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Madagascar Piassava. (*Dictyosperma fibrosum*, Wright.)

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Folia 2–3 poll. longa. 1 lin. lata. *Perianthii* segmenta 2 lin. longa.
Allied to the widely-spread Cape, Tropical African, and Mascarene
H. angustifolia, Lam.

CCCCXIII.—MADAGASCAR PIASSAVA.

(*Dictyosperma fibrosum*, Wright.)

For nearly twenty years a fibre closely resembling Brazilian piassava (described in *Kew Bulletin*, 1889, pp. 237–242) has been obtained from the island of Madagascar. It was moderately long, of a rich brown colour, and evidently obtained from the stem of a palm as ordinary piassava. The quantity produced was never very large, and in the early stages of the enterprise the fibre was shipped in a very rough, uncombed state. Latterly the quality has much improved, and during the period when this class of fibre commanded specially high prices the shipments were probably remunerative. Owing, however, to the discovery of West African piassava or “bass fibre” obtained from *Raphia vinifera* (described in *Kew Bulletin* 1891, pp. 1–5), the prices obtained for Madagascar piassava have apparently fallen almost as low as the cost of production, hence little of it has appeared lately in the London market. For the first specimen of Madagascar piassava, now in the Kew Museum (No. ii.) we are indebted to Messrs. J. Puddy & Co., of Mincing Lane. This was received in 1890. At that time the plant yielding it was not known. The more common palms of Madagascar such as species of *Hyphæne*, *Dypsis*, *Raphia* and *Bismarckia*, were believed not to yield this fibre. Hence it was inferred that there existed in the island a palm not yet described. This eventually proved to be the case. Through the efforts of Messrs. Proctor Brothers, of East India Avenue, E.C., Kew obtained in 1890 specimens of the complete plant known locally as *Vonitra*, with stem and leaves showing exactly the manner in which the fibre was produced. Each plant had a slender stem about 5 feet high and 2½ inches in diam. This was surmounted by a crown of graceful pinnate leaves 5–6 feet long. The whole stem, to the base, was thickly invested by a dense mass of fibres formed from the inner sheaths and the edges of the petioles. The individual fibres were finer and more flexible than Brazilian piassava and also slightly shorter; in other respects they resembled it very closely. As to the commercial position of the fibre, Messrs. Ide and Christie are good enough to inform us: “Of late, Madagascar piassava has been well combed, straight, and clean, and in this state it is worth from 30*l.* to 37*l.* per ton; but as the quantities sent home, even at these rates, are small, we are led to conclude the preparation as now done is costly.” The shipments are made from Tamatave and some of the ports to the south. In September 1894, Madagascar piassava was reported to be “in demand,” and the price had risen to 46*l.* per ton. Fresh seeds were obtained from Messrs. Proctor Brothers, and from these numerous plants, now about 2 feet in height, have been raised at Kew. They are nearest to *Dictyosperma album*, a well-known ornamental palm from Mauritius and Bourbon, but are easily distinguished both from this and other species. Many of the plants raised at Kew have been distributed to botanical establishments in the Colonies. Very soon the species will probably be well represented under cultivation.

As a new species, the following description of this palm has been prepared from such material as is now available. No flowers have yet been received.

Dictyosperma fibrosum, C. H. Wright; arbor, caule erecto fibris ex petiolis obsolete vestito, foliis juvenilibus bifidis adultis æqualiter pinnatis, petiolis elongatis supra leviter concavis subtus convexis (*i.e.*, sectione transversali lunata) leviter furfuraceis, foliolis lanceolatis acutis basi contractis glabris, nerviis centralibus prominentibus lateralibus 3-4 minus conspicuis transversalibus paucis conjunctis, floribus ignotis, fructu subgloboso pericarpio fibroso stigmate terminali, semine embryone subbasilari, albumine ruminato.

Folia 5 ped. longa; *petiolus* 2 ped. longus; *foliola* 1½ ped. longa, 1 poll. lata. *Fructus* 8 lin. diam.

Habitat: Madagascar. *Nom. vulg.*: Vonitra.

This species differs from *D. album*, H. Wendl., in having the trunk covered with a dense mass of brownish fibres, about 18 inches long, which furnish the "Madagascar Piassava" of commerce. Specimens of this from Messrs. Proctor Brothers are deposited in the Museum of the Royal Gardens, Kew. The lateral nerves of the leaflets are also more conspicuous than in *D. album*, and the fruit is subglobose.

CCCCXIV.—THREE NEW SPECIES OF TRECVLIA.

Under the name of Affon-tree some leafy branches and a large ripe fruit of a species of *Treculia* (Artocarpeæ) have recently been sent to Kew from Yoruba by Mr. A. Millson. The fruit is exceedingly like that of *T. africana*, but the leaves are so different in form and texture that, although flowering conceptacles are not present on the specimens, there can be no doubt that it is distinct from that species. It has therefore been described together with two other new species contained in the Kew Herbarium. It does not appear to have been clearly pointed out in the generic descriptions that the flowering bracts are truly confluent for a greater or lesser part of their length, the tips or only the peltate scales which terminate them being free. The original species of the genus, *T. africana*, was founded upon a fruit from Senegambia, but the leaves of it were undescribed; yet there is very little doubt that the plant identified with it, and figured in the Botanical Magazine, t. 5986, as *T. africana*, is the true plant, since it is one that has a very wide range in tropical Africa, its seeds being used as food by the natives. In this species, and it is probably the case in some of the others, the male conceptacles sometimes bear a few perfect female flowers, and the female conceptacles bear numerous imperfect male flowers, which have 2-3 stamens that do not grow out of the perianth, and a rudimentary ovary. The following is a key to the species at present known:—

Flowering bracts terminated by a circular peltate scale.

Leaves coriaceous.

Leaves 3-15 in. long, flowering-bracts free for
half their length - - - - *africana*.

Leaves 2-4½ in. long, flowering-bracts confluent to the apex under the peltate scale - *madagascariica*.

Leaves rather thin, parchment-like in texture *affona*.