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F. C. HILL, Editor and Proprietor.

"BE JUST AND FEAR NOT."

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From the Farmers' Register.
NOTES OF A STEAM JOURNEY.
BY EDMUND RUFFIN, EDITOR.

A Sandy desert. Predaceous and carnivorous Plants.

The country adjoining Wilmington had to me an entirely novel and very remarkable appearance. The original large growth of pine trees had been cut down for fuel or timber, and had been succeeded by an almost unbroken growth of thin, stunted dwarfish "strub" oaks which rarely rose higher than six feet.

The surface of the earth was but half concealed by the fallen leaves, and the scattered tufts of coarse grass; and pure and perfectly white sand, was visible in so many places on the surface, amidst the green vegetation, that the general appearance was as if snow had recently covered all the ground, which had melted in some places, while it still remained on others.

I never saw any land so nearly approaching a sandy desert. This worst appearance here does not extend far back from the town.

But this barren and uninviting soil, and the adjacent country which is not greatly better, is the paradise of botanists. I was informed that there are found more species of plants growing naturally within ten miles of Wilmington, than in all Massachusetts; and one-third as many as are given in Elliott's catalogue of all the plants of South-Carolina and Georgia.

I had new cause to lament my ignorance of botany, when in a region so interesting to the better informed. Still I did not lose all the gratification to be derived from some of the most remarkable of these beautiful works of nature.

In the grounds around Wilmington is found in abundance the wonderful *predaceous* (if not actually carnivorous) plant, called "Venus fly-trap" (*Dionaea muscipula*), of which a description was published in a former volume of the Farmers' Register.

This plant is very small, and was not yet grown, and the largest of the traps were scarcely more than half the size they will be hereafter. Still, though not possessed of their full degree of sensitiveness, which I hope to see, (as I had dug up and sent home a box of growing specimens,) they closed with a quickness, and operated with a degree of effect, far beyond my previous conceptions.

The catching apparatus is an extension of the leaf. It is in shape much like a very diminutive steel trap, set open for catching, except that the valves are close in the plant, and open frame work in the artificial trap.

The teeth around the circumference (forming a circle when lying open,) are long, and when they meet, interlock regularly and perfectly. All the interior is not sensitive. It is only three small and short filaments, on each side, which are scarcely perceptible, that serve as triggers.

I saw every other part of the valves touched with a blade of grass, and even with some force, without its affecting the plant. But as soon as one of these filaments was touched by a small bug, the valves instantly and quickly closed together, their surrounding teeth interlocked, and enclosed completely the unlucky intruder, and will remain so closed until the struggling cease with its life. Then, or after the purpose of the death life of the insect has been effected, the trap opens, and is ready to make another capture. I cannot believe that this wonderful and admirable apparatus has been contrived by nature, and kept at work, without some object. I cannot but believe that the death of the insect furnishes some benefit to the plant, and that, so far, it may be said to feed upon its prey.

These plants grow on the borders of the wet places among the sands. Formerly it was supposed that they were found only in the neighborhood of Wilmington; but they have since been found in Florida, and elsewhere.

There is another bug-catching plant which grows abundantly hereabouts, which though not possessing the power of animal motion, and not seizing its prey by an act of mental volition and design, as almost seems to be the case with the other, yet this one is scarcely less curious in its mechanical structure, and its adaptation of form to its object.

This is the plant which bears the beautiful yellow flower vulgarly called "side-saddle" or "trumpet-flower" (*Sarcocolla flava*). It is a large pendant flower, on an upright stem of a foot to eighteen inches high. The very singular and beautiful form of the flower could not be described by me so as to be understood, and therefore will not be attempted.

The trap is the leaf of the flower, and of a later growth, for the flowers now are generally fully blown, and some even on the decline, and none of the trap appendages are more than half grown, though the structure is full shown in them, and also in the old and dry, but still well preserved leaves of last year's growth, which remain, and nearly all of which contain the scaly wings of small beetles, and other decomposed remains of their insect prey.

This leaf is in the shape of a slender trumpet; of very thick tough texture, which is closed at the ground and gradually enlarges to an inch in diameter at about fifteen inches high. On one side of this mouth of the trumpet, a part of the leaf extends and spreads over the mouth, so as effectually to keep out any rain water; and for greater precaution, in the middle of this umbrella is a deep groove, which, as a gutter, conveys the rain water off. The lower and closed end of the trumpet is always filled some inches deep with a limpid and tasteless water, secreted by the plant, which seems to

attract insects. They descend into the trap easily; but can never return, as the sides are beset with numerous minute hairy filaments, which point downward, and effectually prevent any progress upward of the insects enticed to enter the receptacle.

