

DO SOME PLANTS THINK?

BEHAVIOR WHICH SEEMS TO POINT TO THAT CONCLUSION.

"Venus's Fly Trap" and Its Hapless Prey—The Mimosa's Leaves Close at the Sound of a Horse's Foot.

THE curious behavior of some plants can scarcely be explained under any other supposition than that their actions are due to some connection between sensation and consequent motion that seems to be closely related to the movements of animals. We touch the skin of a person and the person shrinks instantly; a similar touch causes a worm to shrink, and the same effect precisely happens when some plants are touched.

The common sundew, commonly known as "Venus's fly trap," is one of the most curious of the sensitive plants. Its leaves are thick and fleshy, and are covered with spines. The leaves are arranged in pairs like those of a book, and exude a viscid matter, by which flies are attracted. When a fly alights upon a leaf, the spines at once close down upon it and the leaves fold together, inclosing the prey, and it is said by some observers that the hapless insect is digested by an acid liquid that then exudes, and is absorbed as nutriment, much as the toad, silently and stealthily hiding in the grass, perceives a fly alight on a blade, and darts toward it, and with its sticky tongue draws its prey into its capacious jaws; or more like the lazy ant eater, which lies prone on the anthill and projects its viscid tongue on the ground, and when it is covered with ants, suddenly withdraws it into its mouth and swallows the insects.

The sundew opens its leaves when the fly is dispersed of, and awaits another victim. If you drop a shred of raw meat on the leaf the same performance is repeated, and if the leaf is touched by a straw, the leaves shut upon it, but, as if in disgust at the deception, open again immediately.

The Western prairies are covered in places with a beautifully feathered leaved plant, a species of mimosa. This is commonly known as the sensitive plant. You stoop and draw the hand gently across one of the low bunches of these plants. Instantly the delicate pinnate leaves shrink and fold together, and remain folded as long as the intruder stays. But when he softly retires to a short distance the leaves begin to unfold and spread out to the sunshine. Some varieties of the mimosa in Brazil are still more sensitive, closing their leaves when the sound of a horse's foot is heard, and shrink still more closely when the ground is jarred by the tread of the animal near it. One of these species, Mimosa sensitiva, is so curiously organized that it is rendered insensible by exposure to chloroform. It then goes to sleep until the effects of the anesthetic are worn off by evaporation.

The sly opossum and the wily fox lie low and simulate death, when cornered by an enemy and escape appears hopeless; the human criminal hides from his pursuer. Is there any connection between these similar actions of these plants and animals, and if so, are they not due to the same cause? The attempt at deception is the same; it has a purpose, and is the result of a calculation of chances, and it certainly seems as if it were the result of a process of thought.

Many other plants possess this acute sensitiveness. We see the pig picking up straws in its mouth and carrying them about to find a place for a bed, and we say, as the result of observation and experience: "It is going to rain." The cats make their discordant complaints to the midnight moon, the wolves howl, dogs whine, the cock crows at sundown, and we ourselves feel the papillae of the skin shrink and our hair roughens and a curious nervous excitement makes us feel "all over" when the barometer is falling and before the rain comes.

So the clover in the meadow feels, and it shuts its leaves. The spurry closes its petals, and a scientific observer says a field that was white with blossoms has suddenly become quite changed by the mere passing over of a black thunder cloud and the falling of a few drops of rain. The common chickweed opens its blossoms only when the sun is shining, and, like the dial, counts only the bright hours. When its little blossoms close, rain invariably falls within a few hours. Rural dwellers take note of this, and are likely to say: "Hurry, we can get back before it rains, for the chickweeds are open yet."

The sea purslane has the same habit. It never opens in cloudy weather and closes when the sun is low in the afternoon. The scarlet pimperl of the gardens, called the "shepherd's barometer," never exposes its pretty scarlet flowers to a shower. The old herbalist says of it: "It foretelleth what weather will be the next day, and if the flowers be shut it betokeneth foul weather." And one of the naturalists of an Arctic expedition noticed that although the summer sun shone through the night the plants made no mistake, but when the sun got round to the west they dropped their leaves and closed their flowers as if the sun had really set. An eclipse of the sun has had the same effect, and not only this plant, but several others which possess the same instinct, as the convolvulus, shut up their petals as soon as the sun was fully obscured, and opened when the shadow had passed.

