POISON PLANTS.

Discoveries About Some Which Have Been Unsuspected Hitherto.

The fatal adventure that befell some boys the other day who chewed certain parts of plants which they thought were dandelions was an incident of a kind most unfortunately common, says the Washington Star. Only two years ago five school children at Tarrytown, N. Y., lost their lives through incautiously eating some roots which they took for sweet flag. In the latter case it was ascertained by Mr. Coville, botanist of the Department of Agriculture, that the root in question belonged to the common elder, which previously had not been suspected of being dangerous.

The Department of Agriculture has begun an investigation of the poisonous plants of the United States, which is to have special reference to the chemical and other characteristics of such of them as are least known. The division of botany, under Mr. Coville, will try incidentally to separate the active principles of the poisons of these plants and to find out to what uses they may be applied in medicine. It is hoped that in this manner some new and valuable remedies may be discovered. The poisons will be tried on guinea pigs and other animals for experimental purposes.

One very important group of poisonous plants, concerning the toxic properties of which very little has been known until recently, includes certain laurels and rhododendrons. In 1790 many cases of poisoning occurred in Philadelphia, which were traced to certain honey and to the eating of the flesh of ruffed grouse. It was proved that the grouse had fed on the buds of the broad-leaved laurel, and it was more than suspected that the honey was derived by bees from the blossoms of the same tree. Several deaths occurred at this time from the cause mentioned, so that the sale of ruffed grouse was prohibited in the markets of the Quaker city.

Recently the broad-leaved laurel has been analyzed by a Dutch scientist named Plugge and by an American named Lasche, who have obtained from it the same poison as that which characterizes the rhododendron of the Black Sea. From this rhododendron comes the honey which is called by the Persians "delli kal," or "mad honey." The honey of the region of the Black Sea has been known for thousands of years as possessing toxic properties. It is found chiefly in Trebizond, and is used there for medicine and also to increase the intoxicating effects of liquor. For the latter purpose it is sold in Constantinople. In large quantities it is very dangerous.

During the historic retreat of the ten thousand, of which Xenophon wrote, the soldiers encamped in Trebizond and found wild honey in abundance. They partook of it freely and it made them very sick. Even dogs that ate it suffered from severe symptoms. The rhododendron was suspected at the time of being at the bottom of the mischief. Plugge has made a general and comprehensive investigation of this group of "ericaceous" plants, which includes the laurels and rhododendrons, and he finds that half of them are poisonous. Lambs and young cattle eat them in winter for lack of other green food and died. The so-called "lambkill" is one of the laurels. The trailing arbutus is of the same family, but is not poisonous. Poison is found in the broad leaved laurel, the narrow leaved laurel and also in the mountain laurel, which is a large leaved rhododendron.

Deer feed on these plants with impunity, and likewise the ruffed grouse. Thus it comes about that the flesh of ruffed grouse often poisons people. Dogs fed on the intestines of deer that have eaten the plants are poisoned. The toxic agent acts upon respiratory centers, interfering with the breathing, and in severe cases stopping it altogether. No antidote is known. It is only possible to try and control the symptoms. A smudge made of the leaves of the mountain laurel, for the purpose of keeping off insects, has been known to cause poisoning.

Test for Real Diamonds.

A real diamond is not acted on by acids or alkalies. When rubbed on a piece of silk it acquires positive electricity, and will attract small pieces of wool, cotton and paper, and this electrification will last sometimes half an hour. A real diamond, if exposed to the sun's rays for a time, possesses a distinct phosphorescence in the dark. It gives only a simple refraction—that is, it gives only a single image of a bright light when that is viewed through its facets. This last test is a very good one, and the electrification and phosphorescent qualities afford two other good tests. Jewelers usually test with a file. If that affords no proof, the jeweler places the stone into a leaden or platinum cup with some powdered flour spar and a little oil of vitriol. The vessel is then placed over a charcoal fire in some place where the strong draught will carry off the noxious vapors evolved. When these latter have ceased rising the mixture in the vessel is allowed to cool, and the stone is then fished out with a glass rod. If it is genuine, no change will be noticeable; if false, it will be corroded by the acid.

