

THE NATIONAL FLOWER.

Bob Burdette Casts His Vote in Favor of the Humble Plantain.

I am going to record my vote for the National flower, and I am not going to pay Messrs. Whang & Co. twenty-five cents for the privilege either. Talk about corruption in our National elections, there has been more money spent in this flower campaign, right at the polls, and openly, too, than would elect a councilman. Fellow citizens, Indians not taxed, Chinamen and women, I give my hand and my vote to the humble and obtrusive plantain. She needs no encomium from me. There she stands, or rather squats. Where? Right there, right where you are looking at this minute if there is a spot of ground six inches square within half a mile of you. In the velvet laws that cost you four dollars a square foot; in the passy bed; in the tub wherein grows the accursed oleander, breaker of human backs; in the garden of roses; in the toothsome bed where the south wind loiters amid the loud-breathed onion, stealing and giving odor; wherever you have planted any thing; wherever you haven't; on the hill-sides of New England, on the bleak and rocky coast of Maine, in the orange groves of Florida, on the great alkali deserts of the wild and woolly West, where Shasta's hoary head lifts itself to the clouds, crowned with sternal grandeur, and where the gibbering tourist cackles and chatters through the glories of Mount Washington; wherever the foot of man has trod, and everywhere that it hasn't, there springs this radiant weed of hope, eternal on the mundane breast; there strikes its all long root, this herb of truth, though oftentimes crushed to earth, rising again stronger than ever, and spreading itself over the adjacent grass, like a true born American hogging four seats in a railway car. Oh, citizens, I do bespeak your "most sweet voices" for the plantain. It knows no East, no South, no North, no West; it has no sectional prejudices, no local pride or limitation; just wherever the soil is fertile or barren it lays hold on life; it comes to stay, it gets there, Ell. Where nothing else will grow it flourishes like the grass-hopper; where smartweed perishes because it has no root the plantain makes a crop. A few short weeks in slushy spring the Mayflower hides its pretty bloom in mountain slopes and eastern hills, a transient guest of local fame and briefest life. When autumn flings her gorgeous banners to the skies, the golden-rod, for a few passing weeks, makes radiant the meadow, glen and hill, and then departs to hide away the year; but thou, oh! plantain of the sandy caw, thou hast the grip; thou art a stayer, thou; thou art the first to come, the last to go. Thee, the all beholding sun upon his annual farewell tour sees all the time, making glad the door yard of the poor, and playing merry Cain upon the rich man's lawn. Thou thrivest upon persecution; thou turnest not back from them for the grasshook, and sayest among the laws mover, ha, ha! The rains nourish thee; the sun-burned drought maketh thee strong; a black frost tingeth thy leaves with luster life and a six foot freeze that kills the cast-iron hitching posts is pie for the plantain. It is American clean through, this fresh and cheery weed. It has an improved name—plantain-lance, and is proud of it, as any American who she has invented a coat of arms and married an ancestor. That is its family name; the plantain which claims the honor of being the national flower has a name as purely American as the continent itself—Plantain major. Long live the major! Forever float that standard weed, where—? What's that? 'Tis isn't an American plant at all; it is found all over the inhabited and uninhabited world! Well, Jessem River! Isn't that American? Rise up, major, you are elected.—Robert J. Burdette, in Brooklyn Eagle.

WONDERS OF THE SEA.

Facts About Sea-Urchins, Star-Fish and Other queer Creatures.

It is not surprising that the man of science, living in a world of wonders, goes always eagerly through the microscope or telescope, should differ from the common folk whose eyes look out languidly upon life through a natural or corrective lens. The naturalist particularly, amid the marvels of field, forest, swamp and shore, finding stimulus every day to his worship of the great mystery, reverts to the feelings of childhood. His supreme sense of the sublime felt in the contemplation of the mere classified thousands accessible to him among the infinite millions of living things—this sense is never jaded. Man may be a proper, but he is not the only study of mankind; and it is well for us now and then to be as little children and listen open-eyed to the schoolmaster telling the things we once knew but have forgotten.

There is the sea-urchin to begin with, says the Chicago Times. It looks like a chestnut-burr and is commonly called the sea-chestnut, but it is a fish and has 4,000 feet known as the "ambulacra" feet. Their arrangement permits the urchin to progress in any direction. At the base of each contractile tube there is a sac, acting as a reservoir of water. If the urchin wishes to march this sac contracts, the ambulacra

root is distended with water, something like the finger of a glove if you blow into it, the sucker at the end is fixed on the ground, the other ambulacra feet repeat the operation, and the urchin is out for a walk. This creature, so fragile in appearance, is nevertheless able, on rocky coasts where the surf is violent, to pierce the hardest stones and to excavate a lodging for itself, even in granite.

