

STRANGE FREAK OF NATURE

How a Caterpillar's Body Becomes the Root of a Bulrush

From some of the newer countries, so-called on account of the lack of definite knowledge regarding them, reports of strange freaks and curiosities constantly appear, and, as a rule, they are laughed at, but once in a while they turn out to be the truth. It is this way with the strange freak of nature called the bulrush caterpillar, which is indigenous to New Zealand. This report, which stated that at certain seasons a large black caterpillar would bury itself in the ground, and be converted into the root of a bulrush, was laughed at, like the rest, but now an English scientist, who recently gave an exhaustive investigation of the strange phenomenon, stated that in many respects the statements are strictly true. From this report it has been learned that the caterpillar grows to about three and one-half inches long and when about to assume the chrysalis state buries itself in the ground, and in doing so it is frequently infected by the spores of some fungus, which becomes involved in the scales in its neck. These the larvae is unable to expel, and the vegetation thus set up rapidly extends throughout the entire body, replacing each animal cell thus destroyed by vegetable matter, and finally converting it into a comparatively dense vegetable structure, which retains every detail of the body, even to the legs, mandibles and minute claw. From the neck, the portion first infected, there then shoots up a single stem, which grows to the height of eight or ten inches, resembling very closely the clubheaded bulrush in miniature. It has no leaves, and if the first stem be broken off another rises in its place, though two stems never grow simultaneously from the same "caterpillar."

A Queer Story.

The Wettersee, in Sweden, like so many other lakes, has long enjoyed the local reputation of being a bottomless pit. The Swedish scientists have now destroyed the venerable legend, for in the measurements taken a few days ago they have successfully demonstrated that the greatest depth of the lake is only 119 meters. There still remains, however, a series of mysteries which science must be content to leave unsolved—at least, for a time. It is not only a legendary belief, but there is a quasi-scientific ground for the queer supposition that living creatures, animal and vegetable, can and do make journeys to and fro between the high northern lake of Wetten and the South German lake of Constance. This bold conclusion has been partly justified by the appearance of exactly the same fauna and even the same animal life in the Swedish and the Swabian inland seas. It is even asserted that whenever there is a storm on the Lake of Constance the Lake of Wetten begins sympathetically to roll and swell, and that the southern lake is similarly moved by any agitation in the distant northern lake. The Kleine Zeitung soberly declares this sympathetic phenomenon to be a known fact, but considerably adds that we have to wait some time for the rational explanation of it.

A Community of Marksmen.

The little commune of Attinghausen, in Canton Uri, has been made famous throughout the world by the pen of Schiller in his "William Tell." The commune at present has a population of about 500 souls, including the babies. Like all its neighbor communes, it holds its yearly "Schutzenfest." It appears from the report of the contest in the Urner Zeitung that no fewer than 184 out of its 500 inhabitants are capable marksmen or markswomen, for out of the 184 who took part in the contest at the communal butts 43 were women. Not only did some of the women prove to be better shots than their husbands, to the great delight of the sex, but the highest honors of this year's festival were won by female hands. The Jungfrau Katharina Wirsch, who is only in her fifteenth year, made 50 points at the "Zweckschuss," and so carried off the first prize. She is the daughter of Matthias Wirsch, who, with seven of his sons and three of his daughters, appeared at the Attinghausen schutzenfest, and the whole family were so dexterous with their rifles that they gained nine prizes during the day.

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BETTER DAYS:

Better to smell the violets cool than to sip the glowing wine,
Better to hark a hidden brook than to watch a diamond shine.

Better the love of gentle hearts than beauty's favors proud;
Better the roses' living seed than roses in a crowd.

Better to love in loneliness than bask in love all day;
Better the fountain in the heart than the fountain by the way.

Better be fed by mother's hand than eat alone at will;
Better to trust in God than say, My goods my storehouse fill.

Better to be a little wise than in knowledge to abound;
Better to teach a child to love than fill perfection's round.

Better sit at a master's feet than thrill a listening state;
Better suspect that thou art proud than be sure that thou art great.

Better to walk in the realm unseen than watch the hour's event;
Better the "Well done" at the last than the air with shouting rent.

Better to have a quiet grief than a hurrying delight;
Better the twilight of the dawn than the noonday burning bright.

Better a death when work is done than earth's most favored birth;
Better a child in God's great house than a king of all the earth.
—George Macdonald.

INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLE.

Single Passages That Have Transformed Men's Lives and Made History.

As Geikie wisely observes, the story of separate chapters of the Bible, or even verses, if it could be known, would be a record of surpassing interest. In the experience of everyone some texts shine like stars, as we think of personal trials they brightened, or death-beds of friends they cheered. Every religious life borrows thus its own secret illumination from year to year, its own galaxies and bright particular stars, which have soothed disappointments, tempered calamities, and filled the mind with a calm and steadfast serenity in the darkest moments. Human compositions catch its power as they embody its spirit and repeat its words. Kings and peasants, philosophers and the illiterate, martyrs and confessors, have alike been cheered, inspired and sustained by its wondrous words. It has created the loftiest poetry and the sublimest art the world ever knew, and a literature unique in its power and dignity.

There is hardly a chapter that has not, perhaps, in some of its verses kindled sentiments unknown to antiquity. There is a transcendent vigor and life in every page. A single verse made Anthony sell all that he had, and introduced through his doing so, a new era in ecclesiastical history. At a single warning of the epistles, Augustine's hard heart was melted under the fig-tree at Milan. A single chapter of Isaiah made a penitent believer of the profligate Rochester. A word to St. Paul has become the stronghold of Luther.