Traps English Sparrows.

If every public spirited citizen who has grieved over the almost total loss of song birds through the pugnacity of the sparrow would follow the example set by Jack Durney, a downtown youth, it would not be very long before the feathered songsters would return again in full force.

On the roof of a building in the back yard of the Durney homestead a sparrow trap is erected, and is in full swing night and day. Not only are the feathered pests captured by the dozen, but all the friends of the Durney family for squares around will testify to the fact that nothing on earth compares with fat sparrows when cooked in a potpie.

The trap is one into which the birds hop to get the grain and bread crumbs plainly in sight. Once inside the birds did not know enough to come out. The sparrows feed more on a cloudy and windy day than on a still, bright day, but no matter what the weather is it is a poor day when the trap will not yield fifty sparrows.

Mr. Durney says he is going to get his trap patented and then induce the Legislature to pay so much apiece for dead sparrows. Then he'll make his trap earn him a fortune.

The Harp in the Ear.

The majority of people are not aware, perhaps, says the St. Louis Republic, that each of their ears is provided with a many stringed harp, but such is the case. These wonderful little instruments are named after their discoverer, being called the organs of Corti. Each of these curious ear harps is provided with 8,700 wonderfully minute strings of varying length and thickness. The larger strings are estimated to be about 1-5,000th of an inch in diameter, and, as shown by actual measurement, are only 1-200th of an inch in length. The smaller ones are so infinitesimally fine that no estimate of their thickness (thinness) has ever been made. They are, however, estimated to be about 1-1,000th of an inch in length. Musicians will tell you that when a properly tuned violin is held near a piano, and the E string of that instrument is struck, the corresponding string on the violin will also vibrate; so with all the rest. Now, the 8,700 strings of the human ear harp have such a wide compass that any appreciable sound which can be imagined can find a string of corresponding tone the moment it enters the ear passages. The sounds thus noted on the many stringed harp are instantly conveyed through the connecting filament to the auditory nerve, thence to the sensorium. Thus a knowledge of the sound is conveyed to the brain.

Eyes and Wrinkles.

The wrinkles that come about the eyes have nothing to do with the disposition, as the wrinkles in the cheeks do, but are rather due to lack of care of the eyes. Women, as a rule, pay little attention to the eyes, going from extreme darkness to the brightest light many times a day, a thing which invariably leads to shrinking of the skin about the eye. They wear hats that rarely shade, and they read by the last quiver of daylight. But the two items dwelt upon with most significance are the wearing of cross-barred and dotted vails and the unfortunate dwelling in dark apartments common to city folk, where the eyes are strained in the pursuit of ordinary work.

None of these conditions are sufficiently vital to produce serious trouble with the optical nerves, yet strong enough to aggravate the skin into innumerable wrinkles around the corner of the eyelids, or plow furrows between the eyebrows.

Regarding the remedies, the first to adopt is the cultivation of repose in talking. No other art is so successful a foe to wrinkles in any portion of the face. The next step is to wear plain vails, and when reading or writing hurriedly never consider it too troublesome to lift the black film away from the eyes. Then avoid sudden transitions from one degree of light to another. This carefulness, with continual massage, delivered by two fingers on the lids and brows, will abolish or prevent wrinkles.

Directors' Fat Fees.

The fees that directors of business corporations receive for attendance at each meeting range from $5 to $15. It is a fact not generally known that there are some men in this town who enjoy very handsome incomes from this source. Of course, there are men of wealth and high business standing, whose reputation for financial skill and probity makes them eagerly sought for as directors. Cornelius Vanderbilt, John D. Rockefeller or J. Pierpont Morgan, for instance, would be welcomed in the directory of any business corporation. Samuel D. Babcock, ex-President of the Chamber of Commerce, has the reputation of being a director in more concerns in New York than any other man, with perhaps the possible exception of Russell Sage. The president of one of the largest banks in this city said the other day that, although he was a director in comparatively few corporations, his fees last year amounted to $2,000. "I know one man," said he, "whose income from directors' fees ranges from $8,000 to $10,000 a year. Nearly all of the great financial concerns pay their directors $10 each for every meeting they attend. The money is usually paid in gold, and is handed to the director as soon as he enters the board room."

