

The Great Tumble Weed of the Prairies.

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During his wanderings in the great West, Mr. Daniel C. Beard, the well-known artist and naturalist, came upon a curious vegetable growth known popularly as the tumble weed and scientifically as *Cyclotoma platyphyllum*. At the time he was unable to secure a specimen of the weed, but lately, through the kindness of Mr. Henry Worrall, of the Department of Agriculture, Topeka, Kansas, he was enabled to obtain photographs of some of the finest specimens of the great weed preserved in the buildings of the department. The genial gentleman referred to was even courteous enough to permit himself to be used as a medium for comparison.

A startling story is told by the voracious Western man of a party of English tourists who were out on the plains on a shooting excursion. They had been out the greater part of the day without meeting with any game, and were repeating for the hundredth time that their luck was "beastly," when one of them noticed a large animal some distance away, which was approaching them in a leisurely but apparently inquisitive manner, for it paused occasionally as if to study them.

The Englishman pointed the animal out to his companions, and they agreed among themselves that it must be a bison, though its movements were different from those of any four-legged creature they had ever seen before. However, they did not make much of that fact, as a breeze had sprung up and had raised considerable dust and made it impossible to see very clearly.

It was so evident that the bison—if such it were—was attracted by curiosity, that one of the hunters determined to beguile it by a device he had spoken of as very successful with the antelope. Accordingly he laid upon his back and kicked his heels in the air, while the crack shot of the party prepared to shoot when the proper time came. The creature was so far away and approached so slowly that the decoy grew tired and had to be relieved. It was so evident that they were drawing the creature toward them, however, that each in turn cheerfully and even enthusiastically kicked himself tired.

The breeze had grown momentarily stronger, and though it was fortunately blowing towards them, it created so much dust that it was not easy to get good aim. However, the animal had increased its pace, and with an occasional bound into the air, was rapidly approaching them. It was impossible to make out which was his head and which his side, so the appointed hunter, with as careful aim as the strange character of the game rendered possible, fired.

The animal had been hit, for they could see the fur fly, but it paid no attention to the shot, unless it was to bound into the air and increase its speed so much that in a few moments it was near enough to be easily distinguished. It was an uncouth monster of huge proportions, and progressed not in the usual way, but by a series of prodigious leaps. The hunters were greatly startled by the appearance of this unknown animal, but they realized that they must lose no time in shooting, if they hoped to keep it from them. They all fired

at once; but whether wounded or not, the monster only sped the swifter.

They paused in amazement for a moment, but were roused into sudden activity when one of the number shouted that a whole herd of the monsters was upon them. True enough, all over the plain they came with frightful rapidity, making such tremendous leaps that there seemed as many in the air as on the ground. The hunters lingered no longer, but with the haste of terror threw everything from them, and ran to such purpose that



they distanced their pursuers and found shelter late in the afternoon in the town from which they had started. Their story caused a great sensation, but not of precisely the kind they had expected. The next morning it was found that the tourists had left for San Francisco.

The story, if not true, at least serves well to illustrate the peculiar habit of the great tumble weed. This strange growth, which belongs to the

sizes can easily be imagined. And as the English tourist with his store of wonder adjectives and odd expletives is the stock butt of the Western man, it is not strange that he should be brought into service to illustrate the most striking feature of the tumble weed.

