



PURPLE HELLEBORE (to show honey-glands).

nourish the plant. Instead of petals we find tubular nectaries filled with honey, which are situated between the sepals and the stamens. These tubes are attractive to bees from the sweet though poisonous liquid they contain, and in thus rifling the nectaries they brush the pollen on to the stigma and fertilise the flower.

It seems strange that the Christmas rose with its snowy flowers should be called black hellebore, but it is so named from its dark root-stock and black fibre.

MITES.

Some valuable foreign insects in my museum have been reduced to a heap of dust by an army of microscopic mites, whose life work it is to demolish dried specimens, and whether they are butterflies, wasps, beetles, or plants seems immaterial to them.

This incident has led me to some slight study of the mite family, and I am surprised to find how many species there are and what widely differing kinds of work they are engaged upon.

We all know the cheese mite which quickly reduces our favourite Stilton to a mass of powder; this much resembles the destroyer of dried butterflies, and both are like a certain other mite which abounds in damaged flour.

There is a special mite which eats dried figs; another species prefers dried plums.

The feathers of the ostrich are infested by a minute creature of this kind, and it is also found in owl's plumage.

In the cavities of the bones of skeleton-mites exist, and old honeycomb is quickly taken in hand by them and destroyed. A specimen of the sacred beetle of Egypt was sent to me alive some years ago. I kept it in health for about sixteen months, but so rapidly did mites breed upon its living body that every few weeks I had to place it in warm water and with a camel's hair pencil brush away dozens of minute specks which I could only just discern running over its body.

Sometimes humble-bees are infested in this way, and I pick them up in a dying state, apparently unable to rid themselves of their tormentors.

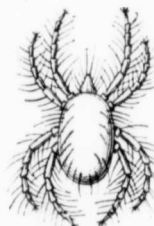
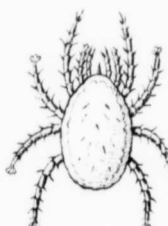
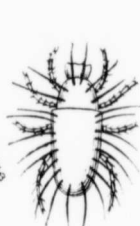
The excessive irritation many persons experience after walking in cornfields is due to the harvest-mite, which buries itself in the skin and there creates acute inflammation and much consequent distress.

Some years ago I met with another branch of the family and could but marvel at its extraordinary labours. A furze bush was apparently wreathed in fine white muslin in layers between the branches fold after fold, and upon this gauzy material were multitudes of bright red specks careering about. Of course I took some specimens home and I

soon discovered they were spinning mites (*Tetranychus lintearius*).

There are many species, and it is one of these, the so-called "red spider," which does so much mischief in greenhouses by sucking the juices of plants.

Birds are sadly worried by a small red mite which lives in the crevices of cages which are not kept perfectly clean. The best protection from their attacks is a good sponging of the perches and every part of the cage with a solution of carbolic acid; this will effectually get rid of the insects.

SPINNING MITE
(*Tetranychus lintearius*).BEETLE MITE
(*Gamasus colcoptatorum*).CHEESE MITE
(*Acarus domesticus*).

I am not attempting to write an essay upon mites or else I might speak of dozens of other species, some parasitic upon flies and spiders, and others inhabiting ponds and ditches. I have but touched upon a few kinds I have happened to meet with in daily life.

These minute creatures evidently have an appointed work which they do secretly and mysteriously all unknown to us, until a suspicious heap of dusty fragments shows us where this unseen army has been encamped.

(To be continued.)

Erratum.—The inscription to the illustration in last month's paper should read "Witches' Brooms on Birch-tree."

VARIETIES.

AN ANECDOTE OF PRINCESS MARY,
DUCHESS OF TECK.

On a brief visit to Lord Sefton, at Croxeth, her Royal Highness visited the Hospital for Women, Liverpool, without any formality. She wished to see it as it was. Her Royal Highness went through all the wards, speaking to every woman and handing to her a little bouquet. On leaving one ward she inquired why one woman was crying so bitterly, and being informed that she was about to undergo a serious operation, her Royal Highness exclaimed, "I will go to her; I will go to her again and try to comfort her." She hurried back to the patient's bed, and was seen for some minutes holding a whispered conversation, whilst stroking the poor toil-worn hand. Turning away, wiping her eyes, the Princess said, "I wish to be kept informed how that patient goes on." On reaching the hall of the hospital her Royal Highness made some laughing inquiry into the presence of "a man" in the hospital; she was told it was the poor patient's husband, who was in great grief. The royal lady said, "I will speak to him. Where can I go to speak alone to him?" A door being open—that of the pantry—her Royal Highness drew the poor husband in with her, and tried in a homely, kindly way to console him. Her remark to those near

her was, "Well, I'm glad I asked about him; I think he will feel comforted." Just little actions such as these endeared the Duchess to the general public; and this has a peculiar pathos when we know that she herself had to undergo the agony of two operations.—From *The Times*.

THE HUMAN RACE.—How small after all is the human race. If we reckon the population of the world at fourteen hundred millions, there would be room for them all on the frozen surface of the Lake of Constance in Switzerland, and the crush would not be so very great either, as there would be a space of four square feet for each person. If the ice were to break and the whole human race were thus to sink into a watery grave, the level of the lake would only be raised six inches.

FLAXEN LOCKS.

"I saw the tresses on her brow

So beautifully braided;

I never saw, in all my life,

Locks look as well as they did.

She walked with me one windy day.

Ye zephyrs, why so thieving?

The lady lost her flaxen wig!

Oh! seeing's not believing!"

Thomas Haynes Bayly.

MARRIAGES OF MEN OF GENIUS.—A man of genius only needs a wife of sense; more than one genius in one house is too much.

MISFORTUNE IS SOMETIMES A BLESSING.

It has often been said that no one ever made a success in life until she had learned to breast the waves of trouble and been well-nigh shipwrecked or cast upon the shoals of misfortune, there to suffer and learn wisdom through the bearing of burdens and crosses. Uninterrupted prosperity never brings out the best qualities of humanity.

While it seems a very hard lesson to learn, it is always of the greatest advantage to young people to be thrown entirely upon their own resources and compelled to work out their own everyday salvation. Whatever they will make of themselves depends to a great degree upon their temperament and disposition. If they have the proper mettle they are bound to come out all right, to develop into something honourable, and will some day be thankful for the fortune that stranded them at an early age and compelled them to exercise self-reliance, forethought, and the ability to adapt themselves to circumstances.

IMAGINATIVE GIRLS.—The girl of imagination without learning has wings and no feet.