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ON BLIGHT

The true blight or Aphis is a quiet, dull, stupid-looking insect, mostly without wings, but sometimes it has four, two of which are much larger and longer than the other two, and fold over and hide them, reaching beyond the body, and meet together behind it. These wings are generally as clear as crystal, with a few veins in them, yet if you hold the insect in the sunshine, and examine him through a glass, you will find they take all the colours of the rainbow: you will also find he has a long trunk or sucker, which is used as a pump or syphon, through which the sap of plants is drawn. I have sometimes seen this sucker so long as to pass under the breast and legs, and reach a considerable distance behind the body, but it is not generally so. All blights infest the young and juicy shoots and leaves of plants, for the purpose of sap-sucking; and the plants honored by their operations forthwith play the most amusing and incredible vagaries: bearing blossoms instead of leaves, leaves instead of blossoms; twisting into corkscrewed stems which ought to be straight, and making straight as sticks those which, like the scarlet runner and hop, ought to twine; as in the peach making the leaves hump in the middle, and causing the tree to look as though it had a ramous crop of young fruit; making apple trees bear blossoms on their roots, and causing roots to grow out of their young shoots; and, by tormenting orchards in this way, preventing the fruit from ripening, and making it woolly, tasteless, and without juice. Our China asters often owe a good deal of their beauty to these veins; they act as a spur to make them blossom beyond their strength and nature, and then die off without bearing seed. It is amusing to see with what regularity the blight station themselves on the young shoots of the Guelder-trose, crowding so close together that not a morsel of the rind is to be seen and not infrequently forming a double tier, or two thicknesses; the poor sprig losing its former upright position, and writhing itself into strange contortions.

Blights are of all colours, but green is their most fashionable hue; those of broad beams are as black as soot, and velvety; and these, if attended to, do but little harm; they cluster at the very top, and each bean should be lopped just below the blight, and the top carried away and burnt, not thrown on the ground, or else they are sure to climb up the bean stalks again, and, stopping here and there at the best landing place to increase and multiply, thus soon covering the whole plant; nor should they be buried in the ground, for they take care to outwit you by living under ground for months, and when the gardener's spade turns them up again, they make for the beans directly; the plan of lopping the beans does not injure the crop, but, if carefully done, rather improves it. The blight of the willow is very large, and, at first sight looks greyish, but under a glass is beautifully variegated with black and white; when crushed it gives out a deep blood-coloured die, which stays on your hands several days, in spite of frequent washings.

I have taken a good deal of pains to find out the birth and parentage of true blights; and for this purpose have watched, day after day, the colonies of them in my own garden, and single ones which I have kept in-doors, and under tumblers turned upside down. The increase is prodigious; it beats every thing of the kind that I have ever seen, heard, or read of. Insects in general come from an egg; then turn to a caterpillar, which does nothing but eat; then to a chrysalis, which does nothing but sleep; then to a perfect beetle or fly, which does nothing but increase its kind. But blights proceed altogether on another system; the young ones are born exactly like the old ones but less; they stick their beaks through the rind, and begin drawing sap when only a day old, and go on quietly sucking away for seven or eight days; and then, without love, courtship, or matrimony, each individual begins bringing forth young ones, and continues to do so for months, at the rate of from a dozen to eighteen every day, and yet continues to increase in size all the while; there seem to be no males, no drones, all bring forth alike. Early in the year these blights are scattered along the stems, but as soon as the little ones come to light, and commence sap-sucking close to their mother, the spaces get filled up, old ones look like giants among the rest, as here and there an ox in a flock of sheep; when all the spare room is filled up, and the stalk completely covered. The young ones, when they make their first appearance in the world, seem rather posed as to what to be at, and stand quietly on the backs of the others for an hour or so; then, as if having made up their minds, they toddle upwards, walking on the backs of the whole flock till they arrive at the upper end, and then settle themselves quietly down, as close as possible to the outermost of their friends, and then commence sap-sucking like the rest; the flock by this means extends in length every day, and at last the growing shoot is overtaken by their multitude, and completely covered to the very tip. Towards autumn, however, the blights undergo a change in their nature: their feet stick close to the rind, their skin opens along the back, and a winged blight comes out—the summer generations are entirely wingless. These are male and female, and fly about and enjoy themselves; and, what seems scarcely credible, these winged females lay eggs, having first lived through the winter; and

