

The Foamy Cicadella

It may possibly happen that the insect's well supplies water that is not quite pure. If left to evaporate in a watch-glass, the clear drop that trickles from the mass of foam yields a thin white residue, which dissolves by effervescence in nitric acid. This residue might well be carbonate of potash. I also suspect the presence of traces of albumen.

Obviously, the Cicadella finds something to feed on at the bottom of the puncture. Now what does she consume? To all appearances, something with an albuminous basis, for the pigmy herself is, for the most part, but a grain of similar matter. This element is plentiful in all plants; and it is probable that the insect uses it lavishly to make up for the expenditure of gum needed for the formation of froth. Some albuminous product, perfected in the digestive canal and discharged by the intestine as and when the blow-pocket expels its bubble of air, might well give the liquid the power of swelling into a foam that lasts for a long time.

If we ask ourselves what advantage the Cicadella derives from her mass of froth, a very excellent answer is at once suggested: