

THE LIFE OF A DEAD CAMEL.

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(Concluded.)

Down swoops the bird which first made the discovery, and is followed by its companions, which may not have seen the dead animal, but know that a vulture does not swoop for nothing. I am of opinion that the hyenas may also watch the vultures, and so learn the presence of food.

Be this as it may, the breath is scarcely out of the camel before it is surrounded by a cloud of vultures. "Where the carcass is, there will the vultures be gathered together," Jackals, too, gather themselves round the body, waiting to pick up any fragments which may be left uncaten by the vultures and hyenas.

Note how differently these animals fulfil their appointed tasks. The beaks of the vultures can only deal with soft substances, and so the birds content themselves with tearing the flesh from the bones.

In those countries decomposition sets in very rapidly, but the more putrid is the meat, the more the vultures seem to like it, and the effluvia which is so repulsive to our nostrils is peculiarly attractive to those of the vulture.

The hyenas gorge themselves as much as they can, but they have a task essentially their own. The horny beaks of the vultures are unable to deal with the hard skeleton, and for its removal from the face of the earth the very powerful jaws of the hyena have been most fitly framed.

Hyenas are by no means large animals, but their power of jaw and strength of teeth are almost incredible. Even the hyenas at the Zoological Gardens retain their strength of jaw, though they have little need of it: and if the leg bone of an ox be given them, they will crack it as easily as a Newfoundland dog cracks a chicken bone, the splinters flying in all directions, and each bone, as it cracks, sounding like a pistol shot.

When the late Dr. Buckland made his discovery of the prehistoric hyena caves, he brought away a number of splintered bones, and then compared them with bones which he had seen broken by the hyenas of the present day. In character they were identical, the only difference being that those which were found in the caves were larger than those of the present time.

The work is not yet finished. There is much material—such as the brain—which neither the teeth of the hyena and jackal, nor the beak of the vulture can touch. Moreover, there is the skin to be considered.

In this country we can hardly realize the effect of a tropical sun upon the hide of a dead animal. It clings to the ribs, and rapidly dries upon them, enclosing them, as it were, in a case of horn. The reader will remember how the wild bees made their combs in the body of the lion killed by Samson. I never understood how bees could build in so unsavoury a locality until some years ago, when I was collecting the larvae, pupae, and perfect insects of our beetles for dissection.

There had been an exceptionally hot summer, and a lengthened drought, accompanied by a great mortality among the sheep on the Wiltshire Downs. The animals died so fast that there was no time to bury or even skin them, and they were, in consequence, left on the ground. The result was as I have stated: the dried skins being stretched so tightly over the ribs, that when struck they sounded like drums, and a strong and sharp knife was required to cut through them. For the removal of this horny skin another agent is employed. This is the dermestid—sometimes called the museum beetle; and sometimes the bacon beetle. The larvae, or grubs of this beetle are covered with stiff, radiating hairs, and their presence in a museum is a sight of terror to the curators. Still, they are only doing their duty, which is to devour dried skin, and for that purpose their sharp and powerful, though small jaws are eminently fitted.

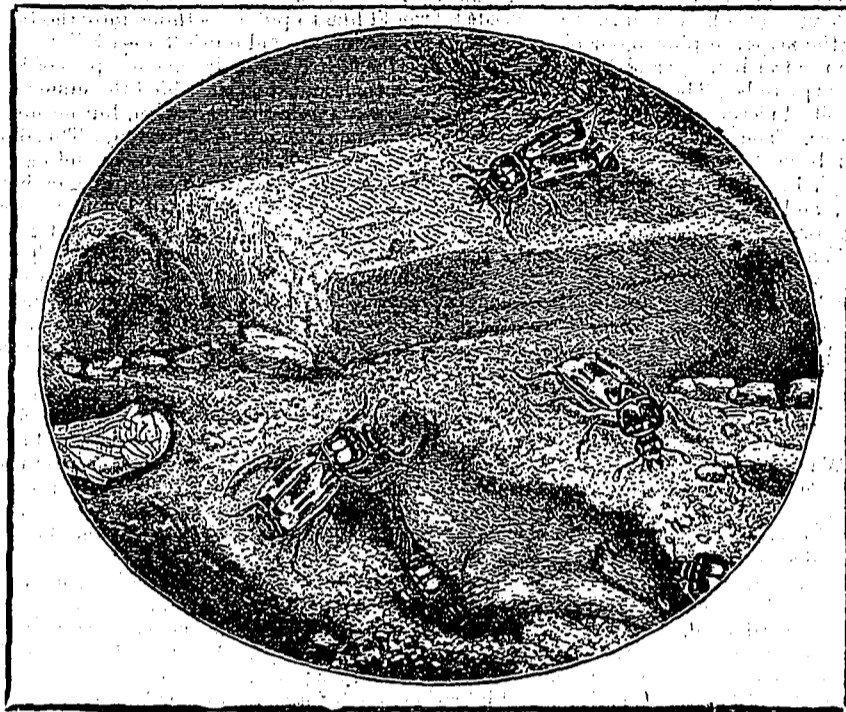
Through the holes thus made by the dermestid pour hosts of other feeders on carrion. Chief among them are the various blow-flies.