whilst this operation is going on, a solitary winged blight may be observed on the under sides of the leaves, or on the young shoots, particularly on the hop, and differing from all its own progeny, in being winged and nearly black, whereas its young are green and without wings. In May, a fly lays a lot of eggs; these eggs hatch and become blights; these blights are viviparous, and that without the usual union of sexes, and so are their children and grandchildren, the number of births depending solely on the quantity and quality of their food; at last, as winter approaches, the whole generation, or series of generations, assumes wings which the parents did not possess, undergoes frequently a total change in colour, and in the spring, instead of being viviparous, lays eggs.

You will never find a plant of any kind infested with the aphis, without also a number of ants and ladybird among them and also a queer-looking insect, like a fat lizard, which is in fact the caterpillar of the ladybird. The connexion of the ant and aphis is of the most peaceful kind that can be conceived; their object is the honeydew which the aphis emits; and, far from hurting the animal which affords them this pleasant food, they show it the greatest possible attention and kindness, licking it all over with their tongues, and fondling it, and patting it, and caressing it with their antennæ in the kindest, prettiest way imaginable.—Not so the ladybird, or its lizard-like caterpillar: these feed on the blights most voraciously, a single grub clearing a leaf, on which were forty or more, in the course of the day. The perfect ladybird is a decided enemy to them, but not so formidable a one as the grub. The eggs of the ladybird may often be seen on the top leaf; they are yellow, and five or six in a cluster placed on their ends; these should on no account be destroyed, as is too often the case; but on the contrary, every encouragement should be given to so decided a friend to the hop grower.

Besides the ladybird and its grub there are two other terrible enemies to the poor aphis; one of which is a green ungainly-looking grub, without legs, which lies flat on the surface of the leaf, and stretches out its neck just like a leech, till it touches one of them; directly he feels one he seizes it in his teeth, and holds it up wriggling in the air, till he has sucked all the goodness out of it, and left it a mere empty skin. This curious creature turns to a fly [one of the Syllphidæ, *Ed. Ent. Mag.*] which has a body banded with different colours, and which in summer you may often observe under trees and about flowers, standing quite still in the air, as though asleep, yet, if you try to catch him, darting off like an arrow. The other has six legs, and very large strong curved jaws, and is a most ferocious-looking fellow, strutting about with the wings of the blights which he has killed on his back. This fierce fellow comes to a very beautiful fly [*Chrysopa Peria*], with four wings, all divided into meshes like a net, and two beautiful golden eyes. All these creatures, which thus live on the plant lice, have a very strong and disagreeable smell in the perfect state.

For a favorite plant infested with blight there are several remedies—smoke of tobacco, snuff, &c.; but the most effectual, and the least hurtful to the plant, is to let it stand in a tank of cold water for half an hour, when all the blights will leave it, and swim on the surface of the water.

EXTRACT FROM THE ANNUAL ADDRESS OF THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CONFERENCE FOR 1837.—Whilst on the subject of petition, we call your attention to a case of great interest, which it is believed can be settled only by the interference of the British Parliament, and which they will be induced to take up only by the interposition of the British public. The case to which we advert is that of the encouragement afforded by the Directors of the East India Company to the collection of a tax commonly called "the pilgrim tax," in which the direct support of idolatry is connected with the public revenue. In this manner idolatry is recognised,

sanctioned, and encouraged, not only to the national injury and disgrace, but to the fearful obstruction of those Missionary exertions which are made by our Connexion, in conjunction with other Christian bodies, for extending the blessings of religion in that great and interesting country. We think civil rights cannot be better employed than in thus removing great and glaring evils, and in expunging from the national statutebook those laws which obviously oppose the principles of religion and the good of man. If you should, in the course of the year, be called upon for your suffrages on this question, we hope you will afford your moral weight to the cause by the expression of your opinion to the Legislature by petition.