Cromwell charged at Dunbar, to the cry, "Arise, O God, and let thine enemies be scattered!" And Anthony drove away his temptations by the same appeal. Thomas Arnold murmured in dying: "If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons," and "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, died quoting Christ's words, "I go to my Father." Lady Jane Grey wrote in the book of the Lieutenant of the Tower before her execution: "The day of death is better than the day of birth." Latimer, at the stake, roused his soul by the remembrance that "God is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able." Luther died crying, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit."

The Psalter alone, by its manifold applications and uses in after times is a vast palimpsest written over and over again, illuminated, illustrated by every conceivable incident and emotion of men and of nations; battles, wanderings, escapes, death-beds, obsequies of many ages and countries, rise, or may rise, to our view, as we read it. What shall we say of a book so many-tongued, so intensely human, so authoritatively divine? Let critics and theorists stumble at words or phrases; let some things remain to the end "hard to be understood;" whose voice can it be but God's, which rises still and holy over the turmoil of life, in a thousand persuasions, commands and promises, to warn us of danger, to guide us aright, and to soothe our infinite cares and sorrows? It is a noble passage in which Augustine contrasts antiquity and Scripture, and gives his fealty as a Christian man must: "In Cicero and in Plato, and such writers I meet many things finely said, things that move the spirit; but in none of them do I find these words: 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'" —Christian Herald.

Times Had Improved.

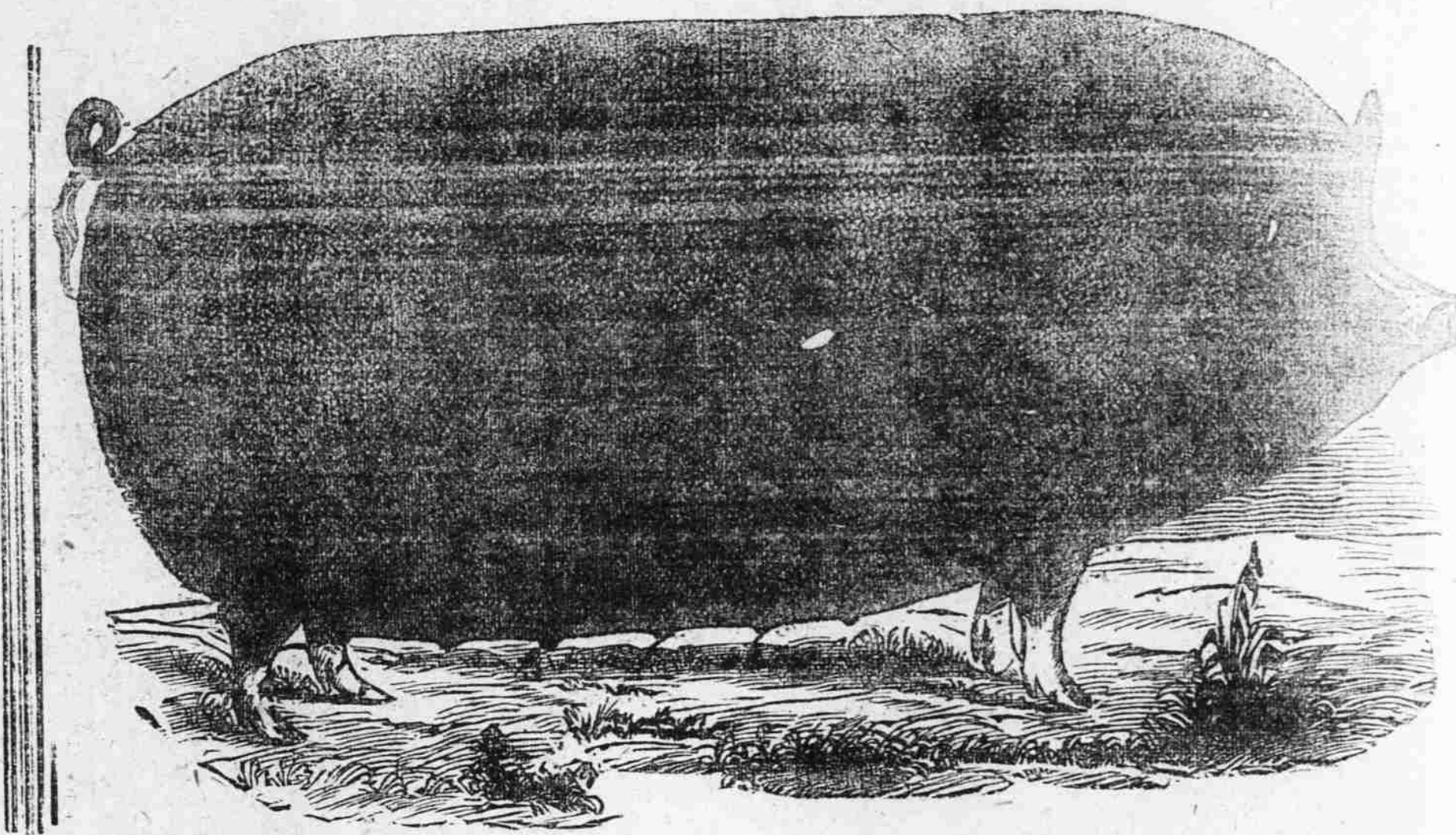
Said an exasperated father at the dinner table: "You children turn up your noses at everything on the table. When I was a boy, I was glad to get enough dry bread to eat."

"I say, pa, you are having a much better time of it now you are living with us, ain't you?" remarked little Tommy.

Tommy—Grandpa, are kings and queens always good?
Grandpa—Not always, my boy; not when there are acts out against them.
—Brooklyn Life.

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