we  
 dug a few growing deep in the pure leafmould.  
 Sometimes the long-necked bulbs, which <sup>may</sup> weigh  
 up to 2 lbs, have the unpleasant habit of <sup>of</sup>  
 hiding beneath an immovable boulder but <sup>large</sup>  
 one was easily extricated by shovelling away  
 the loose leafmould with a trowel until  
 the bulb appeared. The *Pancreatums* are one of  
 the most spectacular features of the Cotswold

flora and it must indeed be a breathtaking sight to see them flowering in May or June with their large clusters of white flowers, <sup>rather</sup> like bunches of pure white daffodils.

These rocky slopes were so remunerative that we spent the next morning collecting there so that it was ~~long~~ almost mid-day before we set off ~~straight up~~ the valley ~~from~~ away from the sea towards the village of Uta. ~~We had intended, as was our habit~~ The road climbed up from the village of Porto and before <sup>starting</sup> setting off we <sup>had</sup> intended, as was our habit, to purchase our lunch in the shops of the village fresh, crisp <sup>the</sup> French bread from the dark, sweet-smelling bakery; some of <sup>one of</sup> the creamy Corsican goat or sheep cheeses and a few of <sup>the</sup> small and piquantly refreshing Corsican oranges. That day, however, we had forgotten that in France the small shops are closed from ~~12~~ 12 o'clock until 2, so



that our lot that day was a lunchless one. Lunchless that is but for a scrap of dry cheese and a quarter of a loaf of the previous days bread, which I had discovered in the depths of my rucksack. One is apt to work up a good appetite while out collecting so that our chagrin that day was great and we took this photograph of our sad, little lunch as a reminder to ourselves and others of the closing time of French provincial stops. After 'Lunch' we collected *Scirpus cordiger* in the surrounding meadows and on our return discovered this rather charming fellow investigating our rucksacks. Corsican mules are more or less given the run of the country and, I believe, they are quite a hazard on the roads in summer, especially at night, when they find the warmth of the tarmacadam provides them with a pleasant place on which to sleep. We found little in flower, though we did collect a number of *Romulea* comms out.

of flower. The real object of our journey was to collect a rare Corsican endemic, *Leucosium longifolium*, which has been recorded from the rocky hill-sides behind Ota. There are two *Leucosium* species native to Corsica one autumn flowering and one spring-flowering. The former is the pink *Leucosium roseum*, which we found later at Calvi, and the latter is *Leucosium longifolium*. It was the great disappointment of our trip that we did not collect this species anywhere. Every time we set out to reach a recorded habitat our arch-enemy 'time' won the race and we had to return to our hotel before the place could be reached. In this instance we reached the <sup>houses</sup> village of Ota, a picturesque Mediterranean hill-village, just as the rays of the setting sun were slanting across the valley. We had no time for plant-collecting and ~~had~~ <sup>had to</sup> completed the five miles downhill to Porto in record time. It had

been a stiff uphill climb but going back we took less than an hour, spurred on by the ~~slightly~~ falling darkness and the ~~emptiness~~ <sup>emptiness</sup> of our stomachs.

The following day we once again moved on our way northwards to the town of Cahui ~~laden~~ <sup>and pulpo</sup> with an ever-increasing load of plants and a now-bulging herbarium press. Cahui is a delightful little fishing village throughout the most of the year but in summer it changes to a tourist paradise on which the French descend in ~~the~~ <sup>from</sup> the meritable ~~trades~~ of sun-seeking, ~~and joy~~ joyful humanity. ~~It was~~ We were glad to have the opportunity to sample its quieter charms, its lobster-pots and pine-trees, its long stretches of deserted sands and the snow-capped mountains across the blue waves of the bay. ~~From~~ From Cahui we went out in two directions to collect plants. Along the coast to

