

gustus ruled the destinies of mankind, the most beautiful dyes, known as Tyrian purple, were extracted from certain species of shell-fish; but unfortunately for the Roman senators and their matronly wives, the coloring was so expensive that a single pound of wool dyed in this famed purple and scarlet could not be bought for one hundred and fifty dollars. For many ages past these fish of the sea have had peace, and the poor cochineal insect has been pressed into the service of man, to afford most brilliant red and purple colors. For a long time European savans were uncertain whether this was an animal, vegetable or mineral substance; in the latter part of the seventeenth century, the French naturalist, Plumier, shared the fate of most discoverers, and was considered *non compos mentis* because he pronounced the cochineal to be an insect: Runsscher, of Holland, who held the same opinion in the beginning of the eighteenth century, carried the cochineal cultivators before the court of Antigua, in the vale of Oaxaca, in Mexico, there to be examined with regard to the origin and nature of these creatures; and it was then fully established that he was correct in his supposition, and that the cochineal of commerce is really an insect in a dried state. It lives upon a species of cactus, and abounds chiefly in Mexico. There is no doubt that other species of the genus *Coccus* could be made to yield dyes equally bright and beautiful as those of the cochineal; and doubtless, some day or other, perhaps even before we again hear of that cute Yankee, who skinned mosquitoes and sold their hides for shoe-leather, man will press them into his service in order that he may turn an honest penny at their expense.

Gum shellac, which is so much used in the manufacture of varnishes, &c., is procured from a species of plant-lice that is found on the branches of the sacred banyan trees of India: and another species, found on the Tamarish trees upon Mount Sinai, by piercing the young shoots with their proboscis, cause them to discharge a large quantity of gummy secretion, which soon hardens and drops from the tree, and is quickly collected by the natives, who believe it to be the manna upon which the children of Israel fed, for forty years, in that self-same wilderness of sin. But we must return from these far-off lands, though so full of interest to every one, to our own Canadian wood.

Running about on these same trees and plants, yet with thoughts and intentions much less sanguinary than those which inflame the ladies, are those "little but exceeding wise" creatures, who, for well nigh three thousand years, have been held up to the men who wish a little more sleep and a little more slumber, as a pattern and example worthy their imitation. If we look closely we will see that all the ants ascending the trees are slim, hungry looking fellows, while those coming down descend lazily with their bodies swollen to their utmost limit; the reason of this sudden filling up of their inner man is, that the ants are extremely fond of the sweet fluid, called honey-dew, which is distilled from the plant-lice, who are, in fact, the milch kine of the ants. The lice and the ants live together on the best possible terms; the latter, though among the most carnivorous of insects, and as a rule most cruel to their weaker brethren, "treat the former with the utmost gentleness—caressing them with their antennæ, apparently inviting them to give out the fluid, by patting their sides. Nor are the lice inattentive to these solicitations, when in a state to gratify the ants, but actually yield the fluid when thus pressed, like well-bred cows, give up their riches to the buxom milk-maids. The ants tend them as carefully as a farmer would his kine, removing all dirt and rubbish about them, protecting them from their enemies, and in case of danger even carrying them away in their mouths most tenderly to a place of safety.

Man, who presses the whole creation, both animate and inanimate, into his service, and shews his lordship over this lower world, by taking from every creature, be it animal, vegetable or mineral, whatever will appease his wants or gratify his whims—who takes the silk

of the silkworm, which he dyes with the juices of the cochineal, to adorn his outer person; the honey of the bee to feed his inner man, and to cure the unpleasant effects sometimes produced by these stolen sweets, crushes the innocent and useful little lady-birds into his incisors and molars—does not pass over the ants, or allow them to escape without the payment of tribute as an acknowledgment of his universal dominion; while the Brazilians, Africans and Siamese, evidently wishing to avail themselves of the gift of every "moving thing" for meat, devour these little insects by myriads—prepared in every possible style either stewed, fried or roasted. The more civilised, refined and scientific Europeans who are a little more particular about the things that are good for food—(though Mr. Consett relates that while walking with a young gentleman in a wood, near Gottenburgh, in Sweden, he observed him sit down on an anthill, and with apparently great pleasure and gusto devour these insects, first nipping off their heads and wings, which doubtless would have caused a slight scratching and irritating sensation, while descending the red lane; this young ant-eater, said that their flavour was an acid, somewhat resembling, though much more agreeable, than that of a lemon), immolate thousands and tens of thousands of these little parsimonious emmets to obtain from them the acid, known as Formic Acid, which is valuable for many medicinal purposes, as well as for the perfume it yields when burnt. This acid is the venom which produces itching, accompanied by white swelling and inflammation, when one is unfortunately favoured with the sting by an ant.

But while, in some sylvan retreat, we are intently examining these ants, aphids and lady-birds, we are startled by hearing some amazonian mosquito blowing a charge with its clarion shrill, and ere we can escape—for they fly with astonishing rapidity, their wings vibrating three thousand times per minute—we are surrounded by hosts of these blood-thirsty sisters, who leap and dance around us like so many fiends, attacking us in a manner which throws the celebrated charge of the Light Brigade for ever in the shade, and exhibiting a perseverance, gallantry and heroism far surpassing that of Penthesilea and her noble dames, flying every one of them right into the jaws of death; and what is even more disagreeable, right into our own jaws, which have been slightly opened, to give vent to certain expletives, which would for ever ruin a saint in heaven if uttered by him there.