The oft-quoted statement of Linnaeus, that three blow-flies would eat an ox as soon as a lion could do so, is far within the mark. The flies themselves, not possessing

jaws, but only having a soft proboscis through which they suck liquid food, do not consume a particle of flesh, but leave that task to their countless young.

Some of them lay eggs, which are hatched after a while like those of most insects. But there are some which, instead of laying eggs, deposit long strings of ready-hatched maggots, rolled up like so many ribbons. As soon as they are deposited, these mag-

got-rolls unwind themselves, and the little hungry creatures at once set to work at their task of eating. They never seem to rest or sleep, but eat unceasingly, until they have attained their full growth. They rapidly pass through the pupal stage, emerge as perfect blow-flies, and in their turn deposit their maggot-rolls upon the carcass.



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Now a lion, although he can eat a large amount of food at a meal, is not a continual feeder. He gorges himself to the fullest extent, and then lies down to sleep until awakened by hunger. While he sleeps the maggots are incessantly eating and multiplying, so that the offspring of the three flies would finish the ox while the lion had still much of the carcass to consume.

Then comes the great tribe of burying-beetles (*Necrophagi*), which render such good service to us of this country. Not only is it true that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the knowledge of its heavenly Father, but he who made and gave it life has prepared for its burial when dead.

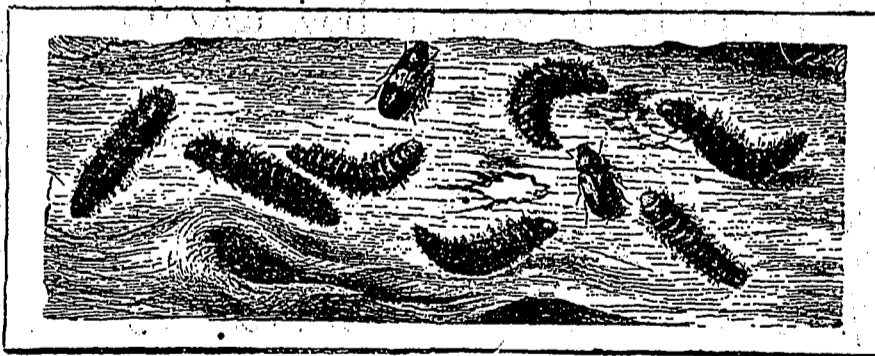
dependent of the direction of the wind. Of course they could not bury a camel, neither could they bury a sheep, but the bodies of the dead sheep which I have mentioned were swarming with the larvae of various burying-beetles, the eggs having been laid by the parents without attempting to bury any part of the carcass.

Another large tribe of carrion-eating beetles is that which is scientifically known

as *Hister*, a title which I am obliged to use, as they have no popular name. They are short, wide, and are notable for the extreme hardness of their exterior. They are highly polished, and in spite of the substances in which they are continually burrowing, not a particle of it seems to cling to their steely armour. These insects, like the burying-beetles, have wings of enormous size in comparison with their bodies.

The last group of carrion-eating beetles which I can mention is that which is popularly known as Rove-beetles, or Cock-tails, the latter name being given to them in consequence of their habit of turning up their long, slender bodies when alarmed.

The object of this habit is rather remarkable. Their bodies being very long and slender, so as to enable them to insinuate themselves into the smallest recesses, and their wings very large, the wing-cases must necessarily be very small. So, when packing the wings into so small a compass, the beetle turns its body over its back, and with the end of its tail pushes the wing into



"A sight of terror to the curators."