the wind-swept Punta de Revellata and inland towards the Bonfatto valley and Monte Grosso. Just of all we shall take <sup>the route</sup> ~~a path~~ along the sea shore to the Punta de Revellata. The narrow gravelly path goes almost straight along the coast between low bushes of the dwarf, compact, grey-leaved *Genista lobeliai*. I was looking about among these dwarf golden shrubs so we went along when suddenly Jonette called out to me. She had spotted a brilliant little violet flower <sup>lying</sup> ~~growing~~ right on the path beneath our feet. It was a *Romulea* and, in spite of the fact that we collected hundreds of <sup>*Romulea*</sup> combs, it was the only one we <sup>ever</sup> found in flower. So little information is available on this genus and there are so few <sup>preserved</sup> herbarium specimens in British herbariums that I cannot be certain as to the identity of the plant but I am pretty sure that it is *Romulea tequeni*, the most common Mexican species. It is a very

beautiful little bulbs with these most exquisite, ~~violet~~ <sup>climacose,</sup> ~~flow~~ imperial violet flowers, the size of a half-crown sitting almost right on the ground. The *Ranunculus* are closely related to the *Crocuses*, from which they differ mainly in the possession of a flower-stem, whereas *Crocuses* are supported on the corolla-tube, and in having a different leaf-structure. They are in reality ~~are~~ primitive ancestors of the *Crocuses*. We do not have a single species in general cultivation a fact, which may seem surprising as they are often the most brightly-coloured and jewel-like of bulbous <sup>plants</sup>. On the other hand they are not easy to grow and flower satisfactorily. If grown outside their little flowers would be battered to anonymous tatters by the February rain and wind and even if grown in pots in the alpine house they do not always flower regularly and they have the major disadvantage of only opening their flowers in sunshine. Nevertheless, I find the plants of great interest

and I can honestly say that among bulbous plants they come in my affections second only to the *Fritillaria* species. I have been referring these *Romuleas* <sup>loosely</sup> as bulbs but they are, of course, corms. The corms of ~~the~~ *Romulea repens* were, <sup>as</sup> usual, about the size of a large pea this late straggler was the only one in flower but many other greas among the foot high hummocks of *Genista lobeliai*. ~~While~~ While digging them I came upon innumerable leaves of *Serapias lingua* and suddenly saw another orchid the Green-veined Orchid *Orchis morio*. It is a <sup>common</sup> British orchid which many of you have no doubt seen growing wild in this country but we had found so few of the <sup>many</sup> *Orchis* orchids in flower that I was mildly excited by the find. It is lovely thing and really very easy to grow in a rich damp loam in the garden. The Mediterranean form is botanically distinguished <sup>by a longer petal.</sup> as *Orchis morio* ssp. *pecta* but I see little justification

Incidentally, for this piece of redundant splitting. While I have been talking about this orchid I wonder how many ~~of you~~ <sup>Preserving plant-collectors among you</sup> have noticed the Rumex leaves and seed capsule in the photograph!

Anyway, ~~we~~ at first I found only this plant but soon I found <sup>growing against a rocky</sup> another two ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> this time different colour forms of the variable plant and thereafter I seemed to find nothing but hundreds of *Orchis morio* for some time. While Janette was faithfully photographing these two we had a rather extraordinary and disconcerting visitor. A strange little man came hurrying along the path ~~and~~ slatching a cake of soap; he stopped suddenly on seeing Janette crouched ~~over the~~ double over her camera. A long and intricate discussion in French followed in the course of which he came to the conclusion that we were foreign spies. The Germans and Americans he told us had come to spy on

him also. However complimented I felt at being mistaken for a James Bond of the Corsican variety. I had to vindicate myself and he eventually made the pronouncement that I was a "specialiste en fleurs". Oh, but he too was a "specialiste" he declared with solemnity, ~~though~~ <sup>but</sup> I never discouraged <sup>what</sup> exactly he specialised in though the ground around his corrugated shack, which we saw later farther along the coast, harboured a vast and ~~curious~~ <sup>weird</sup> collection of rocks and cactus plants and various marine curios in the way of driftwood. Eventually he seemed <sup>were</sup> satisfied that our activities innocuous and ambled off to wash himself at a spring back along the path but not without an occasional backward glance to make certain that we were not training a high power telephoto lens on his dwelling.

Farther back from the sea ~~was~~ cactus bushes grew thickly and a little grassy knoll produced a number of interesting looking but flowerless



and so nameless bulbs as well as some more rather different-looking *Romulea* corms.

