

*Memory
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Kleptomaniac*

A Modern Bestiary

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*Illustrations by Sue Johnson
Text by Wilbur B. Ketcham*

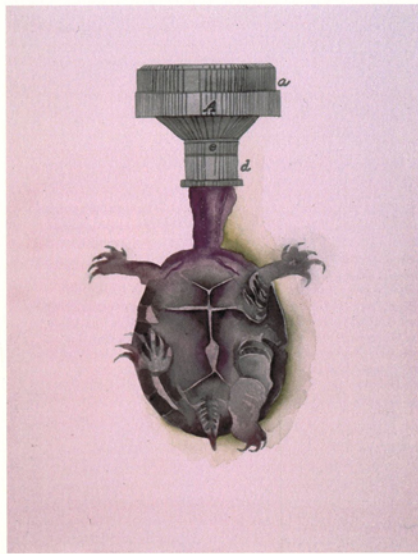
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Moral Truths Mirrored in Scientific Facts,
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Truth Bewildering to Some, New. Men who have lived in traditional knowledge do not thank you for a new truth. It dazes and confounds their dim vision, which is unsuited to its reception. Their bewilderment at the light is similar to that of the cricket. As the cricket lives chiefly in the dark, so its eyes seem formed for the gloominess of its abode; and you have only to light a candle unexpectedly, and it becomes so dazzled that it cannot find its way back to its retreat.



Anger, The Uses of. It might at first appear well for mankind if the bee were without its sting; but upon recollection it will be found that the little animal would then have too many rivals in sharing its labors. A hundred other lazy animals, fond of honey and hating labor, would intrude upon the sweets of the hive, and the treasure would be carried off for want of armed guardians to protect it. And it might at first appear well for mankind if the principle of anger was not a part of our constitution. But then we should be overrun with rogues. The presence of anger, always ready to start forth when an injury is done or intended, has the effect of suppressing much gross impudence and intolerable oppression. The sting of noble anger applied to a dastard who has bullied the weak or injured the unoffending has a most salutary influence in restraining him for the future, and in warning his fraternity of the like punishment which is all ready for them. But man should control his anger as the bee does her sting. It is not to be perpetually projected on every possible occasion, but to be used only when impertinence, laziness, injustice, or fraud requires.



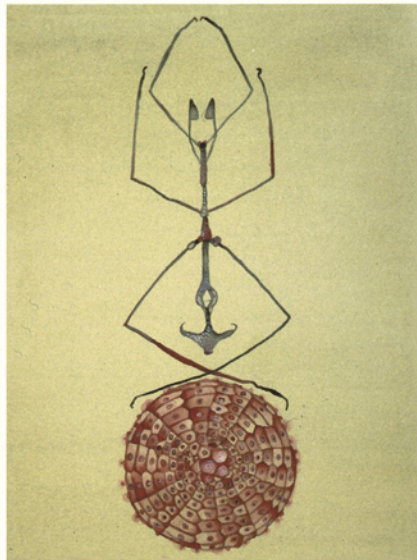
Ancestry, Reliance on. There are persons who seem to have nothing on which to base their claims to notice but the fact that they had noble ancestry, and they are never tired of informing you of that fact. There is every reason to likening them, as Sir T. Overbury did, to that useful esculent, the potato. They make a show, and flourish; but the best part of them, according to their own boasting, is, like the potato, buried and underground.



Lurking Dangers. Many of the most deadly snakes lie concealed just below the surface of the sand, ready to strike a death-blow to the incautious traveler; others lurk and hide in the branches of trees and bushes, from which they dart upon the unwary. The wonderful resemblance in color they bear to the places in which they are found renders them difficult to be seen by the unpracticed eye. However wary you may be, it is often difficult to escape with your life. These reptiles resemble the lurking dangers which encompass us on every side in our progress through this world. Diseases, treacheries, falsehoods, and troubles seem to be in wait for us during a large portion of our journey. We have hard work to elude them; and if we ourselves escape, we have the melancholy misfortune to see them strangling or poisoning our friends.



Economy that is Loathsome. Like all reptiles, the toad changes his skin, but the cast envelope is never found, although those of the serpents are common enough. The reason why it is not found is this: the toad is an economical animal, and does not choose that so much substance should be wasted. So after the skin has been entirely thrown off, the toad takes its old coat in its two fore paws, and dexterously rolls it, and pats it, and twists it, until the coat has been formed into a ball. It is then taken between the paws, pushed into the mouth, and swallowed at a gulp like a big pill.