The common four o'clock invariably closes its bell-shaped flowers at the hour named, and so many plants have a similar instinct that the great botanist, Linnæus, made a floral clock of flowering plants, each of which had a certain time for closing its flowers. A quite common plant, the wood sorrel, not only droops its leaves and shuts its

purple-veined bells when it rains, but does the same if the ground near it is struck with a stick. This whole family of Oxalis has this same habit.

Another plant, a species of saffron, Hedysarum gyrans, thus named because of its curious habit, is continually waving without any apparent cause and is restless day and night. No wonder the Calabrian philosopher became insane by reason of his efforts to solve this question of the sensitiveness of plants and to account for the phenomena. He lived before the time when the true nature of the animal brain became known, and before the fact was discovered that the vibration of cells or molecules produced sensation, as the same kind of vibrations produce light, and that when a man sees stars as the result of a concussion of his brain matter, the excessive vibration thus communicated to the fibres of his brain is the cause of the sensation of light in his eyes or at least in his optic nerve.—New York Times.

SELECT SIFTINGS.

The largest bird is the condor.

Wasps get intoxicated on the fermented juices of rotten fruit on the trees.

About 3 per cent. of the men in the English army are unable to read and write.

Envelopes were first made in 1839 and sold for ten cents to twenty-five cents apiece.

The Anstralians have more churches in proportion to population than any other people.

Brown County, Kansas, has a man who can husk and crib 135 bushels of corn in ten hours.

Cashmere goods were invented in the celebrated vale of which Moore sings in "Lallah Rookh."

A Maine man used the profits of his pumpkin field to pay the expenses of himself and his wife to the World's Fair.

Amber, often classed among gems, is a fossil product. Most of the specimens inclosing insects are manufactured from gum copal.

In the fifteenth century the bishops and monasteries of France, England and Germany did an extensive business in coining money under royal sanction.

There is a bold ridge of gray volcanic mountains in the Cape Verde Islands the crest of which is said to form an exact likeness of George Washington.

A coon, with a leather strap around its neck, which was lost by a young woman at Chester, W. Va., about fifteen years ago, was found the other day by a hunter in the woods near Chester. The animal still had the leather collar around its neck.

Whigs were originally teamsters in Scotland, who used the term whiggam to encourage their horses. Opponents of the Government in the restoration period were derided as favoring the Scotch covenanters, and hence were called Whiggams, afterwards whigs.

In the earlier periods of life trees increase much faster than when adult—the oak, for instance, grows more rapidly between the twentieth and thirtieth years—and when old the annual deposits considerably diminish, so that the strata are thinner and the rings proportionately closer.

Relics of the battles that accompanied Washington's retreat from New York are still found in the Washington Heights region. A police officer long stationed in that part of the city made an extremely interesting collection of cannon balls and military buttons and buckles picked up on the battle field.

In the west of France a cord is put around the neck of geese, and to this cord is suspended horizontally in front of the breast a long and heavy stick. Goats in the same region are bridled—i. e., indeed, we may call it bridling—exactly in the same fashion. The object in both cases is to keep the animals from passing through the hedges and eating the grass of neighbors.

The black kings of the African coast press your middle finger three times as a sign of salutation, the Japanese takes off his slipper, while the Laplander pushes his nose vigorously against you. In Hindostan they salute a man by taking him by the beard, while the people of the Philippine Islands take your hand and rub their face with it. The King of Ternate rises to receive his subjects, and they sit down to salute him.

Involuntary Weather Prophets.

The tortoise is not an animal one would naturally fix upon as likely to be afraid of rain, but it is singularly so. Twenty-four hours or more before rain falls the Gallapagos tortoise makes for some convenient shelter. On a bright clear morning when not a cloud is to be seen the denizens of a tortoise farm on the African coast may be seen sometimes heading for the nearest overhanging rocks; when that happens the proprietor knows that rain will come down during the day, and as a rule it comes down in torrents. The sign never fails. This pre-sensation, to coin a word, which exists in many birds and beasts, may be explained partly from the increasing weight of the atmosphere when rain is forming, partly by habits of living and partly from the need of moisture which is shared by all. The American cat-bird gives warning of an approaching thunderstorm, by sitting on the low branches of the dog-wood tree (whether this union of the feline with the canine is invariable the deponent sayeth not) and uttering curious notes. Other birds, including the familiar robin, it is said, give similar evidence of an impending change in the weather.—Chicago Herald.