Do not suppose, dear brethren, that by these suggestions respecting the Sabbath question and the pilgrim tax we invite you to intermingle in the agitations of the times on party politics. We fervently pray that He who so obviously raised up our Connexion as a purely religious community may now and in all times preserve it from becoming a political association. Whilst you exercise your rights as Englishmen, recollect you belong to "a kingdom which is not of this world;" and that to yield yourselves to party strife, debate, and angry collision, cannot but sully the "beauty of holiness" which it is so necessary to cultivate; as well as rob you of your peace and happiness. But as it will be impossible, in the present state of our national affairs, that you should fully escape the obligation of taking part in many questions which come before the public, we feel it our duty to guard you against a hasty judgment and a false position. Whilst our predecessors maintained their independence, they were always distinguished by patriotism, and by a catholic spirit.—Mere party politics, as such, have been avoided in the public acts of the body; and when circumstances have imperatively demanded an expression of opinion on the exercise of a constitutional right, loyalty to the throne, homage to the laws, and respect towards the civil and ecclesiastical institutions of the country, have invariably characterized this flow of feeling and avowal of principle. We are persuaded that no interest of Methodism, any more than its genius and spirit, can make it necessary or desirable that we should assume an anti-national attitude. We do not exist for sectarian purposes, and ought to guard against a bigoted spirit. The object of our connexional union has not been to assault and break down other evangelical churches; but to maintain a fraternal fellowship with them, and diffuse amongst them a measure of that reviving influence which it pleased God first, in these latter ages, to impart to our venerable Founder and his coadjutors. It would ill become us, after professing, for nearly a century, that we have existed, for purely religious purposes, to be animated by a truly catholic spirit, and to be guided by the most friendly feelings towards the Church of England, now, for party and political objects, to place ourselves in an hostile attitude. Methodism allows perfect freedom of sentiment and opinion in its own communion; but we entreat you to use your liberty with a constant reference to the authority of the word of God, the pure and holy principles of Christianity, your own religious character and profession, the position which has been chosen and occupied by our Connexion in relation to the national institutions, the avowals of sentiment which have been so often made, and the prospect of general usefulness in the world. Under the guidance of these great rules we shall, as a Christian body, be preserved from going astray; but in following the impulses of party feelings, or of a worldly expediency, we shall be in the utmost peril of sacrificing that great work of God with which we have been entrusted.

A letter from Havana, dated July 14th,

states that the Spanish Government has levied a subsidy of two million five hundred thousand dollars on the Island of Cuba, and that the drafts for it had been sold to the Rothschilds. The Intendant had endeavored to raise the sum by offering fourteen per cent, interest for the loan but without success. The church property was soon to be put up for sale.

Test of Integrity.—CONSTANTINE when he was chosen Emperor, found several Christians in office, and issued an edict requiring them to renounce their faith or quit their places. Most of them gave up their offices, to preserve their conscience, but some of them cringed and renounced Christianity. When the Emperor had thus made full proof of their dispositions and characters, he removed all who had thus basely complied with his supposed wishes, and retained the others, saying "that those who desert or deny their Divine Master would desert him, and were not worthy of his confidence."

An amusing anecdote is told of JOHN LAW, the celebrated financial projector, which exemplifies in some degree the acumen and boldness for which he afterwards became conspicuous, and which, we are inclined to believe, has never been in print. In his youth, he had an appointment in the service of the East India Company and by one of those accidents not unusual in that part of the world the death of several of his superiors in rank—he found himself sole Governor of a province, ruling the destinies of thousands with despotism. The native lawyers were noted for the ingenuity with which they mystified every case brought before him; a decision on the merits of the question being impossible, so completely did they weave the web of sophistry and chicanery. Perplexed almost to despair, he bethought himself of an expedient, shocking to professional ears, and announced his intention of tying up and flogging the lawyers whenever he could not understand a case. The perspicacity of the pleadings was now wonderful; truth was brought forward in her naked simplicity, dripping from the well, and his decisions were thenceforward as remarkable for their correctness as the arguments for brevity. A future Convention for the amendment of the Constitution may make use of this.—*New York American.*

AGITATION! Mr. O'Connell, in the debate on Friday, stated that Ireland had never gained anything but by agitation. The learned agitator would have been nearer the truth if, for Ireland, he had substituted himself!!

STUDENTS.—The extraordinary number of from 80 to 100 students will be called to the Irish bar November next. This will be caused by the recent order of

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