Hypnotism for Drunkards.

An English paper reports that at the Sussex Asylum eight cases (six women and two men) were treated for drunkenness by hypnotism. Two of the women were cured. The other cases seem not to have been successful. Two other case were treated at Birkenhead apparently with success.

A STRANGE CASE.

Birds That Imprison and Feed Their Mates.

One South African bird—called at the Cape the "butcher bird"—has the ghoulish habit of killing smaller birds, extracting and eating their brains, and then impaling the bodies of the little victims on the four inch long thorn of the "wait a bit" bushes. Another very curious bird is the variety of hornbill known as Tockus melanoleucus, Licht., regarding which a paper by Dr. Schonland, of the Albany Museum, was read at a recent meeting of the South African Philosophical Society at Cape Town. The nesting habits of this hornbill are so extraordinary that they have been repeatedly referred to by various writers; but, owing to the difficulty of finding the nests of the birds, many details of the earlier accounts are not quite correct, while others are not touched upon at all. During the last four years Dr. Schonland has examined, he said, no fewer than seven nests altogether, with the birds belonging to most of them. The birds are often seen in winter in large numbers in the gardens at Graham's Town, but in the summer they are only to be met with in proximity to closely wooded kloofs, and this is due to the fact that they nest in places where hollow trees are to be found. All observers agree that during incubation the female is a prisoner in a kind of cage, the entrance to which is closed to such an extent that it has to be broken before the female can leave the nest. In all the cases he had seen the nests were built in hollow trees. Mrs. Barber has said that they sometimes made the nest between the crowded stems of the tall euphorbia, but that could not be reconciled with some of her other statements. The birds had apparently no preference for any particular tree so long it suited their purpose. The essential point for them was that the hollow stem should be sufficiently large for the female to move about in the nest, and whether there is one or more entrances, all must be of such a nature that they can be partly or wholly closed up. The female once inside, is fed by the male through the narrow slit left in the material with which the entrance is closed, or through a natural cleft in the wood. In the latter case the main entrance is closed up completely. This may be a precautionary measure to protect the female during the season of incubation. He questioned the statement whether the male built or the female, as Livingstone stated he had been told by a native. The female took an essential part in the plastering up of the entrance.

Having described the nests which he had seen, he proceeded to state that the female, after going into the nest, usually began to molt, and was sometimes almost naked. She was usually very fat while in her prison, as the male bird brought her food every few minutes. As soon as danger approached the female bird climbed up the nest as far as possible away from the entrance, and kept perfectly quiet until the danger had passed. The young behaved in the same manner, the birds relying for protection on the fact that the nest is not easily recognized as such. No doubt if attacked, the hornbill could give a good account of itself. The female is imprisoned for seven or eight weeks, certainly for not less than six weeks. The eggs are laid about the end of December or beginning in January, and are usually three or four in number and vary in size. He felt certain from minute observation that the female constructed her own prison, and left it some time before the young were fully developed. On her leaving it was plastered up again in the same manner, and the female helped the male to feed the young. He concluded by stating that there was still plenty of scope for further investigation into the nesting habits of the hornbill.

The Baby Giant.

Eddie Thompson is a four-year-old wonder, living at Clarksville, Ind. So is his sixteen-months-old brother Clyde. Both are the children of Mrs. Jennie Thompson, a spare built woman, about five feet seven inches and weighing 120 pounds. She obtained a divorce a short time ago from her husband William, who is a six-footer, weighing not more than 150 pounds.

Eddie is a little more than four years of age and weighs 124 pounds. He measures three feet six inches in height, and measures forty inches around the waist. It takes a shoe about the length of a No. 3 to fit him, and he wears a man's hat—a 6¼ in size. He tipped the scales at nine pounds at his birth. Three months later he began to develop at a most wonderful rate, until when he was 5½ years of age. With it all he is as lively as a cricket and a very pretty child, with strength far beyond his years.

His brother, Clyde, gives promise of outstripping him in his giant class. Though but sixteen months old he weighs forty-six pounds and is a most wondrously developed infant.

