

XXI. *An Account of a Species of Opbris, supposed to be the Plant, which is mentioned by Gronovius in the Flora Virginica, p. 185, under the Name of Opbris Scapo nudo foliis radicalibus ovato-oblongis, dimidii Scapi longitudine: By George Dionysius Ehret, F. R. S.*

Read April 14, 1762. **T**HE root of this plant, from which many fleshy fibres branch, is composed of the foot stalks of the leaves, which envelope each other in such a manner, that they form a kind of bulbous root. From the said bulb proceed two oval-shaped, nervous, smooth leaves, having membranous convolute petioli or footstalks. These encompass a triquetrous scapus, or a single stalk arising from the centre of this root, which produces many flowers of a singular construction. These flowers are supported by small pedunculi, or flower stalks, of a bloody-red colour, which swell into seed-vessels, having at their base an acute denticle.

This very singular plant blew (for the first time in England) in the Year 1758, in the curious exotic garden of Mr. Peter Collinson; who received it from Mr. Bertram of Philadelphia.

Mr. Clayton has described a plant, in the Flora Virginica page 185, under the name of "*Bifolium Scapo e medio duorum foliorum nudo, aphylo, ad exortum tenui, paulatim versus apicem accrescente, sex*

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vel septem capsulas sustinente: radice fibrosa carnosâ viridi, foliis obvolutâ, humi jacente; fibras paucas emittente, cui radix anni superioris contigua et integumentis marcidis evoluta pellucida adhæret."

This description seemingly corresponds with the present plant; but yet Mr. Clayton's character of the several parts of the flower is very different from those, which I have observed, and represented in this drawing; and although it may be thought to come near to an epidendrum, yet it is neither an epidendrum nor a bifolium, as the following description of the characters will sufficiently indicate.

This plant, however, should be ranged amongst the first order of Dr. Linnæus's class of *guinandria diandria*, which consists of several genera.

#### The description of the characters.

**TAB. III.** Fig. *a*, represents a front and side view of the flower, which has but one broad, flat, oval-shaped petal, or leaf, of a pale red colour, marked with three veins. It has also a small point or denticle projecting at the top of the limbus or margin, Fig. *b*. At the base of this broad petal is situated an irregular unequal-divided triphyllus periantheum, consisting of three narrow separate leaves, of a pale-green colour, and almost of equal length with the petalum. Two of these leaves are erect, and both gibbous at their insertion as in Fig. *c*, and placed at the back of this petal. It would seem as if these two leaves were supporters of the corolla: the third leaf is fixed at the opposite side fronting the flower, opening and bending downwards, see Fig. *d*.

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In the centre of this flower is situated a leafy style, of a convex figure, projecting outwards, and facing the corolla as in Fig. *e*, the top of which is a membranous foliaceous stigma, which reflects downwards to protect the male sperm, and forms (as it were) a caliptra or lap, under which are inserted two yellow globular apices (containing the farina) without filaments, which are the stamina of the flower.

Fig. *f*. explains a front and side view of the style by itself, (the petal and calyx are separated from these figures:) the base of it is a gibbous fleshy substance, which shews apparently two bodies of nectaria, of a crimson-red colour, see Fig. *g*.

The magnified figure above Fig. *h*, represents the inside, and describes the parts more distinctly; whose leafy stigma is laid open, to expose to view the insertion of the two apices: beneath these globules appears a cross line, on which is placed, on each side, a small pointed leaf. From the corners of this fleshy nectarium thus magnified, come forth two threads, Fig. *i*, hanging downwards: they are of equal length with the peduncle, of a skinny substance, and of a bloody-red colour.

The germen, which is twisted like a screw, represents the footstalk, which supports the flower, Fig. *k*: this swells into an oblong, oval striated unilocular seedvessel, Fig. *l*, which contains an innumerable number of dust-like seeds, as the open longitudinal section Fig. *m*, represents.