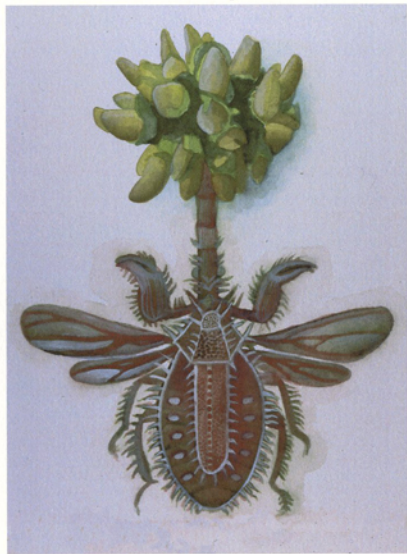
Sensual Pleasures. The dog's-bane (*Apocynum androsaemifolium*), a native of North America, is most cruelly destructive of animal life, and generally conducive to the death of every fly that settles upon it. Allured by the honey on the nectary of the expanded blossom, the instant the trunk is protruded to feed on it, the filaments close, and catching the fly by the extremity of its proboscis, detain the poor prisoner writhing in protracted struggles till released by death, a death apparently occasioned by exhaustion alone; the filaments then relax, and the body falls to the ground. Here is an emblem of sensual pleasures: their attractiveness to the senses, and the punishment of him who is allured by them.



Self-Deception. Sometimes we persistently deceive ourselves. We insist upon pursuing a policy for our benefit which all but ourselves clearly see to be absurd and useless. We cling to a pet project and nurse a worthless conceit long after the folly of both is recognized by everybody else. But we are not altogether to be blamed. A hen will sit with the greatest tenacity on rounded pieces of chalk; and the hamster rat breaks the wings of dead birds as well as of living ones before it devours them. Insects also occasionally err on the same principle, as when the blow-fly lays its eggs on the flower of the *Stapelia*, deceived by its carrion-like odor. A spider, deprived of its egg-bag, will cherish with the same fondness a little pellet of cotton thrown to it.



Transformations, A Series of Marvelous. The genus *Oestrus*, the gadflies, are formidable insects which attack the horse, the sheep, and the ox. The *Oestrus equi* is found in France, in Italy, and also in the East, especially in Persia. During the months of July and August it frequents the pastures and deposits its eggs chiefly on the shoulders and knees of horses. In order to do this, the female suspends herself in the air some seconds over the place she has chosen, falls upon it, and sticks her eggs to the horse's hair by means of a glutinous liquid with which they are provided, and which soon dries. This is repeated at very short intervals. It often happens that from four to five hundred eggs are thus deposited upon the same horse. Guided by a marvelous instinct the female gadfly generally places her eggs on those parts of the horse's body which can be most easily touched by her tongue, that is at the inner part of the knees, on the shoulders, and rarely on the outer part of the mane. When licking herself, the horse carries them, and the larvae which soon emerge from the eggs, into his stomach with his food. It passes through various stages in the horse, and on leaving the body of the horse in its last stage, falls to the ground, after which, in due time, it takes wing and flies off.



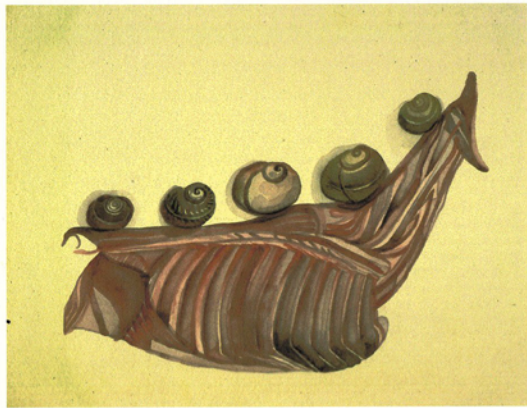
Verbiage. The fecundity of the queen bee is amazing; yet it is surpassed by that of the termite ant. She contains about three inches by half an inch of eggs, and lays them at the rate of sixty a minute. Just as these small creatures are prolific of eggs, so are small minds prolific of words. Eagles' eggs are scarce. So are thinkers' words. Termite eggs and fools' verbiage are plentiful enough.



