

Science Siftings

Wonderful Vitality of Insects.

It is a standing puzzle to the entomologists and others interested in the study of insects how the frail little creatures of the mosquito and the butterfly order can brave the cold of an arctic winter and yet retain their vitality. A London naturalist took the larva of the common milkweed butterfly and exposed it to an artificial blast of 68 degrees below zero. Upon taking it out of the range of this artificial blizzard and gradually thawing the creature out, the naturalist was surprised to find that the worm was able to creep in less than half an hour afterward. According to the testimony of all the arctic explorers, butterflies and mosquitoes, as well as a great variety of other insects, have been found flitting joyously about in the highest latitudes ever penetrated by man. It is even declared by those who have made tours of exploration to the far North that the mosquitoes of those regions are the largest and healthiest varieties of that species of pest that have ever been discovered by man.

The National Tree of China.

The tungshu, or wood oil, tree is worthily named the national tree of China. It is stately in appearance, with smooth, green bark and wide spreading branches, affording a fine shade. It belongs to the spurge family, of which the castor oil plant is a member. It bears a fruit as large as a small orange. Each nut contains three triangular seeds, similar to small Brazil nuts. The oil is pressed from these seeds, and the refuse is used as a fertilizer. The oil is used principally for polishing woodwork and dressing leather. Considerable quantities are exported. The wood of the tungshu is used for making musical instruments, fine boxes, and the framework of small houses. It is free from the ravages of insects.

The Cow Tree.

In the mountains of Venezuela grows a remarkable tree. It is found in the rocky places, at heights of about half a mile. It is a stupid-looking tree enough at first sight. It is lofty and slender, and has stiff leaves that grow a foot or more in length. It looks much of the time as if it were dead. In those regions there is a wet and dry season, and during many months at a time not a shower washes its leaves. It bears very small, insignificant-looking flowers. It is the milk-tree, the famous 'palo de vaca,' which Humboldt describes. He first brought it into notice. It is an evergreen. Its sap is a delicious fluid resembling the finest Jersey milk, only sweeter and richer than even that. When the negroes are thirsty they cut into the side of the trunk, and the milk gushes forth in a great stream. It is both food and drink, so rich is it.

The 'Breathing Cave.'

In the western part of North Carolina, in the mountains known as the Fork Range, is located the most remarkable cavern now known to exist. It is called the Breathing Cave, and is certainly a most wonderful natural curiosity. During the summer months a current of air comes from it which is so strong that a full-grown man cannot walk against it, and in winter the rush of air is equally strong. At times a most unpleasant odor is emitted from the cave, which is supposed to be from the carcasses of dead animals which have been sucked in and killed by coming in contact with the inner walls of the inanimate breathing monster. During the spring months, when the change from inhalation to exhalation takes place, the air is filled with pellets of hair, dry bones, small claws, etc.

The Work of a Watch.

Very few who carry a watch ever think of the unceasing labor it performs, says the Dundee 'Advertiser,' under what would be considered shabby treatment for any other machinery. There are many who think a watch ought to run for years without cleaning or a drop of oil. Read this and judge for yourself. The main wheel in an ordinary American watch makes four revolutions a day for twenty-four hours, or 1460 in a year. Next, the centre wheel, twenty-four revolutions in a day, or 8760 in a year. The third wheel, 192 in a day, or 59,080 in a year. The fourth wheel, 2440 in a day, or 545,000 in a year. The fifth, or escape wheel, 12,960 in a day, or 4,728,200 in a year. The ticks or beats are 388,800 in a day, 14,812,000 in a year.

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Irish Wayside Hospitality

Mr. Charles Battell Loomis, the American humorist, was travelling through Wicklow, in Ireland, when he found himself with a whole day to spare in a section where there were no hotels within five miles. 'I had no notion of going five miles on the road on the light breakfast I had eaten—and no certainty that there would be dinner at Rathdrum,' he writes in the New York 'Sun.' 'I set out as blithely as I could (with the thought of my letter of introduction crossing Mr. W— on his way to town and me a homeless wanderer), and before long I came to a little white washed cabin, in front of which a handsome old woman in a man's cap was bending over some flowers.

"Good morning. Can you let me have something to eat?"

"Sure, 'tis little I have," said she, with a smile that took five years off her age.

"Some fresh eggs, perhaps, or some milk?"

"Aye, I can give ye those, but me house is no place for the likes—"

"That'll be just what I want," said I, and she went into the house and bade me follow.

'Fresh eggs and unlimited milk are not the same as brill and young lamb, and sauterne and cigars, and witty conversation, but when you are hungry from outdoor exercise they are not so bad.

'And Mrs. Kelly, like every man, woman, and child in the whole of Ireland, had relatives in America.

'She'd a son there long since, and Ja-ames, just turned twenty-one, had gone there this summer to the "States of Indiana." Did I know the States of Indiana?

'I told her I did; that I'd been to them many a time. And where did Ja-ames go to—to what city?

'To Lafayette (with as French an accent as you'd wish), and was I ever there?

'I was. Her face lighted up.

'If I went there again would I ask for Ja-ames Kelly, an' he'd be her son, an' as fine a boy as ever left Ireland (with a true Dublin roll of the r).

'Still thinking of the dinner I had missed at Heatherdale, I asked her if she knew Mr. W—

'Sure I do, an' the finest man in all Ireland. Me boy Ja-ames worked there at gardening; an' whin he was leaving for America Mr. W— gave a dinner for him to all the villagers, and gave him a watch with his name on it and "In Remembrance of Heatherdale" in it. Oh, yes, a fine man an' humble. Sure, if Jimmy'd be sick for a day it's Mr. W— would be down here in me cottage askin' afther him, an' could be doing anything for him.

'Humbleness. That was what the blessed Lord taught us. He could have been born in a palace, but He was born in a stable in Bethlehem. Are you a Catholic?"

"No—"

"Ah, never mind. There's all kinds of good people—"

"Is Mr. W— a Protestant?"

"Sure, I dunno," was Mrs. Kelly's guarded reply. "He goes to the Protestant church, but I don't know what he is, on'y he's a good man—none better in all Ireland.

"The good Lord," she continued, as she filled my cup with rich milk (she had no tumblers at all, she said), "taught us to be kind to one another and to be humble, the same as He was kind and humble, although He could have had a palace if He'd chosen."

'I told her that I had heard such things; that I had a grandmother who taught me all about Bethlehem and the rest—

"Oh, the good woman!" said Mrs. Kelly, feelingly. "Well, it's true. Be kind and be good and be humble, and ye'll be rewarded."

All the afternoon I climbed the beautiful heather-purpled hills in the vicinity with her youngest son, a boy of nineteen. The son was a very intelligent boy, and I was struck with his easy and, in the main, correct use of English. He told me that it was easier to understand me than an Englishman, and I took it as a compliment, for I certainly never heard better English spoken than is talked in the Dublin district by rich and poor alike. London and New York should come to Dublin to learn the proper pronunciation of English.

'As I left the village I felt that I had lost one good time to have another, and the day on the hills made me sleep like a top.'

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DEAR ME!

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