The star-fish we know so well in a hundred creatures equally amazing. The white part in the center of it is the stomach. At first sight it has the appearance of a transparent mass divided into five equal parts, and yet it grinds with the power of a grindstone. M. Deshayes tells of the destruction committed by star-fishes on a bed of mussels. They had settled on them by millions. All the roots were covered with them, and from a little way off appeared "quite red." When a star-fish wanted its breakfast it came dragging along by the aid of its ambulacra feet and rested its stomach on the hinge-joint of the shells of a mussel. In a few minutes, by the action of the gastric juices, the muscles of the hinge were dissolved, the stomach penetrated through the shells of the mussel and carried on there a suction so powerful that in a brief time nothing remained of the mussel. The foot itself, although so difficult to detach, shared the same fate as the other parts. The stomach of the creature then returned to its normal situation, and the star-fish made a fresh move to satisfy its appetite. So thoroughly was this done that in the course of a few days all the mussels in the locality were exterminated.

The most depraved of the "corsairs of the sea" is the hermit crab, whose very hermitage—the shell it bears upon its back—is stolen. It is a shameless parasite, the personification of laziness. When still young it makes its debut by an assassination. Seeking a shell of fitting size it installs itself therein, after having devoured the rightful owner. Then it sets out to make its fortune, pillaging ruthlessly on all sides. When its shell or hermitage becomes too small it promptly steals another. "I am acquainted," says M. Deshayes, "with a collection in which there is a hermit that was found in the tropics and had taken up his abode in a great helmet shell, such as you may see in the window of a natural history dealer. The claws of this hermit measured more than eight inches." M. Deshayes calls the hermit crab a "hypocritical old fellow."

A word about the cuttle-fish or sepia. Figure to yourself a bag about three inches long, surrounded by a broad border. From this gray and gelatinous body a short tube comes out and above this is a shapeless head, with two square eyes gleaming like molten gold. Like the octopus the sepia is a great destroyer of crabs and small fish, seizing them with its eight suckers as they pass. It can change its color like the chameleon and by a very simple method. In the intestines of the skin there are globules of various colors, and in accordance with the impressions made on the animal these are expanded or contracted, thus producing the strangest effects. It appears also to have the gift of tears. At any rate it is well supplied with lachrymal glands. By contracting its tube and ejecting the water contained the cuttle-fish can rebound with great velocity. Then there is the thick, black ink it ejects in self-protection. The ancients scarcely knew of any other ink. Cuvier, M. Deshayes says, was the last to put the sepia ink to an important use. As a fit whim for a scientific man he made use of it to write his memoir on Cephalopoda and make the drawings.

Another wily and knowing fish is the fishing frog. It is very repulsive in appearance, with a broad body and an enormous mouth, surmounted by two long filaments terminating above in bright, shining surfaces. The fishing frog, buried in the mud, vibrates these filaments above its head until some fish thoughtlessly comes loitering around the novel bait. Then the capacious maw opens, engulfs the victim, and the game begins again. Market-women sometimes speculate on the voracity of the fishing frogs, and purchase them at a low price on the strength of what they contain. The fish swallows its prey gluttonously without mastication, and the women often find in its stomach smaller fish, little damaged, which they sell to unobservant customers.

An Unjustifiable Expense.

Judge Walton, of the Maine Supreme Court, was one day at work in his office, drawing up an opinion in a knotty and important case, when a brother lawyer walked in. The visitor was a man for whom the judge entertained a pretty decided dislike. "Well, Brother Lightweight," he said, curtly, "what can I do for you this morning?" "Oh, nothing," answered the caller; "I merely dropped in for a few minutes." A disagreeable silence ensued. Then the judge looked up and asked: "Brother Lightweight, why don't you get married?" "Because I can't afford it. How much do you suppose it costs me to live now?" The judge declared that he could not guess. "Well, it costs me all of six thousand dollars a year just for my own living." "Dear! dear!" said the judge, in a tone of astonishment; "why, Lightweight, I wouldn't pay it. Is that worth it?"

When Girls Should Be Silent.

Would a well-bred girl, possessed of any feeling whatever, possessed of the slightest sensibility or sense, divulge the fact that she had been proposed to by a man, and that she had refused him? I have asked this question of several girls, and also of several married women, and while their answers were varying I am confident, from what I know of their characters, that the well-bred girl of honor and sensibility would never, upon the weightiest pretext, disclose what had passed between herself and a man upon so delicate a subject. The unsuccessful suitor is a man who receives very little sympathy, and usually there is some more deserving of it than he.