But to Canadian readers it is needless to dilate upon the various, but, by no means pleasurable sensations produced by the hum or the sting of the mosquito; it is hard to say which is the worst—its bark or bite: we think, however, that most if not all, will agree that "they are both worst." Perhaps it would not be amiss at this season of the year, to mention a few facts with regard to their manner of life from their youth up. The mamma mosquito lays her eggs in the water of some stagnant pool: they are long, oval and light; with her hind legs she arranges them side by side in an upright position, and gluing them together, makes them into a little raft, which floats securely on the surface of the water; in a short time, varying in length according to the heat of weather, these eggs burst, and from each issues a little wiggle-tail, which immediately commences swimming about and diving in all directions, and does so until it attains about three-sixteenths of an inch in length. During this period it changes its skin several times, never eats, and remains with its head downwards, as its breathing apparatus is in its tail: then it assumes a chrysalis form, and at first sinks to the bottom, afterwards rising, the pupa skin splits, and out of it springs the tiny little fly, like a Jack from its box—fully armed, as was Minerva when she sprang from the forehead of Olympian Jove—and fair to look upon as was Sin, when she issued forth from the majestic head of Satan. With its slender legs this little water-nymph perches itself daintily on the edge of its former coffin, which is now transformed into a lovely little canoe—a bark in which Queen Mab would be glad to sail over the deep

blue sea, with her waggoner, the small gray-coated gnat for her pilot; when this fills with water and sinks, the insect abandons its native element, spreads its tiny wings and flies away—piping its war-note, and thirsting for the blood which its natural weapons enables it to draw from its unlucky victims. (Any one who is philosophically inclined, may observe all these wonderful transformations by having a small pool of water under his bed-room window, and watching it attentively during the ensuing summer months.) The instrument with which the insect performs its sanguinary deeds is most curiously and wonderfully made: the visible proboscis is not that wherewith the little wretch wounds its enemy, but merely the sheath or scabbard which protects and incloses the knives and the pumps which pierce our skin and suck up our blood. These instruments are five bristles, (which may be seen by taking hold of the insect by the neck and squeezing its proboscis.) These bristles are like lancets with a hook at the end, and if the fly is unkindly driven away before it has finished its feast, these remain in the wound, causing greater pain and inflammation than would have ensued if it had been suffered to stay until it had fully satisfied itself with our life's blood, and then been allowed quietly and peaceably to withdraw and go about its business. When the hollow sting has entered the flesh about three-quarters of a line, and the insect has filled its body, the wound begins to itch and swell, not on account of the insignificant puncture, but of the venomous saliva which is injected into it, for the purpose, probably, of diluting the blood, which, perchance, would be too strong for such a delicate, fairy-like creature, unless weakened.

But, alas! the mosquitoes are getting very attentive to us, and so rapidly insinuating themselves, if not into our good graces, still upon our good — (unmentionables.) That we must, for the present, leave our bowler and read, for a time at least, no more "pages of that great green book, whose pen is the finger of God, whose covers are the fire kingdoms, and the star kingdoms, and its leaves the heather-bells, and the polypes of the sea, and the gnats above the summer stream."

Kingston, June, 1866.

R.

MUSICAL.

GOUDON'S "Faust" still continues to absorb much of the attention of both opera houses in London. At Her Majesty's theatre, Mdle. Titiens still performs the part of Margherita. At Covent Garden, Mdles. Antò and Patti are this season to alternate the part with Mdle. Lucca, the German *prima donna*.

The singularly beautiful character of Margherita demands more than any one singer has yet portrayed. Mdle. Patti is superb in the garden scene, especially in the "Air des Bijoux," but has not strength to grasp with the closing scenes. Mdle. Titiens, on the other hand, performs these scenes with the utmost effect, infusing into them an earnestness and vehemence quite overpowering; yet she fails completely to command the same interest in the soliloquy and love scene. Mdle. Lucca's performance of this part is spoken of as warranting unqualified eulogy, special praise being given to both soliloquy and love passages of the third act, and contrition and despair in the fourth. Her splendid soprano voice—one of the finest to be heard—bright, resonant, powerful, and fluent, together with her graceful acting, renders her performance of Margaret perhaps more lively and more impassioned than any other yet seen.

NAPLES.—Mercadante's new tragic opera of *Virginia* has been very successful. The composer was called on twenty-nine times the first night. The following is the cast: Virginia, Signora Lottidella Santa; Tullia, Signora Morelli; Appio, Sig. Mirate; Icilio, Sig. Stiggelli; Virginio, Sig. Pandalfini; Arati, Sig. Marco; and Memmi, Sig. Volerio. The composer addressed a letter to Sig. Puzone, thanking him for the skill and care with which he had got up the work, and, also, expressing his gratitude to the