

QUEER FREAKS OF NATURE

UNEXPLAINED PHENOMENA IN THE ANIMAL WORLD.

Bird Tails and Deer Horns That Are Unfamiliar to Their Possessors—Wanted Destructiveness of Animals.

Nature abounds with unexplained phenomena. Of what use, for instance, is the long tail of the male pheasant to a bird that has often to save itself by flight? In some varieties (as in the Chinese silver pheasant), the problematic appendage is nearly six feet long and makes it almost impossible for its proprietor to take wing at short notice. In running through the tangled underbrush of a tropical forest, the tail is hardly less obstructive, and is certainly not ornamental enough to compensate its undesirable tendencies. And again, of what benefit to its owner are the enormous horns of the Wapiti stag—antlers with a spread of fifty-six inches and a weight of twenty-five pounds? Beside stretching left and right almost as far as a man of average size could extend his arms, they send out a number of lateral branches forming a system of hooks and prongs exquisitely adapted to catch against every bush, as the encumbered animal dashes along through the maze of its native woods.

"I would not care for the bite of a mosquito if it wasn't for its whine," I have heard many people say, and it seems indeed not quite easy to understand of what profit the annoying or buzzing sound of its wings can be to any blood-sucking insect. It merely serves to warn or annoy its intended victims, to whom it can hardly be more aggravating than to the whining little vampire itself. A still greater enigma is the deadly virus of the African tsetse fly. In Southern Nubia, there are districts where herdsmen have to drive their cattle hundreds of miles every spring to avoid the bite of the little pest, whose private property is limited to extraction of a few drops of blood, and whose interests have no imaginable connection with the subsequent agony of its victims. A day or two after a stout steer has been bitten, strange swellings appear under his jaw and about the groins; the animal shivers and twitches, as if in extreme distress and finally dies in convulsions, often attended with outbreaks of fury, similar to those observed in an advanced stage of hydrophobia. The testimony of such travelers as Dr. Livingstone and Sir Samuel Baker leaves no doubt about the actuality of the described results; yet if a wasp should be provided with an apparatus to poison every year it nibbles, the arrangement could hardly appear more preposterous. The curious destructiveness of certain carnivorous animals presents a very similar problem. An otter in a well-stocked fish-pond will kill about fifty fishes for one it eats, and the murderous instinct of the weasel and the European pine-marten far exceeds the needs and conceivable interests of the little demons. An amateur poultry fancier of my acquaintance once lost twenty-eight imported chickens in a single night, all of them having been killed by a small sharp bite into the base of the brain. In three or four cases the murderer had gnawed the skull of its prey and torn open the neck in quest of blood, but with those exceptions, the massacre seemed to have been prompted by a sheer wanton love of havoc. With a little more prudence, the poultry-loving marten could have repeated his visits and banquets for a long series of nights, and have all his depre-dations credited to one or the other of the half-hundred different disorders fowls are heir to, for the reason—namely, a voracity of feathered bipeds, some of them always on the sick list. But that one night's mischief ended the game. The fowl was tracked to his lair, and he was shot and his body was examined.

As a rule, defenceless animals are dressed in the colors best adapted to conceal them from their enemies, and kind Nature goes so far as to vary the protective hue of certain creatures with the different seasons of the year as in case of the Norwegian grouse, whose plumage is brown in summer but turns white as it approaches winter.

But the close study of that rule reveals some curious exceptions. In the Arctic regions where snow-white would be the best possible protective color, several species of seals are dressed in suits of black and dark blue, and contrast strikingly with the bleak surface of the ice-fields, and attract polar bears and other connoisseurs of seal-skin from a distance of many miles. Sparrow-hawks often pursue tangers or summer-redbirds, that try their best to escape by darting into a thicket of tangle-vines, but are betrayed again and again by a color that "flames as if it was going to set the woods afire," as Henry Thoreau expresses it. Several species of tropical fowls are attired in even more risky hues—a glaring combination of white and scarlet or of yellow and dark blue; colors that cannot possibly escape the attention of even a casual observer. Butterflies fight the struggle for existence under similar disadvantages, and many species of their helpless caterpillars seem to have been colored expressly for the convenience of their chief enemies, the predatory ichneumon wasps, that can hardly fail to see a coil of red and dark brown worms in a green tree.—*New York Ledger.*

A Diamond Is Useful.