An experimental run on the new electric road built by the Pennsylvania Railroad between Mount Holly, N. J., and Burlington was made Monday, and the results attained were highly satisfactory to President George B. Roberts and other officials of the company. With the machinery new the trial run lacked some of the elements necessary for furnishing reliable data, but sufficient is gleaned to show that the days of steam on railroads are looked upon as numbered.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

In Argentina the preservation of meat by electricity is to be tried on a large scale by an English company that owns the patents. It will set up six establishments in Buenos Ayres, Entre Rios, and Banda Oriental to kill 3,200 head of cattle a day.

The Salvation Army now numbers among its officers the smallest man in the world. Gerrit Keyzer, the celebrated Dutch dwarf and the legitimate successor of Gen. Tom Thumb, may now be seen in Amsterdam and The Hague parading the streets in uniform and leading the army meetings, in which he is said to have been singularly successful.

The best tea in Japan is raised in districts where the snow often falls to the eaves of the houses. Many plants will survive under such snow that are not hardy even in the Southern States. By the same rule some varieties of Japanese lilies will survive Vermont winters that are not hardy in Missouri.

Paris has the greatest number of tailors, paperhangers, dressmakers, wigmakers, lawyers and authors; London has more hackdrivers, engineers, printers, booksellers and cooks than any other city; Amsterdam has most "cranks collecting anything" and userers of any city; Brussels is the town of rogues and smoking children; Naples the town of "Lazzaronis;" Berlin of soldiers and beer-drinkers; Vienna of musicians; Florence of flower girls; Lisbon of porters; St. Petersburg of adventurers; Constantinople of idle officials.

It is a significant sign of the times when a grandmotherly little old lady boasts of being a feminine nimrod. That is, however, what Mrs. Wallihan, of Colorado, a white-haired, gentle little woman, well past middle life, can claim to be. She is a deer-slayer of renown. Thirty-two deer have fallen before her fire and she enjoys deer stalking with her husband as much as the ordinary white-haired old lady enjoys sitting before the fire with her consort and reading the religious weekly.

William Warren has brought suit to establish that he is the same William Warren who thirty-seven years ago made a deposit of $850 in a San Francisco savings bank. It was only recently that Warren, being short of money, decided to draw against his old time deposit. The officials admitted the fact of the deposit, but would not admit Warren's identity, and for that reason refused to pay. Warren now demands judgment for his $850, with accumulated interest. Principal and interest now amount to a snug little fortune of several thousand dollars.

It seems that Hawaii has some compensations for its doleful condition as it is reported that very fine qualities of teas and coffees can be raised there, and it is thought by experts that the islands will soon become an important source of supply. Both tea and coffee grow luxuriously, and both are being prepared for market by machinery instead of by hand. The tea is picked by machine and rolled and packed without being touched by hand. It is believed that the use of efficient machinery will compensate for the low wages paid in China and other tea countries. Extensive drying houses have been erected by the coffee planters, and preparations are making for preparing a large crop for market this year.

The main features of the Chicago World's Fair are a mass of ruins The Transportation, Women's, Fisheries and Horticultural buildings have been completely destroyed, and in their places the visitor finds many signs telling of "Kindling Wood for Sale at $1 per Load." The iron framework of the Machinery Building constitutes the most imposing ruin that remains standing, and in the meshes of the gigantic network of beams and braces the sparrows and orioles have built their nests. Another standing skeleton is the Government Building, never noted for any beauty of design, and now more ugly than ever. The Mining and Administration buildings have so completely collapsed as to bear no sign of their original outlines, and it will be a relief to the eye when their wreckage is finally cleared away. In the entire park there are few beautiful spots left. Only the natural features of the landscape, such as the wooded island and the lagoons, retain their former attractiveness