~~Among the *Cistus* bushes, clumps of a ~~rather~~ ~~strange~~ plant ~~were~~ pushing up scaly shoots of <sup>modelled out of</sup> scarlet or orange <sup>yellow</sup> wax. It is an *Urobanché* sp., a Broomrape, parasitic on the roots of the *Cistus*. It is one of the most arresting plants I have seen and it is a pity that we cannot <sup>even</sup> attempt to grow such species in our gardens. It contains no green colouring matter whatsoever and is entirely dependent on its host plant, the *Cistus* bush for its nourishment. Little success has been met with in attempts to cultivate parasitic species or even semi-parasites, like the *Pedicularis* and *Castillejas*; the only possibility in this instance would be to establish a mature *Cistus* bush ~~and then~~, sow seed of the *Urobanché* around its base and then forget about and hope that one day ~~it~~ you will be greeted by a sight~~

like this. This technique has worked with *Lathraea clandestina*, a bright violet toothwort, sown on willow roots but it is very much of an uncertain shot in the dark.

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South of Calvi, the Ponte de Revellata stretches out into the sea in a low hump.

Down here at the base grow innumerable bushes of Rosemary and in the rock crevices pockets filled with the droppings of hundreds of generations rabbits, grows the lovely autumn flowering *Leucosium roseum*. We dug many of its little, pearly bulbs with their delicate, thready leaves. This is the leeward side at which we are looking. It is comparatively green and grassy and here in what the ecologist would call a damp flush we dug a remarkable collection of bulbs evident only by their leaves. One was probably an *Urtica* species, another a little *Allium*, <sup>and</sup> yet another looked like the tiny

*Hyacinthus puzosii* these three were all growing in close association with a *Romulea* and a *Scirpus* among the ~~sopping wet~~ <sup>mosses and</sup> stones embedded in the sopping wet clay. The other side of the Pointe de Revellata provides the most <sup>dramatic</sup> ~~fantastic~~ contrast to this grassy greenness. Giant and fierce waves lash sheer diabolical crags relentlessly and up on the flat top the scene is the quintessence of barrenness || Every drop of moisture is sucked from the soil by the hungry wind from the north, the savage ~~and~~ 'mistral', which blows down from the icy tops of the Alps in unchecked fury. The wind was so strong that in taking the photograph of this grim place, <sup>Suzanne's</sup> ~~Janette~~ was blown off the rock on which she was standing by the sudden gusts of the gale. How anything could grow here at all, I do not know. Little, in fact, did except for a few wind-tortured shrubs but in the

rock crevices covered the woolly ~~bracts~~ bracts of  
*Erodium cicutarium* // wrapped up in a woolly  
~~felted~~ overcoat against the bitter fury of the wind.

Unfortunately the plants were not yet in flower  
 but they vary in colour from <sup>the</sup> palest of pinks  
 and mauves to a good deeply coloured  
 carmine-form, which one can find distinguished  
 in nurserymen's catalogues as variety 'subseri'.  
 One often wonders how a plant from <sup>the</sup> sea-level  
 in the warm lands of the Mediterranean could  
 prove hardy in Britain but now, having  
 visited *Erodium cicutarium* in its home, this  
 will no longer be a puzzle. The plant's only  
 enemy in a British winter is wetness and  
 a humid atmosphere. For this reason alone  
 it is best grown in the alpine-house or covered  
 with a pane of glass, if out of doors, to  
 prevent rotting off in winter.

After our chilling experience on the Pointe  
~~de~~ *Revelata* we sought a more

amenable collecting area the following day and took the road out of Calvi, turning off it up towards the Bonifato valley, backed the snow covered peaks of the Monte Grosso massif. Between the main road along the north coast and the sea are numerous rich damp meadows and here growing in great quantities was our acquaintance of the previous day // *Orchis morio*. Some very <sup>good</sup> forms grow here and I collected a really robust pure-white one, pure-white that is but for a delicate green veining on the petals, which served to emphasise rather than detract from its purity. It really <sup>was</sup> good orchid country and *Serapias* were just starting to push their flower spikes among the lotus bushes. Here too grew quantities of the ubiquitous *Jessel Hyacinth* // *Muscari comosum*. It is a very common plant of the Mediterranean and in general not one that we want to introduce into our gardens, where it is apt to increase at an alarming

rate and become a menace ~~to~~ instead of a welcome guest. It is nevertheless quite an attractive plant whose chief merit is the becoming tassel of bright violet sterile flowers at the apex of the flower spike of greenish-brown fertile blooms. It is just as well that I did not want to collect many of it as the large, pink-skinned bulbs grow alarmingly deeply in the stiff clay and the white roots hold on to the soil tenaciously. It is I think the most difficult bulb to extricate, which I have come across, so you can imagine how difficult it is to remove it from one's garden should it ever be necessary. ||

