

THE LAY OF THE ANCIENT HYBRIDIST.

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A comic scientific poem, read before the winter meeting of the Fruit Growers Association at Toronto, February, 1883.

In the days of Columbus, so well known to fame,
Who over to Cuba did gallantly pass,
There lived a botanical, physicist, man,
Who did much to improve our whole garden "sassa."

He lived in the light of sunnier climes,
Some thousands of miles from this beautiful town:
He grew luscious greens for the sake of the dimes,
And he met with a large and increasing renown.

But selections and hybrids were chiefly his plans,
To secure the results which his mind had conceived,
He didn't care much for old nature's poor shams;
In the best that would flourish he only believed.

He thought on this question by night and by day,
In the old Alexandrian library he read
All those classical books which philosophers say
Would addle one's fancy, or quite turn your head.

In the study of Greek he made a long pause
Over Anaximander, that wonderful man,
Who believed that condensation of air was the cause
Of the world bodies formed on an aeriform plan.

His conceptions were clear, fundamental and bold,
The development theory he knew to be true,
And by deep cosmological knowledge he told
That the spheres when first formed were excessively few.

Heraclites, that sage was no myth to his mind;
In currents dame nature conceived, was his view;
The father of all was the struggle of kind,
Perpetual change making everything new.

Empedoclese taught accidental conjuncture
Of forces which act and react, was the cause
Of the first genus of life on this globular structure,
Which slowly developed by physical laws.

That the forms which existed in ages of old
Were produced out of matter which never has rest,
And that those which survived were the fittest he
Told,
To exist in the future as being the best.

The conclusion he came to when study was o'er,
Was to "go it alone," as we say in this age;
Cut out a new road in the hybridist lore,
So that next generations might call him a sage.

So he set himself down to steady hard work,
To cross a large fowl with a suitable vine,
And he swore that his duty he never would shirk
Until mind and matter closely combine.

To come at this wonderful comical trick,
Of a miracle, chemical, monstrosity,
He thought himself hoarse, and he got pretty sick,
It haunted him so in the land by the sea.

The pollen he chose was the yolk of an egg,
Hard boiled and rubbed down into powder so fine.
That it looked like the stuff which sticks to the peg,
Or the style of a flower on which the bees dine.

A gourd was procured with a stamen whose cavern
Could swallow whole gravel and not mind the load,
Into this our scientist brushed in his pollen,
And waited results with the patience of Job.

To his joy one fine day at the end of September
He passed by his gourd on his way to his swine,
When he heard the "cheep, cheep," of a chick
Young and tender,
And he knew it came from his hybridized vine.

To say that he sprang twenty feet in the air,
Would perhaps be a little o'erstepping the mark;
But surprise and confusion did raise up his hair,
And his sensitive organs gave him a rough jerk.

But collecting his senses and looking around,
He found that his brain-box had led him astray,
For the old "yallar" hen that was lost had been found,
Having made her a nest in the cool on the clay.

Like Jonah, she hatched in the shade of her vine,
And brought out her chickens in comfort and ease;
She never once thought of the science sublime,
Which grows drumhead cabbage on root of sweet peas.

The man of deep thinking was awfully sold,
Kept dark on his plans for improving the race,
Lest his friends should combine, and turn him out in
The cold,
And his enemies give him a much warmer place.

MORAL.

Stick closer to nature, you then may succeed
In developing something that's really some good;
But to cross a shanghai with a pumpkin indeed,
Would produce wings and giblets, but next to no food.

NOTE.—Anaximander, who lived 625 B. C., assumed that out of infinity of matter through eternal revolutions, numerous world-bodies came into being as condensations of the air, and that the earth, too, as one of these world-bodies, issued out of a state originally fluid and afterwards aeriform. He also taught the theory that the earliest living creatures on this globe originated in water from the action of the sun. From these creatures, later on, were developed the land inhabiting plants and animals, which left the water and adapted themselves to life on dry land. Man likewise, gradually worked himself up from animal organism, and, in reality, from fish-like aquatic animals.

One hundred years later, Heraclites of Ephesus, propounded the principle that a great uninterrupted process of development pervaded the whole universal world, that all forms are involved in everlasting currents, and that struggle is "the father of all things," seeing that nowhere in the world exists absolute rest; that all standing still is but apparent, we are compelled everywhere to assume a perpetual change of matter, a constant variation of form. One form thrusting out its predecessor, the new usurping the place of the old.

Later on, Empedoclese of Agrigent in Sicily, assumed that the everlasting universal struggle was caused by the laws of attraction and repulsion of atoms. He also taught that purposive forms or organisms came into existence through the accidental conjunction of counteracting forces. Out of this great struggle the living forms now existing have issued victoriously, because they were best prepared for the battle, and therefore most capable of life.