This magnificent and curious plant is said not to be found much farther north. There is, however, another of very similar general structure, the purple *sarcocolla*, which grows as far north as New England. However, I never saw it before, and it would have been considered as admirable for its beauty, and its curious mechanical structure of the flower, and its water-holding and insect-catching apparatus of the leaves, but for the inferiority in all these respects to the more common *sarcocolla flava*.

As little knowledge of and taste for botany as I have, a longer residence in this neighborhood and sufficient leisure would tempt me to the study. It is surprising that this region is not more visited by the lovers of curious plants and beautiful flowers, and that ready means now offered by the rail roads are not more used to convey these rare treasures northward by the train, in boxes, growing specimens of all the above plants, with their native soil, just dug up, and which must have reached Petersburg in perfect condition; and might so be carried as far as Philadelphia, even should they fail to be kept alive afterwards. In this manner, by proper arrangements, hundreds of rare plants, which even in green houses cannot be produced in perfection at the north, might be sent in all their native splendor and vigor, to floricultural exhibitions a thousand miles distant.

General appearance of the lands of New Hanover county.

One of my first objects after reaching Wilmington was to seek out, and make personal acquaintance with Dr. James F. M'Ree, a gentleman whom I knew merely as the only subscriber to the Farmers' Register in or near Wilmington. I drew the inference, in which I have rarely been mistaken, that a man who had thus appreciated my labors for seven years, would probably be one both able and ready to aid me in acquiring information. I was not mistaken. In addition to the pleasure derived from Dr. M'Ree's general conversation, and to his kind and serviceable attention in other respects, I was indebted to him for much of the information in regard to the peculiarities of this region, and its products, which I was enabled to acquire. My first inquiries of him were in regard to the extent of the marl formation of this region, (having previously seen it in Wilmington,) and I heard from Dr. M'Ree such interesting facts on this subject, that I was very willing to accept his invitation to accompany him to his farm, Ashmore, near Rocky Point, the most favorable portion for a rock-formation. For this place we set out on the 17th.

In a mile or two from Wilmington, along the ordinary carriage road, the excessive sandiness of the soil changes to rather less of that character, and to such as is general through the pine lands for many miles. The general growth is long leaf pine, thin, set, with very little undergrowth of trees or shrubs. The surface of the earth is set with tufts of what is here called wire grass, and which (as might be inferred from its locality,) is altogether different from what is called by that name in Virginia. This grass, Dr. M'Ree informed me, (and to whom, by the way, I am indebted for all the botanical names here used,) is the *crispa striata*. It grows in small tussocks. Each spike is a single upright stem, cylindrical and as regular in shape as a wire. This is the most general grass in the poor pine woods, and open grounds of same quality. When burnt off in the spring, as is most usually done, the young grass springs out more rapidly, and furnishes good grazing all over the country.

The surface of the land, like that of the last 50 or 60 miles seen along the rail road, is almost a level. The slight depressions are all of swampy character, and are called "bays" or "bay lands, because the loblolly bay tree (*Gracilaria lutea*) is always found in such places. But whether dry or wet, all these pine lands, and the shallow "bays" intersecting them, are very poor, and, without being furnished with calcareous ingredient which they want, are, and will continue, worthless for tillage. It is from such pine woods, which cover so large a part of eastern Carolina, that the great supplies of turpentine and tar are obtained, the making of which is almost the sole business of the residents of the pine lands.

The calcareous lands of Rocky Point.

Upon reaching what are termed the Rocky Point lands, the marks of soil changed from the indications of the basest to those of the most valuable calcareous lands. Rocky Point is a low bluff of the limestone peculiar to this remarkable region, jutting out on the northeast branch of the Cape Fear river. The stone or the softer marl (or that which may be correctly called *chalk*, as the harder is *limestone*), forms the continuous and nearly horizontal substratum of all this neighborhood, and comes so near to the surface of a body of some 6 or 7000 acres, as to give to it a peculiar and well established character for great fertility, and power of long endurance of continued cultivation of the severest kind. A small tide water creek, which passes through the Ashmore farm, marks the middle of this body, and on each side of it are the best of these celebrated Rocky Point lands. They are the best, no doubt, because the surface is lowest, and the calcareous substratum is nearest to the surface. It is sometimes so near that the plough turns up a white slice upon the top of the black soil; and in these, and many other places, where the cause is the same, though not so manifest to the eye, the productiveness of the land is greatly impaired. This injurious effect, however, is greatly increased, owing to its too great wetness of the soil, and sometimes close and adhesive texture, and especially to the solid calcareous substratum, which prevents the surplus water escaping downward by filtration. The land too has not been cultivated in beds (or ridge and furrow,) which, if properly executed, and with the necessary ditches, I am sure would make the lowest acre abundantly dry. There are no springs rising to the surface that cause wetness, but only the surface water from rains to guard against; which is a very simple and sure business. The soil, in quality and in level, and in its calcareous sub-stratum, is more like the famous low grounds of Gloucester and Back River in Virginia, which have been described at length in former volumes of this journal, than any other known lands. I never saw soil that seemed of better natural constitution and quality than some of the fields of Ashmore, or which promise better rewards for their cultivation.