THE MERRY SIDE OF LIFE.

STORIES THAT ARE TOLD BY THE FUNNY MEN OF THE PRESS.

An Undoubted Fact—She Knew What Was the Matter—The Human Sponge, Etc., Etc.

That "one swallow"—early comer—"Doesn't make for a summer." Is a maxim which, of course, is known to all. Yet one swallow—if a long one, And the liquor be a strong one—Will often of itself produce a fall. —Truth.

SHE KNEW WHAT WAS THE MATTER.

Maud (apropos of nothing)—"I wish I were dead!" Elaine—"Who is he?"—Chicago Record.

DELAYING ACTION.

He—"This may be my last kiss, darling—" She—"Then I give notice of flibuster."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

THE HUMAN SPONGE.

"No, I won't take water from any one." "Then you must be made different from the ordinary sponge."—Raymond's Monthly.

OF THAT OPINION STILL.

The Wife—"Yes, at first, my dear, the doctor thought that your recent sick spell had affected your brain." The Husband—"He still thinks so, it seems, from the bill he sent in yesterday."—Truth.

A TEST OF LOVE.

Wife—"You said, before we were married, that you were willing to die for me." Husband—"Well, so I am." Wife—"Yet you refuse to insure your life in my favor."—Raymond's Monthly.

A BRAVE MAN.

Editor—"Who wrote these verses?" Poet (proudly)—"I did, sir." Editor—"You are a brave man." Poet (blushing)—"Thank you, sir." Editor—"Yes; only a brave man would dare to acknowledge the deed."—Detroit Free Press.

NOT THE WHOLE TRUTH.

Magistrate—"What's your business?" Sandy Rhodes—"Railroad man." Magistrate—"What particular kind?" Sandy Rhodes—"Track walker!" Gets six months.—Halo.

A DIFFERENT BIRD.

Mrs. Cumso (holding up the article admiringly)—"Isn't it a duck of a bonnet?" Mr. Cumso—"It's more like a pelican of a bonnet."

"What do you mean, dear?" "The bill is too big for a duck."—EXPRESSIVE ORIEL.

She—"If Mr. Wiggins is in mourning why does he wear such loud trousers?" He—"Because Wiggins is extreme—most men would be satisfied with quiet mourning, but his trousers are positive lamentations."—Elmira Gazette.

IN THE HANDS OF JUSTICE.

The Poet—"Did you receive those verses I sent you last week?" The Editor—"I did." "I haven't received anything for them yet?" "No; but you will. The court will not convene until next week."—Statesman.

A BOYISH PREGOATIVE.

Tom—"Hallo, Ned. Have you heard the news?" Ned—"No. What's that?" Tom—"The people have just moved out of that factory building down on the river bank. Let's go down and stone the windows out."—Somerville Journal.

IDEAL FEMINE EMPLOYMENT.

First Female—"What business are you engaged in?" Second Female—"I am a book agent."

F. F.—"What have you to do?" S. F.—"Nothing but talk." F. F.—"How delightful."—Boston Courier.

A KEEN INTELLECT.

Chawley—"That fellow Jonesy has a very analytical mind." Fred—"How's that?" Chawley—"Why, this morning he saw a fellow out of the club window carrying an umbrella and he said: 'It must be raining.' He did, by Jove!"—Chicago Record.

A REFORMER.

First Burglar—"Let's quit this business and become reformers." Second—"I'm a reformer now." First—"Come off." Second—"Yes, I am; a chloroformer."

And he proceeded to saturate the sponge as the victim slept.—Detroit Free Press.

ETIQUETTE FOR THE GREEDY.

Mother (returning to the lunch table after a temporary absence)—"Why, where are the jumbles, Tommy? How many did you eat while I was out?" Tommy (aged seven)—"I don't know, mamma. You told me it was very rude to count what was eaten at the table."—New York Telegram.