—A "Guide to the Churches of London" shows that the number of metropolitan churches has increased between 1885 and 1889 from 828 to 1,018. Altar vestments are now the rule in 69 churches, as against 87 in 1883; altar lights in 118, as against 64 in 1883; and the "Eastward Position" in 369, as against 304 in 1883. In the same period the number of churches in which the communion is celebrated in the evening has decreased from 289 to 372.—The Church Review.

THE DIVORCE EVIL.

Marriage Made a Failure by the Man with Which It Can Be Annulled.

The frivolous character of the divorces granted in many cases of divorce recently granted and now on the docks leads thoughtful people to ask: "What are we coming to?" We do not know that the wives in a given number of cases are more blamable than the husbands, but it is the wives who suffer the most from such sundered relations. As a rule, they suffer more in their affections and in their reputations than the stronger sex. While there is something to be said in favor of a law of divorce which separates mismatched couples, there is no condemnation too severe for men or women who enter the marriage state with the idea in their minds that if they do not like it they will take advantage of the law that allows them to escape. Yet there is no doubt that thoughtless young men and giddy girls often approach the altar with that thought in their minds. In cases where the husband is very young the idea is apt to grow in strength as the years pass. He finds himself while on the sunny side of thirty with a wife who has possibly lost some of her girlish beauty and children, whose necessities absorb the greater part of his earnings. He compares the free and independent life of some of his bachelor associates and imagination magnifies the pleasures he might participate in if he were unmarried. Some day the wife, who is ill prepared to fight the battles of life alone, is stunned by the service of an application for divorce. Cases of this kind, we regret to say, are not uncommon. Almost every one can recognize or more in his own circle of acquaintances. Of course, if the reasons were preferred in the application less harm would be done; but the legal necessity of setting forth reasons often suggests a resort to falsehood. Trifles in the way of disagreements will be magnified into baseless suspicions urged as matter of fact. The remedy for them, as for most other evils, lies with the people themselves. The law is not so much at fault as the faculty with which it is evaded. The church and society are too lenient in matters of this kind. I may be questioned if a man divorcing a wife for no other reason than that he prefers to live single is injured in his business or social relations by his act. If he has been a church member he still remains one. And yet he has committed the most cowardly crime a man can commit. A woman thus divorced, unless she have powerful friends, has no future, and children are thrown upon the world without character and instincts of right which are inculcated in well-regulated homes.—San Francisco Call.

MUSIC-LOVING LIZARDS.

They Follow a Whistling Student Until Scared Off by a Peasant.

As is well known, lizards of all colors and sizes abound in Italy. They lie basking on all the stones, they run along all the walls, they peep out every chink and crevice; but as soon as they hear the faintest noise the disappear with lightning speed, and it is hard to see them near and to observe them closely. Walking carelessly, and noticing the dear little animals darting now here, now there, I remembered the Greek statue of Apollo Sauroktonos, who is always represented as busied with a lizard—Apollo god of the sun and of music. "Suppose I try," I thought, and softly spoke softly. I began to whistle; dreamy old German air, and behold! lizard lies still as though rooted to the spot, rising its little head in a listening attitude and looking at me with his sharp little eyes. Without stirring I continued my melody. The lizard came nearer and nearer, and at last approached quite close, always listening and forgetting all its fears. At once, however, as the whistler made the slightest movement it vanished into some crevice, but to peep forth again a moment after and to listen once more, as though entirely entranced. A delightful discovery truly, and one of which I extended the field of observation daily. At last as many as eight or nine of these little music-lovers would sit around me in the most comical attitudes. Nay, two of them, a mother and its young one, would sit awaiting me as I arrived whistling at the same hour of day, sitting on a large stone, under which was probably their home. With these, too, I made some further experiments. After having made music to them for awhile I cautiously went a few steps further, whistling on in soft, drawing tones, such as I had found they best loved to hear, and see, verily, they followed me! Watching them with intense interest, I continued to whistle as I walked on slowly, halting every few paces and being silent while I halted, and truly the little creatures followed, slowly it is true, but in a straight line, at a distance of about fifteen steps, until at last, unhappily, the heavy tread of a peasant put them to flight. But my experiment had lasted long enough to make me understand the Apollo Sauroktonos, and I once more reverenced the keen native observation of those old Hellenes. Be-

William H. Wells believes with me that a novel is not a work of a stamator or a tallow chandler. The both act upon the principle that writing novels is purely mechanical work, like writing lawyers' briefs, for instance, or book-keeping.