Rule without an Exception, No. It seems the rule among all creatures to desire above all things to preserve their bodies intact and unhurt. Yet there is an exception to this rule. The brittle starfishes have a habit of breaking themselves into pieces whenever they are alarmed. It appears almost strange that such a creature should experience a feeling of alarm, or indeed any mental emotion whatever. Yet the brittle starfishes are peculiarly timid, and have some instinctive way of detecting danger. One would think that however the danger might be dreaded, it could do no worse than beat the starfish to pieces, and yet the creature adopts this singular mode of escaping from his enemies.



Parasites, The Uncertain Pleasures of. Parasites who expect any consideration at the hands of their patron are frequently deluded. The patron treats them in the spirit in which the fox treats fleas. When the fox is troubled with fleas, he will go into the water, at first to a small depth, the water rising very little above the bottom of his belly; the fleas, to avoid the water, will creep up toward the top of his back. Gradually he will go deeper and deeper, till the fleas actually gather upon his back, when he will sink his hinder parts, gently and by degrees, below the surface of the water, till the fleas are driven forward, and he will at length merge every part of his body, in the same quiet way, beneath the water, except his nose, on which the fleas will congregate as on an island. At last he will sink his nose also and withdraw, leaving the parasites to be drowned.



Drones, Nature's Sentence upon. It will be profitable to idle people to observe the arrangement whereby Nature condemns the drones to death in the bee community. No sooner is the business of swarming ended, and the worker-bees satisfied there will be no lack of fertile queens, when issues the terrible edict for the massacre of the drones. Poor fellows! It is to be hoped they comfort themselves with the reflection that their fate is an everlasting homily, presented by Nature in dogmatical but most effective fashion, of the uselessness of all who labor not for their living. If one must die for the good of one's kind, by all means let it be as a martyr. Poor fellows! How they dart in and out, up and down, the hive, in vain hope of escape! The workers are inexorable. Huber tells us that the latter plant their stings so deeply - for the most part between the segments of the abdomen that they cannot extricate themselves without turning as upon a pivot. The cruelty apparent in the fierceness of the attack is perhaps only a kindness, for the wound is immediately fatal: the drones expand their wings and die.



Tortuousness the Habit of the Weak. With its large and light wings, the butterfly can fly for a long time. But it never flies in a straight line. The line it takes is composed of an infinity of zigzags, going up and down, and from right to left. Thus it is saved from the bird which pursues it, whose flight is far more rapid; for the butterfly is always higher or lower than the place to which the bird flies, expecting to catch it. Its tortuousness is not only its defense, but its habit. So it usually is with weak natures. There are weak-minded people who never go straight. The butterfly goes zigzag even although no enemy is near; and these human flutters persist in crooked paths even when there is nothing to fear from going straight. By the habit of their weak natures they habitually shuffle and equivocate. You may as reasonably expect a butterfly to fly in a line like a crow, as expect this sort of people to abandon their tortuous courses.



Evil Thing, The Terrific Force of an. The lance-headed viper, or *Trigonocephalus* (*Bothrops lanceolatus*), is most common in the West Indian Islands, where it is justly dreaded. It has been computed that at Martinique fifty persons out of a population of one hundred and twenty-five thousand souls die annually from the bite of these odious reptiles. Their fecundity is frightful. Every female bears sixty young, which on their very advent into the world are completely formed and able to wound. This viper, unlike the rattlesnake, carries no warning rattle; nothing indicates its presence.



Statesmanlike Insensibility. It is very remarkable that some fishes can subsist, apparently in health, in water sufficiently heated to boil them if dead. Broussonnet found, by experiments, that several species of fresh-water fishes lived for many days in water so hot that the human hand could not be held in it for a single minute. Saussure found living eels in the hot springs of Aix, in Savoy, in which the temperature is pretty regularly 113 degrees Fahrenheit. But still more extraordinary are the facts recorded by Humboldt and Bonpland, who saw living fishes, apparently in health and vigor, thrown up from the crater of a volcano in South America, with water and hot vapor that raised the thermometer to 210 degrees Fahrenheit, a heat less by only two degrees than that of boiling water. The equanimity with which these slippery creatures bear "getting into hot water" reminds us of the statesman's insensibility to the heated turmoil of public indignation. We have seen many glib specimens, hurled forth from their places by explosions of righteous opinion, float about quite comfortably in currents of popular fury which we should have thought would annihilate them. They disregarded the irony of circumstances, and preserved their slippery egotism under all conditions.



