

The Sense of Smell

an odour, as our physiology understands the word? I cannot bring myself to believe it.

The Dog smells the truffle by sniffing the earth, quite close to the tuber; he finds his master at great distances by consulting the scent of his footprints. But is he able to discover the truffle hundreds of yards away, miles away? Can he join his master in the complete absence of a trail? Certainly not. For all his fineness of scent, the Dog is incapable of such a feat, which is performed, however by the Moth, who is put off neither by distance nor by the lack of any traces out of doors of the female hatched on my table.

It is a recognized fact that smell, ordinary smell, the smell that affects our nostrils, consists of molecules emanating from the scented body. The odorous matter dissolves and is diffused throughout the air by communicating to the air its aroma, even as sugar dissolves and is diffused in water by communicating to the water its sweetness. Smell and taste touch each other at some points; in both cases there is a contact between the material particles that give the impression and the sensitive papillæ that receive it.

Nothing can be simpler or clearer than that