A St. Louis drummer, says the *Globe-Democrat*, says he has found by experience that a small diamond worn in the necktie—not in the shirt front—served as a badge of respectability wherever he went. If he went into a restaurant and found that he had forgotten his pocket-book he was never asked to leave his watch until he could pay his bill, and he was never asked to pay in advance by a hotel clerk if he went to the hotel without baggage. In short, wherever he went that little \$60 diamond proclaimed that there was a man who was not pressed for money and who could be trusted.

A Peculiar Fish.

A fish of most peculiar appearance, the like of which has never been seen by any of the many old fishermen who have inhabited Pensacola, Fla. It was caught in the Gulf with hook and line and is about five feet in length. The body is similar to that of a dolphin, and it has a bill like a needle fish. The tail is forked, and has two immense fins rising from the back. They are of a soft, bony substance, and are of such peculiar formation that they give the fish the appearance of having a flowing mane.—*Chicago Tribune.*

THE FARM AND GARDEN.

GREEN FOOD FOR FOWLS.

Fowls want green food, especially in the season for it, and where they have their liberty they consume large quantities of grass; also vegetables, if they can get at them. When confined in little runs they should have a small supply with their other food daily. Clover is always welcome. There is nothing they like better than cabbages, both heads and leaves. By sowing a bed in the garden with cabbage seed, early and thick, a plentiful supply of leaves can be furnished them before the transplanted plants head.—*New York World.*

VALUE OF SOAP SUDS AS A FERTILIZER.

The wastes of the domestic washing contain some free alkali and some alkaline solution of animal matter derived from the soiled clothing. The skin exudes a considerable quantity of nitrogenous matter and some ammonia compounds. These are dissolved by the alkali of the soap and become available nutriment for plants. Hence all the soapy wastes of the household should be turned to use, and either drained into a compost pit, where they can be absorbed, or run direct into the garden, where they will be very valuable for all garden crops.—*New York Tribune.*

CUT-WORMS.

We do not know of any better way of protecting cabbage, tomato and other plants from the devastation of cut-worms than to inclose the stems of the plants with paper. The paper may be applied when the plants are set out or afterward when the cut-worms begin their work. When the worms are very abundant some such protection is necessary, but where only a few appear we keep them in check by examining the plants every morning and killing all the worms found. A few years ago cut-worms were so abundant in our gardens that all early vegetable plants were soon destroyed if not protected, but by persistent warfare on these pests we have so much reduced the number that we set out our cabbages and similar plants without protection.—*American Agriculturist.*

FEEDING OATS IN THE STRAW.

Threshing did not use to cost so much as it does by modern methods. The steam thrasher does the work quickly and well, but that is about all that can be said for it. Counting cost of coal, help and other expenses, doing the work with the flail in winter is quite as cheap. If the oat crop is thus left much of it will never be threshed, but fed to horses and other stock in the straw. There is no waste enough in this oats to pay cost of threshing, provided the oats in the straw are fed to animals having good teeth and good digestion. If pigs have access to the straw they will root over and eat all the wasted oats. Practically the largest part of the oats fed to horses in winter are fed whole. After the threshing has been done the farmer thinks he cannot afford time to take the oats to mill, and the toll for the advantage of feeding them ground. It is the opinion of most farmers that they cannot afford the cost of grinding oats, except they have the facilities for grinding them at home, without carrying them several miles to mill.—*Boston Cultivator.*

PROFITABLE WOODLAND.

Cattle need some shade in the pasture fields during the hot days of summer, and nothing is better for this than to have a small piece of woodland attached to the fields. Such a piece of woodland can be made profitable in various ways and prove a valuable adjunct to the farm. If the trees are properly attended to all of the fence posts needed can be grown right on the farm, and the wood pile kept stocked. New bean poles could be made from the young saplings, and in fact the woodland would be of value in a dozen different ways. To do this, however, the underbrush must be kept down by thinning out occasionally. If the stock is kept out, young trees can be trained every year by giving them more freedom. If the woodland is used for a pasture the succulent grasses should be sown among the trees, and if the underbrush is kept down all they will thrive better during the hot days than if exposed directly to the sun's hot rays. The animals should not be turned into the woodland until the grasses have a good start, and are thoroughly rooted in the soil. If after a few seasons the woodland becomes depauperated and the trees begin to look old and withered, the animals should be kept out for a season to give the growths a chance to regain their lost vitality.—*New York Voice.*

HOW TO BUILD UP HORSES.

