

harmless as its larva; I sometimes find a wandering specimen near my bird-cages, and I know I can safely pick it up and restore it to the box where its kith and kin reside, with no fear of its biting or leaving any odour on my hands.

The English nightingale is unfortunately so fond of this insect, that bird-catchers can always trap it with the greatest ease by clearing a space upon the ground and placing some mealworms on lined twigs.

The bird flies down immediately to secure the dainty, and is held fast and caught by the snare so cunningly set.

FOOT-PRINTS IN SNOW.

A heavy fall of snow gives us a clue to the nocturnal wanderings of such animals as hares, rabbits, foxes, rats and mice.

With a little practice, we may learn to recognise their respective foot-prints in the garden and fields.

Some animals run, others leap along; each creature has its own manner of getting over the ground, and what we cannot see when we catch a glimpse of them when their limbs are in rapid action is faithfully revealed by the snow-prints.

We can soon learn hare and rabbit-marks, which always show two feet in front, one before the other, and the hind feet parallel.

The fox runs like a dog, with alternate prints, the squirrel places its short fore-feet close together, and the hind feet widely apart.

Rats vary much in their movements: land and water-rats, young and old rats, all mark the snow differently and are very puzzling to define.

I think mice are the cleverest little people in snowy times; they know that they can easily be seen by owls, so they form tunnels in the snow from one spot to another so that they may go to and fro in safety; their fore and hind feet make parallel marks as they leap along.

If a mole chances to be on the surface of the ground he makes a furrow as he flounders through the snow and his foot-prints are alternate.

I was much puzzled by a three-pronged impression always with a connecting line in the middle, but at last I discovered it to be made by the pheasant; it plants one foot exactly in front of the other, and the long hind toe makes the trailing line between the footprints.

Pigeons and doves, having very short legs, are apt to help themselves along with their wings, and these leave a sort of blurred trail rather difficult to make out until one has seen one of these birds plodding with difficulty through the snow.

With a little study we may soon distinguish the birds that walk from those that run or hop, and once our attention has been called to this subject of footprints, we shall find it a rather amusing interest added to our winter rambles.

OTOLITHS.

As the ground is frozen and all nature seems asleep at this wintry season, we must defer our out-of-door rambles and go into my museum for some otoliths for to-day's study.

The word sounds like something very scientific and out of the way, and yet without knowing it these objects have been constantly upon our dinner-plates, for they are little snow-white bones to be found in the heads of haddock, whiting, gurnard and cod. How these little stone-like bodies assist the hearing of fishes is, I believe, not very clearly known, but that is supposed to be their use in the economy of the fish.

One exists in each lobe of the brain, so that if we wish to find them we must completely divide the head of a whiting, when

boiled, and there hidden on either side we shall discover the otolith. It appears to be quite unattached to the skull, and simply lies in its cavity to aid in the conveyance of sound to the fish's brain.

I may mention a use to which I have put these ear-bones with a rather good result.

Having a store of rose-beetle wings and otoliths I resolved to decorate a banner screen with them in this fashion. I traced, on a

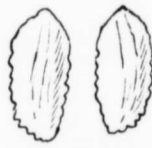
stitches of white silk across either end attached them firmly to the satin.

The plate will give an idea of the effect, which is remarkably good, and my rather original banner screen has, I must say, been much admired.

Rose-beetles are not usually to be found in any number, but an even better result may be obtained by Indian beetle-wings which are sold at all Berlin-wool shops.



Haddock.

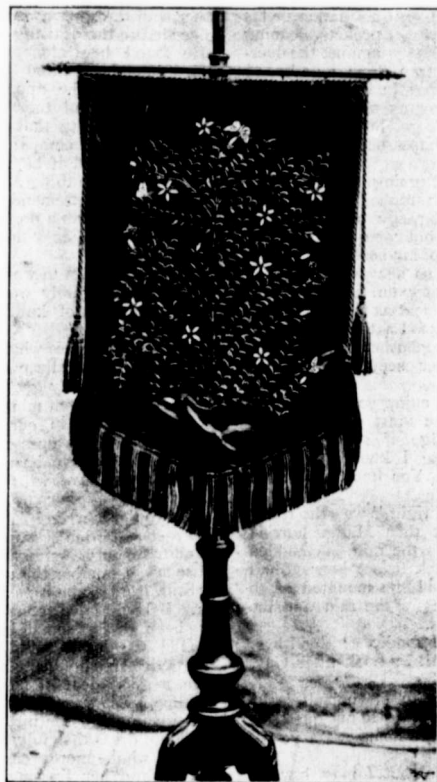


Cod.



Whiting.

OTOLITHS.



OTOLITHS.

piece of rich dark green satin, a flowing design of jasmine sprays. With fine white silk I tacked on sets of five otoliths starwise, each star to represent a jasmine flower, while the beetle wings did duty for the leaves. Each otolith and beetle-wing was edged round with fine gold braid which kept them firmly in place and also formed the connecting stems. The beetle wings had to be pierced with a very small needle and each sewn on separately with fine green silk. The ear-bones will not admit of piercing, so two

The otoliths must of course be saved up from our daily repast until we have sufficient for the purpose: the ear-bones of the haddock are, I think, the most suitable for this novel fancy-work.

To add a little varied colour to my screen I embroidered a few butterflies, copied from nature, in coloured silks and introduced them with good effect amongst the jasmine sprays.

The screen is made up with old gold cord and tassels and lined with silk of the same colour.