Has the reader ever reflected how many birds die annually, and how few dead birds are seen? The fact is, that during all the warm parts of the year, the burying-beetles are at work. They have the power of smelling a dead carcass, however small, and at a wonderful distance, and it is very interesting to see them converging from all directions towards the carcass, upborne on their beautiful wings.

I cannot but think that they have some sense, independent of smell, which indicates the presence of food for their future young. Were scent their only guide, the direction of the wind would affect their whole economy. But, as I have already stated, they converge from all points, in-

its place. I have found that the larvae of these beetles were mostly to be found within the skull, and could be shaken out in hundreds, their object being evidently the consumption of the brain. Thus does the death of one being become the life of another.

MIDSUMMER WORDS.

What can they want of a midsummer verso  
In the flush of the midsummer splendor?  
For the Empress of Ind shall I pull out my purse,  
And offer a penny to lend her?  
Who wants a song when the birds are a-wing,  
Or a fancy of words when the least little thing  
Hath a message so wondrous and tender?  
—Mrs. Whitney.

WORK FOR LITTLE FOLLOWERS.

BY MRS. MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

There's always work in plenty for little hands to do.

Something waiting every day that none may try but you:

Little burdens you may lift, happy steps that you can take.

Heavy hearts that you may comfort for the blessed Saviour's sake.

There's room for children's service in this busy world of ours;

We need them as we need the birds and need the summer flowers:

And their help at task and toiling, the Church of God may claim.

And gather little followers in Jesus' holy name.

There are words for little lips, sweetest words of hope and cheer:

They will have the spell of music for many a tired ear.

Don't you wish your gentle words might lead some souls to look above.

Finding rest and peace, and guidance in the dear Redeemer's love?

There are orders meant for you; swift and jubilant they ring.

O the bliss of being trusted on the errands of the King!

Fearless march in royal service: not an evil can befall

Those who do the gracious bidding, hastening at the Master's call.

There are songs which children only are glad enough to sing—

Songs that are as full of sunshine as the sunniest hours of spring.

Won't you sing them till our sorrows seem the easier to bear,

As we feel how safe we're sheltered in our blessed Saviour's care?

Yes, there's always work in plenty for the little ones to do.

Something waiting every day, that none may try but you;

Little burdens you may lift, happy steps that you may take.

Heavy hearts that you may comfort, doing it for Jesus' sake.

POST AND RAIL PEOPLE.

A friend of mine says there are two sorts of people in the world—"posts" and "rails" and a good many more rails than posts. The meaning of this is that most people depend on somebody else—a father, a sister, a husband, wife, or perhaps on a neighbor.

Whether it is right to divide the whole population of the earth quite so strictly, it is true that we all know a good many rail-like people. Blanche Evans tells me one of the rail-girls sits by her in school. Miss Rail never had a knife of her own, though she used a sort of pencil that continually needed sharpening; so Blanche's pretty penknife was borrowed until one day the rail-girl snapped the blade. Blanche was so tired of lending the knife that she was not very sorry.

Miss Rail's brother works beside Henry Brown in the office of the *Daily Hurricane*. They both set type, and Henry's patience is sorely tried by Master Rail. If Henry tells him to-day whether the *i* is doubled in model when *ed* is added, he will have forgotten to-morrow; and Henry has to tell him whether the semicolon comes before or after *viz.* every time he "sets it up." The truth is the rail-boy doesn't try to remember these things; he has taken Henry for a post and expects to be held up by him.

I met two pretty young ladies travelling together last summer. One was always appealing to the other to know if they were to change cars at Osanto, or not until they reached Dunstable, or if they should not change at all. She asked her companion the time though her own watch was in order; "she couldn't bother to remember names of routes and hotels and people, but she found it very convenient for somebody to do all this for her, and she never concealed her surprise if her friend forgot or neglected anything.

Being a post is often unpleasant, but how much worse is it to be a rail! The post can stand by itself—but take it away and where is the rail? Boys and girls have this advantage over a wooden fence—if they fear that they are rails, they can set about turning themselves into posts at once, and they will find the post business a far more delightful one.—*July Wide Awake.*