The limestone is but an accumulation of pure shelly matter, solidified into stony hardness. The marl is the same in chemical composition, but about as hard as chalk, and has very much the texture of an impure chalk, and is soft enough to be used as manure with out pounding, burning or other mode of reducing. I analyzed, on the place, three specimens which were selected as fair samples; and Dr. M'Ree, before, with the aid of my portable apparatus, had examined several others. The general proportion of carbonate of lime in both kinds was fully 95 per cent. One specimen only, of marl just dug and hastily dried, yielded as little as 88 per cent; and as this was the only one so poor, by 6 per cent, I suspected that it had not been sufficiently freed from water, in drying. However, at any rate it is the richest and most valuable marl I have ever known, and the easiest to be used. The stone, of course, would require to be burnt; and it will yield excellent lime, for cement or for manure.

The lowest parts of this body of land, not yet cleared, are swamp, called "white oaks;" not because white oak is their general growth, and indeed it is very rare there—but because such are the only places on which a white oak tree can be found in this part of the country. These swamps are covered with the trees that are most favored elsewhere by the richest, stiff, alluvial, and wet bottom lands. The calcareous bed lies near the surface of all these swamps or "white oak" lands.

Dr. M'Ree has taken great pains to introduce good husbandry on his land, and his clover is wonderfully productive. That sown on the first of March, 1839, was fit to mow, and was mown for the same year, in July, and the hay sold and delivered in market within eight months of the sowing of the seed. This is a remarkable proof of the admirable fitness of the soil for clover; and it was particularly valued by me, as the strongest known proof of what I have so often maintained, that if the soil be but made calcareous, the warmth of climate of North Carolina, or even farther south, is no bar to profitable clover culture. Before my practice proved otherwise (after marling) it was as firmly believed that lower Virginia was too hot to produce clover to profit, as it is now generally (and as erroneously) believed of lands 200 miles more southward.

But though the calcareous deposit beneath the Rocky Point lands is richer and more easily accessible, than any known elsewhere, it is but the most remarkable case of a formation that is spread throughout a vast region of the State, accessible throughout a great part of its extent, and which would be highly profitable to be used wherever it can be obtained. I knew before that marl had been found along the Neuse and some of the upper waters of the Chowan, and that it had been used to some small extent by a few individuals; and I inferred, that if sought for, it might be found at some greater or less depth, almost every where between the granite range and the sea coast. But I had never heard of a single actual discovery farther south than the borders of the Neuse and Trent. In addition to what I saw in Wilmington, (though the stratum of marl there is thin, and the limestone poor,) and at Ashmore and the surrounding lands, I learned from Major Gwyn, the able engineer who directed the construction of the Wilmington railway, that marl was found in the wells dug at the water stations of that road, through the distance of 80 miles from Wilmington. And this marl lies under a thin enough layer of topsoil, and is so near to the surface, that it is not difficult to be obtained, and which, when used, would be highly profitable to be used wherever it can be obtained. I knew before that marl had been found along the Neuse and some of the upper waters of the Chowan, and that it had been used to some small extent by a few individuals; and I inferred, that if sought for, it might be found at some greater or less depth, almost every where between the granite range and the sea coast.

It would seem as if the Rocky Point land, so deservedly noted hereabout for its fertility, owes its value to its being so thinly spread over the calcareous deposit, that the two earths have necessarily become mixed, by various natural causes. When the roots of trees, and even small plants, can strike through the upper poor soil into the marl below, the parts of the latter which are taken up into the plants at their death and decay are finally left on the surface. Thus, in the lapse of ages, the surface, no matter how destitute of lime, and how poor, must thus be made calcareous and rich. But not so if the surface soil be but six or even four feet above the marl, and cut off by a barren intervening subsoil, which the roots of plants are not able to pass through. Then the soil will remain poor; and so it would, even if within a foot of the marl below, but for the operation of plants or animals in bringing up the marl to the surface.

In accordance with these views, where the land is higher, it is very inferior to the best kind; and at a few miles from the river, a still higher elevation of surface becomes either the poor pine forest land of New Hanover County, or savanna, of which I shall speak presently.

The texture of the calcareous substratum of the Rocky Point lands is altogether different from any of the numerous marl beds I have seen in Virginia. In chemical constitution, and in hardness, much of the former may be properly called by its common name of "limestone," and by the same tests the balance might be called *chalk*, slightly adulterated, and tinged with very little foreign matter. But geologists I believe, do not admit any true chalk to be in this country; and the concretion of shells to a stony hardness, cannot make the limestone so called in mineralogy. However, in agricultural sense and use, they are truly what these names would imply.