Where the Merchants of the East Traders from the East.

Nijni-Novgorod, situated at the confluence of the Oka and Volga, 776 miles by rail east of Moscow is composed of three parts, the upper city, or Kremlin, built on three hills, rising to a height of some 600 feet; the lower town, along the right bank of the Oka and Volga; and the Fair and Kusavino suburb, on a flat, sandy tongue of land between the Oka and Volga, connected with the town by a bridge of boats 400 meters long and 15 broad. The position of the town, writes Theodore Child, in Harper's Magazine, is most picturesque. As we stand on the bridge the foreground is formed by the bi-stre waters of the Volga crowded with boats and barges; in the middle distance are the quays and sloping banks, surmounted by the large red buildings of the lower town, with their white window-frames; to the right, midway up the hill, is the vast monastery of the Assumption, dating from the thirteenth century, with white domes and white inclosing walls; crowning the hill to the left is the Kremlin, with its capriciously irregular walls and battlements, from amidst which rise bulbous cupolas with gilded domes, and towers with conical roofs; to the left, also in the lower town, may be seen the green domes of the Church of the Nativity, built in a bastard style of Italian Gothic, of red brick picked out with white stucco ornaments, the whole very eccentric in form and color; still further to the left, beyond the Kremlin, on the summit of the hill, is an alley of trees, the Alkas, or terrace, from which may be obtained a magnificent view of the mighty Volga and the plains through which it flows. This is the Mother Volga, the "Matuschka Volga," of which you hear so much in Russia; and indeed when we follow its course on the map, and when we examine the products that it concentrates at Nijni-Novgorod, we can understand why the Russians speak of it so affectionately, and why the annual fair at this point has become so important in Russian commerce. From its source to its mouth in the Caspian sea the Volga runs a course of 2,300 miles; the extent of its water-shed is three times that of France; by various systems of canals it is connected with Moscow, St. Petersburg and the Balkans; by a canal also it is connected with the Dvina, and therefore with the White sea; by its affluents, the Oka and the Kama, it acquires a total navigable system 7,500 miles in length, and commands vast districts westward toward Toula and eastward as far as the foot of the Ural Mountains. The consequence is that the Volga is the greatest waterway in Russia. Above Nijni-Novgorod the river is navigated by some 14,000 boats, employing 300,000 men; below Nijni it is navigated by 8,000 ships, manned by 230,000 hands; while on the lower Volga immense fishing and fish-curing enterprises are carried on.

Although it numbers only 60,000 inhabitants, Nijni-Novgorod boasts more than fifty churches and chapels.

From time immemorial Russian merchants were wont to meet in the summer with the merchants of the East at various points on the Volga between the confluences of the Oka and the Kama. In 1624 the greatest fair was located on the ground of the monastery of Jeltovodski, near Makarieff, where it remained until 1817, when it was transferred fifty-five miles higher up the stream to Nijni-Novgorod. In order that we may relieve our minds of too serious thoughts before venturing to explore this famous fair, let us plunge once for all into the most recent statistics and sum up briefly its commercial importance. First of all, the reader must bear in mind that the Jahrmärke, as it is called, which takes place annually from August 5 to September 15, is a wholesale fair. The goods chiefly dealt in are cotton, woolen, linen and silk stuffs, which constitute about forty per cent. of the whole; next in importance come iron, corn, tea, furs, salt, wine, fish, pottery and manufactured goods. About four-fifths of the whole goods brought to the fair are of Russian origin. The basis of the Oka river sends agricultural and manufactured products; the basin of the Kama sends metal wares; corn and salt are produced in the southern provinces; fish comes up from the lower Volga and the Caspian; Siberia, the Caucasus, Central Asia and Persia send a variety of wares; and about ten per cent. of the total amount of goods are imported from Asia, namely, tea via Kiachin, Canton and Suu, raw cotton and silk, leather wares, madder and other manufactured goods. The chief article of trade is cotton, of which the price is fixed at this fair; the prices of raw wool and silk are also fixed here. Economics will also readily demonstrate that the whole iron production of the Ural depends on the fair of Nijni-Novgorod. The caravans of boats laden with iron start from the Ural works in the spring, stay at the fair of Lelshav, which supplies the lower Volga, and then proceed up to Norgord in August. The purchases of iron made at this fair for consumption in Asia and middle Russia determine the amount of credit that will be granted for the next year's business to the owners of the iron-works, who are largely dependent on this credit. The corn and salt trade, and still more the whole trade of Siberia and Turkistan, are influenced by this fair, their success depending entirely on the conditions of credit which the merchants are able to obtain at Nijni-Novgorod. It thus appears that the fair exercises a direct influence on all the leading branches of Russian manufactures. During the six weeks that it lasts it attracts daily some 300,000 people from Russia and Asia; the river is literally laden with thousands of boats; the quays, extending over a length of ten miles, are covered with merchandise; on the fair ground proper and around it 6,500 shops are occupied, and although the exact and absolutely correct statistics are not at hand, it is estimated that the fair is worth to the city of Nijni-Novgorod about 100,000,000 rubles.