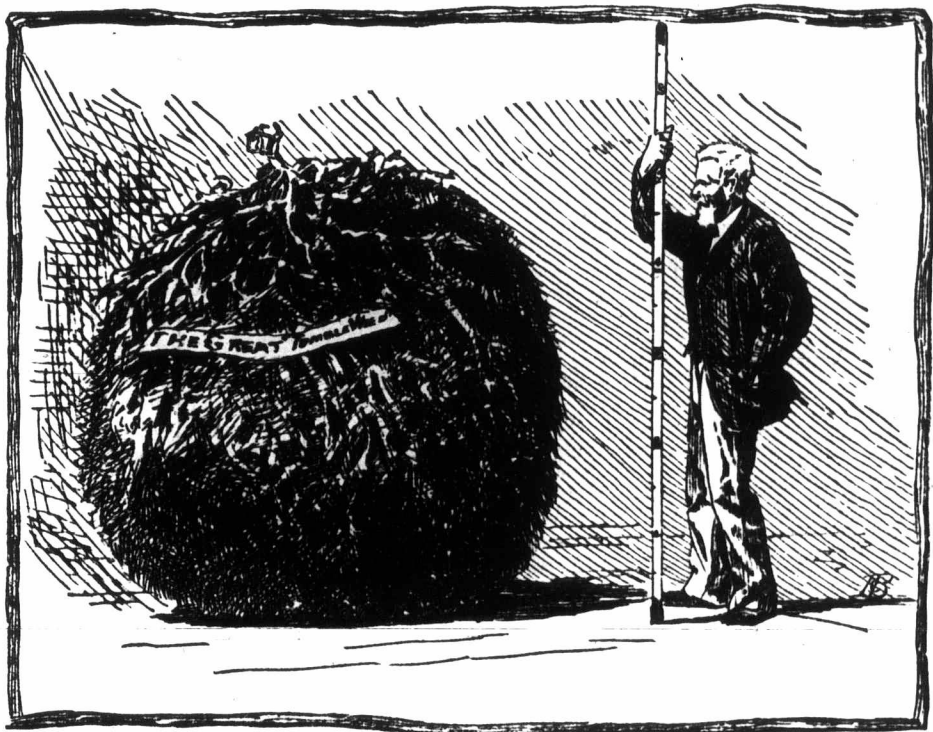
Aside from its peculiar phase, this habit of the tumble weed may be viewed in an even more interesting light. Man sees everything from the standpoint of utility to himself, and he may not comprehend the necessity for the existence of the tumble weed at all; but in every created thing there seems to be inherent a continual effort to propagate its kind. Examples of the working of this spirit cannot be necessary, for even in the cities, the trees—the aiantus, for example with its winged seeds give evidence of it. The fantastic and seemingly senseless whirling, rolling, and bounding of the tumble weed, when understood, tell the story of a unique plan for distributing seed.

Knows too Many People.

The older we grow the more fastidious as a rule we become socially. We like the friends we can count upon—who are "as easy as an old shoe" with us; but we shrink from the new ones, especially, I need not say, from any that give the least suggestion of patent leather. There are those for whom the companionship of persons of title makes amends for anything; but I am speaking of a class who have over-lived such illusions and made up their minds, during the span left them in this world, to be comfortable. Old friends, or, if new ones, nice ones; intelligent society with a humorous bent in it; the most perfect freedom of thought and speech; these alone to mature persons make social life worth living; all the rest is strained, pretentious, and uncomfortable. As a very young man I once sought an introduction to a well-known woman of letters in London. She is not now of much importance, being dead and forgotten; but all literary persons had then an attraction for me, (as indeed they have now), and I expressed a wish through a common friend to know her. "My dear fellow," he wrote, after making his application, "she will have nothing to do with you. She says she knows a great deal too many people already." At the time I thought this rather rude, but I have long learned to envy that lady's moral courage. How delightful it would be, if one dared, to have that noble truth printed on one's card, and when new folks call upon us whom one does not want to know to return them this by post: "Mr. So and So's compliments, but he knows a great deal too many people already!"

—Longmans Magazine.

EATING BEFORE SLEEPING.—Man is the only animal that can be taught to sleep quietly on an empty stomach. The brute creation resent all efforts to coax them to a violation of the laws of nature. The lion roars in the forest, the horse will paw all night, and the pig squeal, refusing all rest or sleep until they are fed. Man can train himself to the habit of sleeping without preceding meal, but only after long practice. A child's stomach is small, and when perfectly filled, if no sickness disturbs it, sleep follows naturally.



pig weed family, is very abundant in the great Arkansas valley, and varies in size from the huge specimen shown in the illustration to one foot or less in diameter. It grows upon a disproportionately small stem, which, however, is of sufficient stoutness to sustain the mass until it has ripened and dried, when a slight gust of wind will suffice to blow it over and snap the brittle standard.

It now rolls over and over at every puff of wind, and being both light and elastic will perform a series of bounds over any impeding boulders or bushes. In a high wind the fantastic spectacle produced by a number of these balls of varying