~~A delightful little Labiate grew occasionally in the short turf of these pastures. It is *Salvia clandestina*, though there is nothing very clandestine about its display of pure sky-blue flowers. It is a very pleasing little member of a genus which has produced so many good plants but which is <sup>so</sup> sadly neglected by rock gardeners. The reason is inexplicable as ~~the~~~~

some of the Salvias are among the ~~most~~ most  
 colourful and easy dwarf species. ~~They grow~~  
 the taller species in herbaceous borders and  
 plant solid beds of the <sup>tender</sup> glazing-scarlet Salvia  
 splendens but no-one puts the dwarf, hardy  
 ones in their rock-garden !!

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From the level meadows of the coast-line  
 we turned inland towards the Mountains, bleak  
 and <sup>still</sup> snow-capped in April. I found *Orchis*  
*papilionacea*, shrivelled by the unusual drought of  
 last spring and a tall somewhat sad-looking  
 spike of the Monkey Orchid, *Orchis simia*, caught  
 my eye in the *Cistus* bushes. While investigating

this I saw a great mass of white daisies  
 growing farther down the bank. What impelled  
 to go down and have a closer look I shall  
 never know, but it resulted in the discovery  
 of one of the most lovely of the Corsican bulbs. !!

Among the daisies ~~one~~, indistinguishable <sup>from a daisy</sup> on  
 account its similar colour, and all down a  
 grassy slope, hidden by surrounding *Cistus* bushes,

was *Ornithogalum exscapum*. It is found only in Corsica and on a little of the neighbouring Italian mainland but is nowhere common. It always grows in colonies which may consist of thousands of bulbs but are few and far between. The large white flowers like huge upturned snowdrops sit very close to the ground and the outer segments are exquisitely pencilled with fine grey-green lines on the reverse side. Only a couple of thready green leaves are produced ~~so that~~ from each of the bulbs ~~as mine only~~. The, which were growing in damp clay among innumerable lumps of granite. I set about digging a number of the little bulbs and looked up at the high pitched <sup>small</sup> hum of a motor-bike to see a gendarme humming along the road <sup>high</sup> above us. He almost fell lost his balance in <sup>turning</sup> his neck to watch us but soon disappeared round the corner; a few moments later another gendarme hummed along the road; there was then a short pause;



I continued digging holes; then the hum of light-weight motor-bikes again and this time the two gendarmes came back <sup>together</sup> along the road to investigate. They clambered down the grassy slope and the elder and superior, doing his utmost to look like a uniformed Inspector Maigret, greeted us with 'Bonjour, m'sieur dame'. The inevitable handshakings preceded a long interrogation which involved ~~rather~~ <sup>meticulous</sup> examination of passports and the writing of copious notes in a tiny, dog-eared notebook. As a result the Corsican police now possess a detailed record <sup>containing</sup> of such odd facts as my mother's maiden name and where she was born. I am sorry to say <sup>however,</sup> that much of it is fictitious as I have atrociously bad memory for birthdays <sup>and such facts,</sup> and as I wanted to avoid further complications, I translated everyone's name into French so that Janette <sup>is</sup> <sup>now</sup> <sup>called</sup> <sup>Jaquet</sup> have father called Guillaume and Jacques. The junior of ~~our~~ the two gendarmes regarded our activities less gravely and was soon handing round ~~some~~ Corsican cigarettes and generally

generally entering into the spirit of things by informing me that my treasured *Ornithogalum* was only 'oil sausage' and the myrtle, which he proceeded to dance off and gather, was much more interesting. Eventually, however, the two policemen went off with their <sup>hands</sup> resting comfortably on the fat, leather holsters at their sides.