"Cannot we have a cable penny post?" Mr. Henniker Heaton, Member of Parliament, asks and answers this fascinating question in the North American Review. He is the father of a resolution which stands on the Order Book of the British House of Commons declaring that it is advisable, at all costs, to put an immediate end to the cable monopolies and operate them hereafter as a Government enterprise for the general good, charging only such rates as are necessary for the cost of maintaining and extending the service. It is estimated that the total capital invested in the existing transatlantic cable companies is $60,000,000. Nominally there is competition between them, but actually there is none except between the Anglo-American Telegraph Company and the Commercial Cable Company. The former company controls nine cables and the latter company three. There are three other cable lines in existence, but they have been abandoned. According to Mr. Heaton the cost of laying a transatlantic cable is about $2,500,000. The total cost of the twelve working cables and the three which have been abandoned was, therefore, about $37,500,000. Yet the capital of a single company is stated at $35,000,000, and the aggregate capital of the twelve at nearly double that sum. Mr. Heaton proposes that the British and American Governments shall jointly acquire the property and rights of the existing cable companies at a fair valuation and establish a common State monopoly in cable communication. Then he would have them establish a tariff of one penny per word. He believes that the result would be a prodigious development of trade and an immense increase in the happiness of the great mass of the people of both countries.

Charles E. Schaffer, who has just been elected President of the Altruria Co-operative Union, of Oakland, Cal., thus describes it: "This is the first union of the kind in the United States. Whether we will start a department store, a planing-mill, a brickyard or laundry, or all, depends upon the amount of capital we have. While they would be very acceptable, we do not expect any gifts from any one. You see, each member pays $1 a month dues, and when you have 500 members this amounts to a very neat sum. Here we have a co-operation without colonization, and that is going to make a great difference. I can see no reason why our scheme should not be eminently successful. Oakland Council, No. 3, of which I am the president, will be back of the Union to nurse it along. We expect to have these unions started in all the towns in the State before a great while. We propose to get things in running order here and then hold Oakland up as an example to the State, showing what can be done by co-operation without colonization. We want to establish manufactories, ranches, laundries, and the like. We want the money to remain among the wealth producers. The preamble to our constitution gives a few points on that idea. It says: 'Corporate greed and vicious legislation have built up colossal fortunes for the few and a plutocratic power which practically disfranchises the wealth producers and threatens the very life of the nation. The time has come for the wealth producers to unite in one solid compact for their own protection and the salvation of the Republic. The subscribers unite and organize into an economic phalanx, to be known as the Altruria Co-operative Union, based upon justice, equity and fraternity.' The preamble, it strikes me, is right to the point."

A great deal of interest is being manifested in the preparations being made for the Cotton States and International Exposition which opens at Atlanta, Ga., in September next. The project is receiving the practical indorsement of the leading industrial interests throughout the country. New York, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, the three great commonwealths which head the lists of manufacturing States, have already made provisions for exhibits, and will show the latest achievements in industrial arts. Several departments of the National Government are making arrangements for very interesting exhibits. The United States Geological Survey will make its entire economic exhibit at the Cotton States and International Exposition in the mining building. This exhibit has been planned to include a statistical column showing the total product of each mineral in the South for a limited period of time. Another feature of the Government's exhibit will be instruments for testing structural materials, and it is hoped that this machinery will be in daily operation. The South's resources in road material will be similarly shown, and another feature will be a collection of typical ores from the regions which can furnish the most characteristic specimens. The exhibit to be made by the Department of State will be practically the same as at Chicago. This exhibit will be quite interesting, and will illustrate the principal period in our country's history. The exhibit to be made by the War Department will include many rare relics of Revolutionary times and of the early days of the Republic. All forms of army wagons, pack mules, ambulances, etc., many of them used on historic fields, will be shown. There will also be models of harbors and river work, and a complete field signal outfit, including field telegraphic and telephonic instruments. The Art Department of the exposition promises to be the most notable one that has been shown in America. It will not be too large to be properly seen, and the variety of exhibits will possibly excel any exhibition that has yet been attempted.

An Explosive Fruit.

A correspondent of M. Gaston Tissandier (editor of La Nature) sent him recently from Batavia a small number of dry pods having the form and color of miniature cigars about 3 centimeters (1¼ inches) long. These little pods have the singular property of exploding with a noise when they are placed in a vessel of water. A drinking glass suffices. If one of the pods is left thus it floats quietly on the water for two, three, five minutes or more, when it suddenly bursts with violence, throwing out one of its two valves, as well as most of the seeds that it contains. It is not necessary to say that this bursting is due to electricity.