HUMANITY'S TORTURER.

"You are the defendant in the case, are you not?" asked the prosecuting attorney.

"Yes, sir," replied the man in the witness box.

"May I ask your occupation?" "I am a manufacturer of calliope whistles."

"That's all," rejoined the attorney. "So far as we are concerned, your Honor, the case is ready to go to the jury."—Chicago Tribune.

CURIOSITY.

Prisoner—"As my counsel has failed to put in his appearance, I would ask your honor to adjourn the case."

Judge—"Why, you were caught in the act of stealing a gold watch from the person of a gentleman. Besides, you admitted the charge. I am curious to know what, under these circumstances, your counsel could have to say in your defense."

Prisoner—"So am I, your honor, and therefore I should like to hear him."—Vogue.

DANGEROUS TO BE AT LARGE.

"Why are they hanging this man?" asked the new arrival.

"For shootin' a feller in the laig," explained Alkali Ike, who was master of ceremonies.

"Good gracious! Would you take the life of a fellow-creature for so small a matter as that?"

"You bet we would. You see, he missed the feller he was shootin' at and hit the innocent man in the laig. A feller that can't handle a gun 'bout endangerin' the lives of everybody who happens to be on the street is too dangerous to have around, besides bein' a disgrace to the community."—Indianapolis Journal.

HER DREAM CAME TRUE.

A bashful youth of some twenty summers was paying his addresses to a young lady who had long since despaired of bringing things to a crisis. One night he called and they sat in the gloaming, their hearts pulsating with the tender passion. After settling the merits of the weather the girl looked shyly into the face of her timid lover and exclaimed:

"I dreamed of you last night, John."

"Did you? Why, now?"

"Yes, I dreamed that you kissed me."

"Why, now, what did you dream your mother said?"

"Oh, I dreamed that she was away from home."

A light dawned upon the young man's intellect. A singular sound broke the surrounding stillness, and in less than a month they will be married.—Memphis Commercial.

WISE WORDS.

The highest friendship must always lead us to the highest pleasure.

You, who forget your own friends, meanly to follow after those of a higher degree, are a snob.

To be of noble parentage and not to be endowed with noble qualities is rather a defamation than a glory.

Gentle words, quiet words, are, after all, the most powerful words. They are more convincing, more compelling, more prevailing.

Charity and good nature give a sanction to the most common actions; and pride and ill nature make our best virtues despicable.

A noble life, crowned with heroic death, rises above and outlives the pride and pomp and glory of the mightiest empire of the earth.

It is astonishing how soon the whole conscience begins to unravel if a single stitch drops; one little sin indulged makes a hole you could put your head through.

What is death but a ceasing to be what we were before? We are kindled and put out, we die daily. Nature that begot us expels us, and a better and a safer place is provided for us.

Woman is the highest, holiest, most precious gift to man. Her mission and throne is the family, and if anything is withheld that would make her more efficient, useful or happy in that sphere she is wronged and has not her rights.

Power will intoxicate the best hearts, as wine the strongest heads. No man is wise enough, nor good enough, to be trusted with unlimited power; for, whatever qualifications he may have evinced to entitle him to the possession of so dangerous a privilege, yet when possessed, others can no longer answer for him, because he can no longer answer for himself.

Close Dealing.

A woman sold a pig to a butcher the other day and he killed it on the premises. Now it is a superstition with some butchers that to cut off a pig's tail insures the preservation of the meat. The pig's little tail was cut off. But the woman was on the watch. She picked up the tail and gave it to the butcher to be weighed, saying: "I want pay for the whole of him."

But the butcher got even with her. The reckoning came to half a cent, probably because of the addition of the tail. She wanted the half cent, of course; she always does. So the butcher placed a cent on the block, cut it in two with his cleaver, and gave her the half cent.—Portland (Me.) Press.

Heroic Work by a Servant Girl.

The heroism of a servant girl saved a span of valuable horses for John Moser, of Perkiomenville. The large barn on the farm was set on fire, and the men, when they covered the flames, feared to enter the stables to release the horses and four head of cattle. The daring girl, however, dashed into the burning building and freed the plunging animals and was burned on the hands and face, though not seriously. She was honored by the men who saved the brave deed. The baroness of Philadelphia Record.



