

Leaf Insects,

“Once upon a time” a boatload of Spanish soldiers landed on the coast of Florida, and after filling their water casks from a sparkling spring, laid themselves down under a tree to rest.

Those were the days when the “New World” was still a wonder, a land of marvels and witchery.

A sudden puff of wind sent a shower of leaves fluttering down upon the ground. It was midsummer. The fallen leaves looked fresh and green and the sailors began sleepily to speculate as to the cause of their fall. Then their eyes opened widely, for they saw that the leaves were doing something more than falling.

They were walking, tumbling, jumping, fluttering over the ground in the maddest confusion. But there was “method in their madness.” They were all making their way toward the trunk of the tree, some of them were already crawling up the bark.

The sailors sprang to their feet, panic-stricken, and fled without stopping to investigate the marvel. Some of them declared that, looking back, they saw the trees step out and start in pursuit. Not a man of that ship’s company could be induced to land on that shore again, and their captair had to complete the filling of the water casks at another part of the coast. For years and years after that spot was known and avoided by the Spaniards as “the haunted spring, where the leaves and trees walked about.”

How those brave men would have stared had they known that it saw only a harmless insect that was at the bottom of it all.

The Phillium scythe, or leaf insect, leads a sluggish life, making its home on the branches of a tree. Its body is very thin and flat, its large wings are veined and colored exactly like a leaf. When disturbed, it tucks its legs under its body, thus perfecting the resemblance to a leaf, with petiole and blade complete. In summer its wings are bright green, but in the fall they change with the deciduous leaves to a brown, withered hue. Its hold upon the branch is slight, a puff of wind being enough to throw it upon the ground, when it at once sets out to regain its home, in such manner as terrified the Spanish sailors.

There is another race of leaf insects, butterflies. While the upper surface of their wings is bright, like a flower, the lower resembles a withered leaf, with fungus-like blotches. Their flight is very swift, and they settle on twigs only, never on leaf or flower.

When pursued, and hard pressed, the leaf butterfly has a way of vanishing as suddenly as a full-fledged ghost. In the twinkling of an eye, the insect has become a leaf so far as

its pursuer is concerned. Settling on a twig, it folds its wings closely back to back, with the head and antennae hidden between them. The tiny tails of the wings touch the twig, forming a perfect stalk to the leaf, which is held in place by the middle pair of feet. While thus at rest, the most observant eye would not suspect it to be other than a withered leaf.—[Selected.

Prayer vs. Dinner—Dinner Wins.

A newly-married young man took his wife to church. The sermon was just about well under way when he noticed the little woman at his side suddenly start. Then she turned red, looked around nervously for half a minute, and then hurriedly rose and left the church. The young husband felt certain his wife was ill, and would have followed her out, but he is a bashful man, and the thought of the long centre aisle he would have to travel in the face of the congregation kept him rooted to his seat. He was glad when the service was over, and made his way almost at a lope for his little menage. He found his wife cheerfully busying herself about the dinner. “Weren’t you ill?” he breathlessly inquired. “Why, dearie me,” was her reply, “you know I’m never ill.” “Well, why did you leave the church so suddenly?” “Why, Jack, I suddenly remembered that I forgot to put the chicken potpie on the back of the stove before we left home. Would my listening to a good sermon have compensated you for a charred dinner?” “Not much,” said Jack, who (we are assured) is “as human as they make them”.

Had the story reached the editor of a straight religious journal, he would no doubt have varied it—making the pious wife sacrifice her dinner, and rewarding her with “the peace of God that passeth understanding” in place of it.—[Secular Thought.

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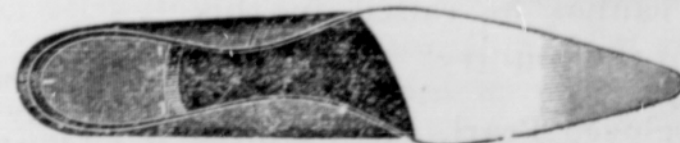
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