Once again, I felt like James Bond although Janet was <sup>somewhat</sup> rather perturbed and was considerably very relieved that we would be leaving Calve the following day. Regardless of such <sup>or</sup> incidents we had to carry on with our work and dig some more of the *Ornithogalums* || On the larger slabs of granite, a little *Sedum* grew. Its rosettes were of a ~~pr~~ translucent crimson and it grew in shallow pockets <sup>of humus,</sup> sometimes only a fraction of an inch deep, on the large rocks. It is *Sedum coeruleum*, which flowers in August and September ~~the~~ with delicate sprays of tiny pale blue flowers, and is one of the very few annuals which are not only permissible

but desirable in the rock garden. ||

The next morning at ten minutes to six we arrived promptly at Calvi's tiny railway station to catch the first train to Bastia across the island on the Eastern coast. From Calvi ~~there~~ fast little diesel trains tear at an average of seventy m.p.h. along a very narrow gauge track, which climbs up and across the mountainous interior of the island. The day before we had had a look at the track along the beach from the ~~Calvi~~ town end and had wondered how any train could run along the sand covered, ~~the~~ rusty rails <sup>teetering</sup> on the loose, warped sleepers but sun they did and with a vengeance on their clouting passengers.

The interior of Corsica is very <sup>derive</sup> mountainous. You may, up till now, have ~~to~~ A the wrong impression of Corsica from my account. As ~~it~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~not~~ <sup>at least</sup> early in the year we restricted our

activities to the lower coastal areas but ~~the rest of~~ Corsica is almost wholly mountainous rising up to the great peaks, like the highest, Monte Cinto, of 8,900 ft. in altitude. The mountains are the homes of many fine alpine but in spring they are still snow-covered and the end of May and June are the times when to visit them. This was, however, the sort of country that the railway wound through: past snowy peaks and mountain-streams, over bridges and through long tunnels. As with almost every Corsican journey, our train ride was not without incident. As we lurched through one such long dark tunnel, there was a sudden screaming hiss of the powerful air breaks and ~~we~~ a most sickening and sinister muffled thud, ~~and~~ <sup>they</sup> followed by a <sup>ch</sup>unch, as everyone was jolted violently forward. We had a cow <sup>hit</sup> ~~still~~ <sup>on the line</sup> asleep in the depths of the tunnel. The ill-fated animal had obviously not realized that day had broken outside and had slept on in

ignorant bliss. Before I even realised what had happened, almost every occupant had either jumped down onto the line or was hanging out of a carriage window to witness the no doubt mangled and bloody carcase being dragged off the line. Knowing, the trench I should not have been surprised if they had returned to the carriage clutching piles of ~~double loins~~ the best fillet-steaks !!

The train soon continued on its way across to Bastia past some of Corsica's highest mountains. This one is Monte d'Uro, the second highest peak in the island. It is called the golden mountain, I believe, because the rocks around the summit are covered in summer with a growth of deep-yellow lichen which glints golden in the setting sun. The forests around its base are of the tall, straight, Corsican pine, *Pinus laricio*. The photographs of the mountains were, by the way, taken from the carriage window and, in the course of our

three hour journey to Bastia //

Bastia is the largest town in Corsica and  
 a ~~very~~ uninteresting manufacturing centre. In  
 two of our three days there, we took the <sup>fastest</sup> bus service  
 north, in the direction of Cap Corse, to the  
 village of Pietranera and made our way on  
 foot into the hills to the tiny hill-village  
 of Acquatta. By the roadside, on the shady  
 banks // grew ~~hundreds~~ thousands of Anemone  
 hostesses luxuriating in the cool conditions  
 and pure leafmould. It is difficult to  
 envisage this as one of the parents of the  
 large and showy flowered anemones but this  
 it certainly is. // The lovely delicate flowers  
 provided quite a kaleidoscope of colour as  
 they waved among the tall grasses: from pale  
 silvery blues and mauves through pinks to quite  
 a deep and exciting magenta, which was made  
 more splendid by the emphatic ~~loss of~~ <sup>jet-black</sup>  
 in the centre. Crossed with the scarlet.