Black net is wrought with silver.

England is said to have over 1,000,000 widows.

Shoe strings and corset laces are now tipped with gold.

Mink collarettes are to be worn as much as usual this winter.

Two fifteen-year-old girls have passed the entrance examination to Yale College.

Before long women will be admitted to German universities on an equal footing.

A German lady of wealth and position has founded a school of gardening for women.

The Duchesse of Fife recently landed in one day seven salmon, weighing from six to ten pounds.

That phenomenal young sculptor, Theo Alice Ruggles, is now the wife of Henry Kiteon, himself a worker in the plastic art.

Persian lamb, astrachan, mink, bear, monkey, lynx, marten and beaver are all popular furs for trimming use or for whole garments.

Hereafter the junior fellowship of Dublin (Ireland) University will be open to female and mule students on the same conditions.

There are 600 women journalists, editors and authors in England and Wales, according to the British census reports just published.

The new medical school of Tufts College, College Hill, Mass., open to both sexes, has been formally opened in Boston with a class of sixty assured.

Mrs. Hermann Oehlrichs, a rich New York lady, is a member of the "Needlework Guild," which makes garments for the poor and the destitute.

Black silks, especially the thick, soft-finished silks, are coming into competition with satin-duchesse for combinations for velvets, black or colored.

Narrow elongated half-moons in diamonds make pretty brooches, and these pinned into the hair at the top of a coil have all the appearance of a diamond comb.

A decided novelty in Dresden china is a fruit knife stand. In shape it somewhat resembles a little bottleless caster with receptacles for knives in the upper band.

Swedish women often work as farm laborers. Those who have babies carry them on their backs in a leather bag, as squaws carry their young. This plan permits the mother to use both hands at her farm work.

The Czarina of Russia, although employing a household of seamstresses, makes nearly all the clothing for her youngest children, and also takes their new hats to pieces and trims them according to her own taste.

The Empress of Austria has to give a written receipt for the State jewels every time she wears them, and her majesty, as a result, usually contents herself with her private collection, which is worth \$1,500,000.

A novel feature introduced at a wedding recently was that all of the house guests inscribed their names on a roll of vellum, which was afterwards inserted in a filigree silver tube, which was presented to the bride.

Mrs. R. E. Willard is an enterprising Chicago woman. She is the proprietor of a barber shop which boasts six chairs, each in charge of a woman barber. Each of the assistants makes \$12 a week and half of all they take in over \$23.

The very newest fashion among the ladies of St. Petersburg, Russia, is to arm themselves with long canes when they go abroad. Some of these canes measure six to seven feet in length, and as the ladies stalk along they seem at a distance stalwart amazons who have supplied themselves with small scaffolding poles or plucked up young trees.

The so-called gold bonnets, with crowns of bullion embroidery, are very effective with pleated brims of brown velvet trimmed with parrots' wings standing out from choux of white chiffon edged, with gold picot loops. White satin ribbon strings two inches wide start from the back, and are tied under the chin in a stiff bow.

The death is announced of Miss E. J. Crop, the first woman who crossed the Atlantic from England in a steamer. On April 8, 1838, she sailed from Bristol in the Great Western, under the command of Captain Hosken, Royal Navy, who obtained special commission to command a merchant vessel. The voyage was accomplished in fifteen days. She was the only female passenger on board.

Amateur skirt dancing has been ousted in Australia by the skipping parties, which are all the craze just now in fashionable circles. Mrs. Rupert Clarke is responsible for introducing this fascinating form of entertainment to Melbourne society. Tournaments are held on to the asphalt tennis courts, and valuable prizes are offered by many hostesses for the lady who skips most gracefully and most successfully.

Miss Cleveland, of South Pasadena, Cal., a cousin of President Cleveland, has started a charity of her own in that city. She is fitting up a house she owns as a home for children whose parents are too poor to provide for them. Miss Cleveland is a bright, active woman of seventy. She does her own housekeeping work, and devotes several hours a day to teaching her little charges, whom she feeds and clothes at her own expense.

SUBDUING WILD BEASTS!

NOT BY KINDNESS, BUT THROUGH FEAR ARE THEY TAMED.

