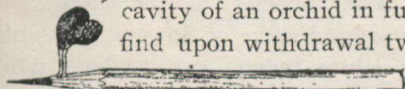


'Tis a fair and lovely family, high-favoured and profligately rich; of wondrous grace too, and bearing the hall-mark of exalted rank. And we have not a few of these nobles and ladies among us; not in the cities or villages, 'tis true, for some of them live in the greatest seclusion far from the haunts of man, while few of them deign to mingle with the crowd on roadside or meadow, in bog-land or marshes. They live in an atmosphere of the wild flowers' breath, where the insects, free-flying, are the marriage priests, where moisture abundant quenches their thirst, or the grasses give shelter, the wood-lands shade. But wherever they are it is usually easy to test the genuineness of their lofty pretensions. First let me initiate you into this secret, and then introduce you to some of these floral grandees.

It is almost needless to remind my readers that flowers have been given suitable form to woo the winds to waft the pollen, or have assumed shape, and colour, and perfume to invite insects (and birds) to carry it to other blooms of the same species and thereby secure the continuance of the kind. This is not the place to enter into a description of the structural peculiarities of orchid flowers; suffice it that this order is the most fantastically modified and has the ordinary floral structures most wonderfully adapted to attract insects by form and fragrance, to repay them for their services by a liberal reward of honey, and to secure in return that their visitors transport the pollen for the benefit of the race. Pollen, as everyone now-a-days knows, is usually a yellowish powder, though sometimes more or less coherent; but in the orchid, (with rare exception) it is agglutinated by a connective tissue or web into masses, in shape like little Indian-clubs, which may generally be removed with little trouble from the full-opened flowers. What a bee does naturally you may in most cases imitate artificially by thrusting the point of a lead-pencil, or even a pin, into the



*Pollen-masses withdrawn on pencil*



like pollen-masses sticking to the point of the intruded article.