If the people of Carolina, who have the means of marling, would apply the lesson afforded here, it might be considered that here God had marled, and thereby enriched the land, and had thus revealed to man the mode of improvement. The enriching of these lands was effected simply by natural marling, with the additional aid of freedom from exhaustion, and of the accumulation, and fixing in the soil, of as much vegetable matter as the calcareous ingredient could combine with.

The limestone is not disposed with any regularity as to the softer marl. Isolated masses of the former, of various sizes, are scattered over the best fields; and sometimes the stone, and sometimes the chalk is nearest to the surface, or the one

over the other. The ditches generally reach the calcareous substratum. When in the chalk or marl, the excavation is easy enough. But when the stone is opposed, blasting by gunpowder is necessary to open the ditch. I saw in two ditches where this last had been done, for stretches of 200 to 300 yards each. Still, Dr. M'Ree told me that this ditching by blasting was not very difficult, and as he thought was not more expensive of labor, than there are some other unexpected peculiarities of a limestone region in this neighborhood, and even at some miles from the calcareous soil. These are subterranean caverns and subterranean streams. The former are like the limestone caves of the mountain region, except for their very narrow dimensions, which forbid any passage or examination. A small dog has been known to make his way through a subterranean passage for several hundred yards. I saw, at Ashmore, one of the "natural wells" which show subterranean streams. This well is a field not of calcareous soil, and was about the size across of an ordinary artificial well. The water stood at about two feet from the surface of the earth, and is supplied by a perpetual stream passing below. The water, however, is now higher than usual, owing to additional supply from rain.

I heard that a little marl had been used in some of the gardens of Wilmington; but not the least of it has as yet been made on fields, by any south of the Neuse and Trent, of whom I have heard.

THE DUEL.
[Extract from the Countess Ida.]

"Nine o'clock struck—ten—eleven—twelve; still Denham came not, and no news of him could be obtained. It was now near one. The widow, for all felt that she was such, except herself, and she still hoped; was almost deprived of her senses. At every whisper she started: at every step in the street she trembled. Sometimes the sound of horse's feet would advance from the distance; her features would light up, the noise approach, and seemed about to stop at the door; but went on, and was lost again in the distance; now a shout in the street startled her, now a oath. Sometimes she heard the tramp of the soldier's feet, as the guard were led round to their posts; once a party of riotous young men went by, and, by a cruel coincidence, stopped immediately beneath the window, shouting fourth a glee, which was interrupted by peals of laughter. Then they departed singing, their voices softening as they retreated, and dying at last utterly away; leaving, they little knew what—silence, solitude, and despair, behind them. "Mr. Windham," said Mrs. Denham, suddenly, in a voice of sternness, which made him think her senses were falling, "you are the cause of this!"

"My dearest madam!"—"You, coward!" Great heaven! "You knew my husband had the heart of a lion; you know he could not be so trifled, abused, and you, you meanly took a blow—a blow! a base, blasting blow! and yet you live, coward! and he, my brave, my noble, my lion-hearted Charles, for your infamy has risked his life—which, God in his mercy he prized, is but a risk. He will not perish. It is impossible. He will come. He is wounded, doubtless, but what do I care for wounds! He will come, or he will send for me. I shall nurse him. He will recover; but you, sir, must never look for his friendship again; nor his, nor mine, nor the world's esteem, nor your own. You are a dishonored man."

I had rather be *Elkington* than you. A blow, coward!" There was suddenly a knock at the door. Mrs. Denham fell back in her chair, laughing hysterically. The intruder was a messenger of the police to know whether any news had been received of the floating and quivering over the silent town, and struck into the hearts of all present, for they now forbode the worst. The solemn sound, as it died away, called forth new groans, sobs, and hysterical screams. All conversation ceased. There was as little room for remark, as for hope or consolation. They sat like those unhappy beings we sometimes read of, on a wreck, waiting in mute despair, till the broken hull goes down with them forever.

"Ten o'clock struck. Mrs. Denham had sunk into a state of exhaustion; when a sharp, heavy knock, announced an end to this suspense. There was decision in it. The door was opened by a servant, and a step was heard in the hall, quick, light, buoyant. It approached, and all eyes were turned towards the door. "Oh God! he is here at last!" cried Mrs. Denham with a smile of ineffable happiness, and gasping for breath. "The new comer entered. It was again a stranger. A start of horror went round the room, and a low shudder was heard from Mrs. Denham, who buried her face in her hands. "Mr. Windham!" said the stranger, who was a gentleman, in dress and appearance—Claude stepped forward, and recognized him as a sharp, heavy knock, announced an end to this suspense. There was decision in it. The door was opened by a servant, and a step was heard in the hall, quick, light, buoyant. It approached, and all eyes were turned towards the door. 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