Cost of Indian Wars.

Our government has had fourteen great Indian wars, which are estimated to have cost it not less than $150,000,000, and as much more in private loss was sustained by individuals.

THE JOKERS' BUDGET.

JESTS AND YARNS BY FUNNY MEN OF THE PRESS.

Wanted His Due--Failure, of Course--His Apprehensions--A Movable Date--Etc., Etc.

WANTED HIS DUE.

Green—Where are you going, Brown?

Brown—To the country for air.

Green—Please don't fail to send me a draft for that last bill of goods.

FAILURE, OF COURSE.

"She threw herself at his head, but she didn't get him at that."

"Certainly not. Girls can't throw.'

HIS APPREHENSIONS.

"I'm really afraid," said the floor walker in the dry goods store, "that Mrs. Bilby's husband has lost his position."

"What makes you think so?"

"Yesterday was salary day, and Mrs. Bilby hasn't been here yet."

A MOVABLE DATE.

"You told me," said the weary collector, "to bring this bill the first."

"Yes," replied the man, "but I meant the first time I had any money."

PROFESSIONAL INCOMPETENCY AT HOME.

"Ma, that little baby across the street hasn't any teeth."

"Of course not, Tommy. You didn't have any when you were that small."

"But that baby's pa is a dentist."

CHANCE FOR A PRECEDENT

Fuddy—What's the trouble with Caudle and his wife?

Duddy—She has sued him for breach of promise.

Fuddy—Breach of promise! How can that be, when they are married?

Duddy—Why, she married him for his money, and he declines to give up the money.

WITHOUT BENEFIT OF CLERGY.

Mr. Billus—Maria, how does it happens that Fanny isn't going to church with you this morning?

Mrs. Billus—You know as well as I do, John, that when Bessie and Kate and I go to church somebody has got to stay at home. There isn't room for four pairs of sleeves in our pew.

MORE THAN THAT.

Daughter—Frank said something to me last night.

Mother—I hope it was apropos.

Daughter—It was more, mamma. It was aproposal.

INDUCEMENT.

New arrival—Are all your rooms engaged?

Hotel proprietor—Yes; but there are a lot of summer girls about here who aren't.

NOT LOQUACIOUS.

Though money talks, as people say,
I cannot quite with them agree,
For it has always had a way
Of being very short with me.

SICK.

Chimmie—Wot's de matter wid you?

Chonnie—I'm sick. De doctor says I've got an ulster in me t'roat.

SOON TO BE SHATTERED.

"I hear that you are engaged to a girl with an ideal. You are likely to find that sort of girl pretty hard to get along with."

"Oh, I guess I am all right. You see, I am the ideal."

HIS TONGUE NOT INJURED.

"Did not the fender break your fall?"
They asked him in the wreck.
"Nay, nay," he answered, "what it broke
I fear me, was my neck."

HIS ATTENTION DIVERTED.

His Aunt—I fear I shall have to administer a reprimand to you, Charles, for your college follies.

Charles—Why, what have I done?

His Aunt—From all that I can gather you have been allowing your studies to interfere with your progress in athletics.

APPEAR AMID THE DESERT.

"Why are they called pyramids, pa?" asked Georgie, who was looking at a picture of those wonders of Egypt.

"They are called pyramids my son," replied his father, without hesitation, "because, you see, they appear amid the general desolation of the desert."

WHAT ROBERT WAS DOING.

Husband comes home later than usual from his club. To avoid disturbing his wife he takes off his boots and steals into the room on tiptoe. But vain precaution, his wife begins to yawn. Quickly determined, he goes to the cradle of his first born and begins to rock it, singing slumber song the while.

"Whatever are you doing, Robert?"

"I've been sitting here a couple of hours trying to get the baby to sleep."

"Why, Robert, I have got him here in bed with me!"

London's Water Supply.

The average daily water supply of London is 190,123,599 gallons. The water is obtained from the Thames, the Lee, from ponds at Hampstead and Highgate and from springs and wells. The population of London is 5,401,800. The daily consumption per head is, therefore, 34.68 gallons for all purposes.