

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN WILDFLOWERS.

No. XVII.: DESERT PRIDE.

(By C. A. GARDNER, Government Botanist.)

The drier parts of Western Australia, inhabited by the mulga bush with its drab colouring of grey, owe much to the genus of plants represented by over eighty species. This genus is *Eremophila*, so called from the Greek *eremophiles*—desert-loving; and in truth the genus is well named for the drier the country, the more stony and unfavourable the soil, the better do these charming shrubs appear. They give wonderful colouring to the surrounding landscape, the large showy blooms of some of the species resembling rhododendrons.

The greatest variety is to be found in the Murchison district—the true home of the *Eremophila*—especially between Shark Bay and Meekatharra, and southward to Cue. In this area they form a conspicuous feature in the vegetation, being present in all types of soil, but more especially on stony rises and hills, or along watercourses. The flowers range in colour from intense violet to flesh-colour, while blue and red colours are not uncommon. The blooms are also of wonderful delicacy, and their beauty is intensified by the general aridity of their surroundings. The individual blooms, however, are not long-lived, many only enduring for a single day. With many

Desert Pride, *Eremophila* sp., Murchison River.

(A) Flowering branch; (B) Leaf; (C), (D) and (E) Various views of

species, however, there is a wonderful development of the calyx after the corolla has fallen; for during the process of fruit development the calyx undergoes enlargement, and frequently assumes brilliant hues, so that shrubs which have lost their flowers often appear to be in full bloom. The reason for this is not apparent, but it is a striking feature with many species, especially with the "Turpentine Bush" (*Eremophila Fraseri*).

The accompanying sketch, drawn in the bush, gives a good idea of the structure of the average *Eremophila* flower. There are five calyx segments variously developed in different species; a corolla much narrowed at the base around the ovary, so that it has a bulbous appearance with a narrow constriction above it; and a long or short tube which is irregularly five-lobed. There are two types of lobing of the corolla: in some species (the greater number) the upper lip of the two-lipped corolla consists of two lobes, and the lower of three spreading lobes (the upper ones being usually recurved). In other species, especially those growing on flats or around lakes, the corolla has an upper lip of four short lobes, and a lower lip of one tongue-shaped reflexed lobe. There are four stamens, either included in the tube of the corolla, or protruding. The ovary is superior with two cells, and the simple style is usually hooked at the extremity.

Many species of *Eremophila* are very resinous or viscid, while others are very woolly or downy. On this account they are valueless as forage, and are commonly known to pastoralists as "Poverty Bushes." Other names, which are singularly unsuitable, are "Honey-suckle" and "Native Fuchsia."

Since I am particularly interested in these plants, I should like to collect every species; I would, therefore, be glad to receive from pupils in the outback districts any plants of this nature which they may find. The genus is widespread over the State, extending from the south coast to the north, but most of the species occur in goldfields areas.

STORIES FROM THE FRENCH.

(Specially translated for Correspondence Pupils.)

THE RED HOUSE.

Part II.

"How he has made his money?" repeated the innkeeper, whose tongue had been loosened by the wine. "Well! that is quite a simple matter. As you have already said, Linguard was a clerk in the house of Fleuriaux, and he was looked upon as a poor old thing; but just then misfortune befell the firm, and the clerk all at once became the owner of the property of his former masters. The old father had died, and his son, August Fleuriaux, a bad lot, was compelled to leave the country on account of some shady business in which he was concerned. After his departure Linguard showed documents proving that he had bought and paid cash for the very considerable property of his late master. People smiled at first, but the documents were all in order, signed and sealed, and so the matter was forgotten. From that time