Many flat-sided, long-backed, slack-loined horses are receiving liberal patronage on account of their defects being considerably masked by layers of fat and flabby muscle. Condition does not simply mean the presentation of a good appearance, but signifies the ability to endure work and maintain health. The two latter attributes cannot be possessed without liberal feeding and plenty of exercise. Good condition requires time to produce. The work of conditioning ought to begin fully two months before the season. The daily exercise and quantity of food should be increased in like ratio, until five miles a day is given a draught horse and eight or ten a light horse. Drags are detrimental to the process of conditioning. A great invigorator of the horse is rubbing. Nothing next to good feeding, gives him more vim. A plentiful supply of good, clean, thick cotton rubbers should be on hand, and the horse should be vigorously rubbed after his exercise until he is perfectly dry. Groom while the circulation of the skin is active, as after exercise is far more beneficial than at any other time. The death rate among heavy stallions during the season is much higher than need be, which is largely the result of abruptly putting horses into the trying ordeal of heavy service and constant excitement, without building up the system in the manner indicated.—*Canadian Live Stock Journal.*

POULTRY HOUSE ON WHEELS.

The chief cause of disease among restrained fowls in hot weather is close confinement. Even if allowed an earth floor it soon becomes contaminated, and its corruption emits death-dealing gases. Most "movable poultry houses" are prettier in theory than available in practice. If built to move they are seldom moved, because too heavy and unhandy. They are frequently too high, increasing their weight, and are rarely moved. My model is a simple one. Having an old wagon

HOUSEHOLD AFFAIRS.

BEAN SOUP.

Soak over night one pint of good dry beans; throw off this water, parboil fifteen minutes, and put to boil in plenty of cold water with a pound of fat pork cut in slices. Simmer slowly till soft, adding more water as needed. There should be two and a half quarts of it when done. Cut the pork in dice, and rub that and the beans through a coarse sieve or colander. Have ready one pint of cooked and thinly-sliced carrots; if very large cut the slices in quarters. Mix and break up with one quart of new milk, adding water if too thick. Just before serving add two ounces of butter, and pepper to taste. The pork may be omitted, and more butter, or a cup of cream used in its place.—*The Housewife.*

COOLING AND SERVING MELONS.

If there is room in the ice-box and plenty of time put the melons there. Otherwise wrap a wet towel around them and stand them in a draught to cool by the evaporation of the water on the cloth. To keep watermelons over night in a large tub of cold water is an excellent way to cool them. Do not lay ice upon the cut surface; it makes the fruit watery and destroys the substance.

Of course the ordinary slicing of melons is generally unimproved, but a little ingenuity applied to the matter greatly improves the appearance of the fruit and increases the enjoyment of eating it. Cut off the top of the melon and then, using a fork and tablespoon, take up convenient sections, letting the seeds drop out as they will, but do not break the pulp apart to reach them. This is a much more acceptable way of serving than in great slices or wedges, always providing there is no stint in quantity. When watermelon is frozen as an ice the flavor is much improved by the addition of any acid fruit juice as currant, lemon, cherry, or lime juice, with a palatable addition of sugar.—*Chicago News.*

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Cut a piece from the top of old kid shoes and insert it inside the ironing holder you are going to make.

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HOUSEHOLD HINTS.

Coffee boiled longer than one minute is spoilt.

Never put tea leaves on a light colored carpet; they will surely leave a stain.

Boil clothespins in clean water once a month, and they will be much more durable.

In packing bottles or canned fruit for moving, slip a rubber band over the body of them.

Warm dishes for the table by immersing them in hot water, not by standing them on a hot stove.

To beat the whites of eggs stiff, with ease, they should be cold, with a very small pinch of salt added.

Cut a piece from the top of old kid shoes and insert it inside the ironing holder you are going to make.

Ladies' shirts are in greater variety as the demand increases. Dotted muslin, percale and linen are used in negligé attire.

Jessie Carson, a plucky girl, has for several years been driving a stage between Osage and Park Rapid, in Minnesota.

Butterfly boxes for hats are made of everything—lace, velvet, filigree work, metallic and bullion gauze, jet, pearl and tinsel cloth.

Now the swagger girl has adopted the dude silk sash, and with her blazer, shirt and four-in-hand looks too sweet for anything.

Miss Fannie Edgar Thomas, whose pen now earns her a very handsome income, says she was working for only \$4 a week a few years ago.

The modern corset was introduced in the twelfth or thirteenth century and was worn by men as well as by women until the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

One of the newest shades of color is puce-blue, which is charmingly effective combined with gray. It is said to be the favorite color of the Empress Eugenie.

Miss of the most noted of Kansas belles is Miss Clark, of Leavenworth. She is a blonde, with blue eyes, a peach-blow complexion, and a beautiful mouth, which reveals pearly teeth.

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