Anemone coronaria from the Eastern Mediterranean

it gave us, as I said, our race of florists  
 Anemones but somehow I should rather  
 prefer to grow this ~~delicate~~ fragile wildling  
 even it were only to remind me of these  
 Corsican woodlands where it sway and  
 quivers with the grasses at every touch of the  
 wind. When you have <sup>seen</sup> Anemones growing  
 like this, it is very easy to realise how  
 they got their name of windflowers; but  
 this pleasant habit ~~is~~ means nothing but  
 trouble for the plant photographer and  
 I had dug dozens of the tubers before  
 Janette finally secured this portrait of the  
 incessantly moving plant. Higher up in  
 this area I collected a variety of wothshlike  
 species from the great turnip <sup>of</sup> tubers of  
 Cyclamen neapolitanum to the two  
 beautiful orchids, *Orchis papilionacea*  
 and *Orchis provincialis* but little was in  
 flower and the plants showed sad signs  
 of suffering <sup>from</sup> the unusual drought which had

marked the previous winter and early spring. On our last day in Bastia we travelled farther up the eastern side of Cap Corse to Erbalunga, a small and very picturesque village. It was a Sunday and the weather was hot. Janette caused something of a sensation <sup>with</sup> for the Sunday afternoon trippers from Bastia, by photographing a plant by the roadside || There was a very sharp bend in the road just beyond this point and I fear that on several successive occasions our activities were very nearly the cause of what would have been a most spectacular car accident || This is the plant I had found, *Uphrys sphegodes*, the Early Spider Orchid. The *Uphrys* species are perhaps the most fascinating of terrestrial orchids and unfortunately, as we do not have the equipment for macro-photography, I cannot let you see on the screen the fantastic intricacy of the little flowers. Many of my subscribers had requested members of this



genus but I only found the odd tuber here  
 and there and this was the only one we  
 found in flower. Early May is really the best  
 time to look for these plants in the  
 Mediterranean. I found one or two more  
 plants among the grass not in flower so I  
 left this one in the hope that it might  
 propagate itself by seeding. Over ~~the~~  
 wall <sup>from the pool</sup> in what had once been a terraced  
 field, we dug a number of *Cycladobolus*  
 corms just pushing up through the hard  
 clay. They were almost definitely  
*G. byzantinus*, quite a common  
 plant of the Mediterranean. Apart from  
 these we did not collect much that day  
 and I admit we were more than a little  
 lazy: perhaps it was the long trek we had  
 had up from Epalunga; perhaps it was  
 the relaxing ~~heat~~ <sup>heat</sup> of the scorching sun  
 or maybe the holiday atmosphere of the  
 passing car-loads of French driving up to

sunbath in the secluded beaches of Cap Corse; perhaps it was for all three reasons that we too had a holiday that day and lay in the grass on a rocky hillside, writing up our respective note-books, ~~which~~ a duty which was all too often sadly neglected. When the sun's warmth lessened we gathered up our rucksacks and made our way down to the village //, which by now lay relaxed and hazy in the late afternoon sun, to catch the bus returning to Bastia. On arriving, we found that we had just missed a bus and so I eased my conscience by spending the next hour collecting *Serapias lingua* and a variety of ferns from the hillside behind Erbalunga. All too soon we were bound southwards for Bastia which by ~~now~~ <sup>then</sup> lay, its lights twinkling, in a dusky blue haze beneath the salmon sky of the setting sun // It is now time for us to leave Corsica, the

little scented island of the Mediterranean ~~is~~  
 but I know that sometime I must return  
 to discover the secrets of that ~~little~~,  
 romantic valley on La Pianetta and to  
 sample the summer delights of the high  
 mountains. How little of Corsica ~~is~~  
 we really know; how few of its plants we  
 had seen; how few of its people we had met  
 At the beginning of this journey I called  
 Corsica an 'enchanted island' but in  
 reality it is ~~the~~ <sup>Corsica that is the</sup> 'enchanter' ~~itself~~ and it  
~~a strong~~ <sup>a compelling</sup> weaves a wonderful spell about  
 those who try to discover it. I hope that  
 I have been able to reveal just the tiniest  
 thread of this spell to you all tonight, ~~and~~  
~~that you may want to~~. Thank you  
 everyone for joining me on this hurried  
 little trip and for showing yourselves  
 to be such good travelling companions.