Plants in the Homes and in the School Room.

Insectivorous Plants.

The cut represents a curious plant which is very common in these Provinces—*Drosera rotundifolia.*

It grows on the borders of ditches, by roadsides, in swamps and in wet places generally. In June its round, reddish leaves may be observed, forming a rosette close to the ground. From the surface of each leaf there are numerous hairs or spines, bearing on their tips minute liquid drops which glisten in the sun like so many diamonds—hence the popular name of Sun-dew, which has been given to the plant. But if these minute drops be examined, they will be found to consist of a glutinous substance wholly unlike dew. Later in the summer, in July or August, one or perhaps two scapes are sent up from the rosette of leaves, bearing a raceme of flowers. The plant when fully grown is not more than a few inches high. When first noticed early in June, its rosette of leaves, not more than three or four inches in diameter, lies close to the ground.

But this little plant has been talked about and studied closely by many naturalists; and if all that has been written about it and others of its class were gathered together, it would make a small library. These Insectivorous Plants catch and devour unwary insects. They lie in wait for these, and although they do not dart out and seize them their plans to secure their prey are no less sure and deadly. The drop of glutinous substance on each little hair or spine is sweet and attractive to the insect. Alighting on the leaf he makes his meal, but when he would retire he cannot. The more he struggles the deeper he is imbedded in the sticky substance, while the spines begin to enclose surely with a death-like grip. The sides of the leaf then begin to contract as is shown in the upper leaves of the drawing above, and at the expiration of a few hours the unhappy insect is enclosed in its living tomb. After the leaf has partaken of its meal, which may take a day or more, it gradually unfolds, and its traps are again set for another unwary insect.

This is no fancy sketch. You may dig up a plant, taking care to have plenty of earth attached, and expose in a saucer to plenty of air, for the plant derives its nourishment from these sources, while at the same time it does not object to animal food. Take a small insect, or if your humane instincts forbid you impaling a black fly or mosquito on these deadly spines, a particle of raw beef about the size of a pin head will satisfy the plant's craving for animal food. Then watch the results.

Dr. Hooker, the eminent botanist, sums up the opinions on the Drosera by saying: "The repeated testimony of various observers spreads over a century, and though at no time warmly received, must, I think, satisfy us that in this small family of the Droseraceæ we have plants which in the first place capture animals for purpose of food, and in the second digest and dissolve them by means of a fluid which is secreted by the plant."

Another species of Drosera less common in these Provinces, has longer and narrower leaves than the one figured above. It is *Drosera Americana,* var. *longifolia.* It has the same blood-thirsty character as the round-leaved form.

The relatives of these plants which derive their nourishment in part, at least, from animal food are numerous. Very many plants capture insects but it is not yet certain, in many cases, that they use them for nourishment. Among the latter is the Pitcher Plant, *Sarracenia purpurea,* so abundant in bogs and wet places. The leaves of this family of plants—Sarraceniaceæ—which give them a character entirely their own, are pitcher-shaped or trumpet-like, and are collected in tufts springing immediately from the ground. They send up at the flowering season one or more slender stems, bearing each a solitary flower. The early English settlers in this country gave the plant the name of the *Side-saddle Flower* from the peculiar umbrella-like expansion in which the style or whole flower terminates. Another common name for it is the *Huntsman's Cup,* but ugh! no huntsman would drink the putrefying contents of one of those cups—the open sepulchres where myriads of insects are decaying in a polluted liquor and in a polluted atmosphere. At the top of these pitcher-like leaves there is a gaudy coloring and sweet juices, somewhat intoxicating in their nature, which tempt unwary insects to alight. Leading from this to the receptacle below are numerous hairs, all pointing downwards. The insect, feeding pleasantly and securely on the intoxicating nectar, wanders onward to the brink. If he would return it is difficult, for the hairs point downward, and he is in that happy, don't care mood that leads him to prefer the "primrose path." He reaches the brink and is carried to that "bourne" from which no insect traveller returns. Examine this Pitcher Plant and let the Drosera come in for a share of your attention. They are worthy of it.