THE LEAF-CUTTING BEE.

Strange Habits of a Particularly Industrious Insect.

Of all our visitors, however, the most interesting is the leaf-cutting bee, who comes to work upon an old-fashioned bush-rosebush which forms a part of a side wall of our parlor. Bees, you know, are such busy creatures that they can not even make a call without taking their work with them, and it was the faint sound of his industry that first drew attention to our new friend on a leaf of the rosebush. Looking closely to see what the stranger was about, we were amazed to find that, having placed herself astride of the edge of the leaf, the bee was deliberately cutting out with her jaws a piece of the leaf, rolling it up beneath her as she did so. We tried to trace her flight when the cutting was done, but this astonishing visitor baffled us in our pursuit by disappearing quite suddenly into the earth—just where we could not discover.

When all these strange doings were related at the dinner table the family punster declared that such a performance of a bee on a leaf was clearly beyond belief, and had not the bee continued her visits, giving all an opportunity of forming her acquaintance and seeing her work, the truth of our account of Mrs. Bee might still be doubted.

Happily she was not easily disturbed, and at a call from some watcher in the out-door parlor, "The bee is at work," we could gather quite closely around to observe her, when she had carefully chosen the leaf that best suited her and began the work of cutting it. Toward the close of the summer the selection of leaves was made with greater care, sometimes as many as six leaves being inspected before one was found sufficiently tender for her purpose. Often when Miss B. started for home her roll of work was so heavy that she fairly tumbled on the leaf with it, and had to pause a instant to recover her balance before bravely carrying it away. But where did she take her load, and what did she do with those nicely cut pieces of leaf? She was too busy to tell us; and, although we were eager to return her calls, we could not discover her home, and could not imagine why she rose leaves so industriously, until happened upon a book, Forés Carie, one day which told us all about it.

It seems that these bees build nests of the leaves of the rose and other trees, and the surface of the ground or in old wood. These nests are sometimes six inches deep, and generally consist of six or seven cells, shaped like a thimble, the closed of one thimble fitting into the end of another. When a cell is full of the pieces of leaf, such as we watched the bee cut out, it is watched with honey, and so nicely are cells built that they hold the honey without leakage. On the full of honey an egg is deposited then the cell is closed with three circular bits of leaf for a cover. Ruskin says the bee pushes down little cell covers "with a tucked-up quite tight, like the covering of a preserve." Think of each bee having a nice little pot of honey all to itself!—Harper's Young People.

HUMOROUS.

—Lumley says he isn't much of a grammar, but he knows that his wife is in the imperative in Washington Capital.

—Inquiring spectator (at the Speculative speculator (gloomily)—"don't know the name of the horse won, but I know the names of all the horses that didn't win."—N Weekly.

—"That was a very brave act yours in stopping the runaway of young man. Here's a hundred-dollar bill for you." "That's a good deal money for me." "Nonsense! What a man saves my life I believe in paying him what it is worth."—Epoch.

—"Who's right has let her certainties down, with low and plasticum hum, Hesperus, striving for our blood, around our pillowe hum, We watch, we wait with bated breath, while within the midnight chime, And all our doubts a stinging slap—and mine 'em every time."—Boston Courier.

—"Do you know," said Dedbrota, "that there is nothing more depressing to me than to go into one of those big dry-goods stores." "Why?" "It worries me to hear those people yelling 'cash' so promiscuously."—Merchant Traveler.

—Clerk (entering theatrical manager's sanctum)—"There is a young man waiting who wants to read a play to you, sir, and another who says he's come to horsewhip you for breach of contract." Manager (taking off his coat)—"Oh! show in the man who's come to horsewhip me."—Judy.

—Tommy—"Are we going to take the cat with us when we go to see grandma next week?" Mrs. Figg—"Of course not. What makes you ask such foolish questions?" Tommy—"Cause I heard pa tell Mr. Brags that the mice would have a high old time while the cat was away next week, that's all."