A Trainer Tells How He Handles the Beasts When First Picked-Under His Charge—Nerve Required.

HEAD KEEPER CONKLIN, in charge of a large menagerie, tells the New York Herald how wild beasts are tamed. He says:

"We have a tremendous amount of work to do with the wild animals in the winter quarters in Bridgeport of which the public knows nothing. You see we are getting new wild animals all the time, and as they come to us there is not a man living who would dare to go into the cages with them. During the winter we have to break those beasts so that we can handle them as you see us handle them on the road."

"And how do you do it?"

"Well, when they come to us they have thick leather collars around their necks, with heavy chains attached. They are more savage then than they were before capture, their capture only having served to bring out all that is ugly in them. They will spit and growl at anybody who gets near their cage and jump at the bars until they exhaust themselves. We begin to teach them manners the very day we get them, and they take a lesson in etiquette every day after that until the show starts out."

"What do you do to them?"

"My men catch the end of the chain fastened to the collar around the new beast's neck and fasten it to the bars in such a manner that the beast can only move a short distance. Then I take a good rawhide whip and stout club and enter the cage. I take a chair and sit down in the corner."

"Feeling perfectly cool, I suppose?"

"Yes, so long as I know that chain is solid and securely fastened. Well, the instant I get in the beast will give a roar and spring for me. I would be torn to shreds if I was within reach, but the chain holds, and instead of getting at me the lion, tiger, panther or leopard simply comes to the end of his rope, as it were, is brought up with a shock that sends him in a heap to the floor of the cage, and I give him a lash with the rawhide. The beast is at me again in an instant, and again he goes down and I lash him. I never have used the club on an animal, but I always keep it handy in case it is needed. I keep drawing my chair a little closer to him as this goes on until I get so close that they can touch me with their noses but cannot bite me. Then I just sit there and talk to them, and you would be surprised at the power the human voice will finally be made to exercise over wild beasts."

"While I sit talking to one, just out of reach of his teeth, if he gets ugly and attempts to spring at me I give him the rawhide. I keep this up and after a dozen or fifteen lessons they get so that they only snarl and growl at my entrance. As soon as I think it safe I try the beast without a chain. It is a little ticklish business at first, but I have plenty of help ready for the first effort. If it is a success the first time you generally have your beast mastered, although once in a while a brute that has been tractable enough will break out and go for his keeper. We had such a case here in the Garden two years ago, when Joseph Foster an experienced lion tamer, was clawed by a lioness and nearly killed."

Mr. Conklin modestly refrained from adding that Keeper Foster would unquestionably have met a terrible death on that occasion if it had not been for the fearless and prompt manner in which he attacked the lioness with an iron rod.

"Generally in the course of a winter we can get a beast so that he will not attack his keeper when he enters the cage," Mr. Conklin continued. "We not only have to get them so that they will not attack their keepers, though, but so that they will not attack each other, and that is a mighty hard job. Sometimes we can never do that. There is an old tiger there, one of the most savage brutes I ever handled, and I could take you into his cage with him now without the slightest danger. If I dared to put him in the same compartment with that big Bengal there, though, I would have a dead tiger on my hands in two seconds. Notice the long mark on the belly. That is where the Bengal ripped him two years ago, when I tried to put them together, as they would show better that way. If the Bengal's claws had not been clipped he would have ripped open the other one and killed him."

"What truth is there in the story of the power of the human eye over wild beasts?"

"It is a pretty thing to say, and that is about all," Mr. Conklin replied. "A man who wants to subdue a wild beast has got to be fearless and go about it in a courageous way, and the eye plays its part. The man who attempted to handle a wild beast who was not chained with nothing else than a fearless eye would be in a pretty bad hole, though. What a man must have is a good heart, plenty of pluck—lots of sand in his neck, as the prize fighters say. The secret of successfully handling wild beasts is to become imbued with a confidence that all wild beasts are really cowardly, especially if they belong to the cat family. If you are not afraid and you know how to do it it is easy enough."

An interesting find is a library of 500 volumes, including seventy manuscripts of the tenth and eleventh, and some with wonderful miniatures of the fourteenth centuries, which were recently discovered in a Franciscan cloister near Rieti, Italy.