

The Life of the Grasshopper

the spurge to the surface. A sifting takes place then, which allows almost pure water to issue from the source that gives the where-withal for making the froth. A subtle exhaustion-process, whose mechanism is hidden from our curiosity, a piston-play of unrivalled delicacy, effects this marvellous work of purification.

Water is always water, whether it come from the stagnant pool or the clear stream, from a poisonous liquid or a healing infusion; and it possesses the same properties, when it is rid of its impurities by distillation. In like manner, the sap, whether furnished by the spurge or the bean, the clematis or the sainfoin, the buttercup or the borage, is of the same watery nature when the Cicadella's syphon, by a reducing-process which would be the envy of our stills, has deprived it of its peculiar properties, which vary so greatly in different plants.

This would explain how the insect makes its froth rise on the first plant that it comes across. Everything suits it, because its apparatus reduces any sap to the condition of plain water. The inimitable well-sinker is able to produce the limpid from the cloudy and the harmless from the toxic.