Memory's Mode of Appropriation. Understanding is not essential to memory; the memory of many things not understood may be vital within us. For the fact is that memory often grips and appropriates quite mechanically. The magpie appropriates the silver spoon, carries off the gold pencil, and numbers of other articles, without knowing what they are or what to do with them, and stores them carefully away. Like the magpie, the memory is a kleptomaniac. It cannot restrain itself from snatching at and stealing away all sorts of things. Hence the importance of keeping away from thoughts and scenes which it is undesirable for memory to accumulate. The magpie does not turn his medley of stores to much account. The memory does. It is constantly meddling with them, and they are all turned to either a good or evil purpose. And they endure forever.



Life, The Tenacity of. The vitality of the large-bodied moths is quite astonishing. You may even stamp upon them and yet not crush the life out of that frail casket. If you drive the life out of one half of the creature, it only seems to take refuge in the other, and then retains a more powerful hold. So unless the entire mechanism of the insect be killed, the poor creature may live on for days in pain.



Impertinence, The Model of.

The sparrows are a tame, troublesome, and impertinent generation, and nestle just where you don't want them - they stop up your stoves and water-pipes with their rubbish, and build in the windows and under the beams of the roof, and would stuff your hat full of stubble in half a day if they found it hanging in a place to suit them. They are extremely pertinacious in asserting their right of possession, and have not the least reverence for any place or thing.



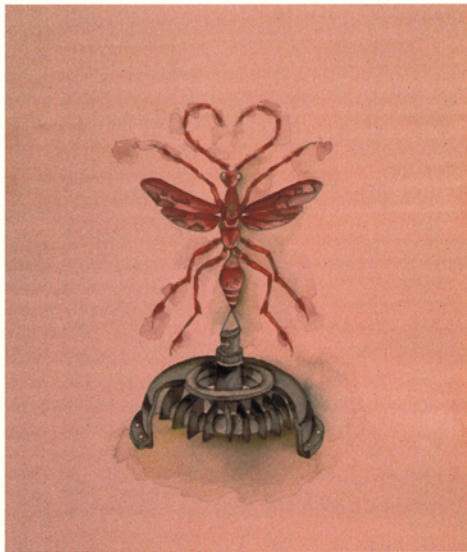
Hideous Implies the Dangerous, The. There is a close connection between ugliness and vice. Among human beings a hideous expression of face usually implies a wicked person, excepting, of course, in cases where it is accounted for by illness or accident. There are men whose badness is written in repulsive characters upon their complexions, so that any observer may avoid them. Not only so. It curiously happens that in some of the creatures whose rage is likely to be fatal to man, there should be something in the physiognomy which puts him on his guard. It is so in regard to sharks; it is so in the crocodiles; it is so predominantly in the venomous serpents. There is in most of these an expression of malignity which well indicates their deadly character. Their flattened head, more or less widened behind, so as to approach a triangular figure, their wide gape, and the cleft tongue ever darting to and fro; and above all, the sinister expression of the glaring, lidless eye, with its linear pupil, are sufficient to cause the observer to retreat with shuddering precipitancy. Darwin, speaking of a sort of viper which he found at Bahia Blanca, says: "The expression of this snake's face was hideous and fierce; the pupil consisted of a vertical slit in a mottled and coppery iris; the jaws were broad at the base, and the nose terminated in a triangular projection. I do not think I ever saw anything so ugly, excepting, perhaps, some of the vampire bats."



Heads Worth Little, Some. If a man loses his head, he dies immediately; but an insect is not nearly so fastidious, and continues to live a long time without any head at all. Indeed there are some insects, which, if beheaded, die not so much on account of the head, but of the stomach; for having then no mouth, they cannot eat, and so die of hunger. And some insects there are which positively live longer if decapitated than if left in possession of their head.



Error, The Recuperative Power of. Error is a worm which it is difficult to destroy. It possesses a power of wriggling away from its assailants and recuperating its existence even when, to all appearances, it has been annihilated. Its vitality resembles that of the earthworm which we often see an object of contention between two birds, neither of which is willing to part with it. In the contest the worm is frequently divided into three parts, each of the birds flying away with a portion, and leaving the center part of the animal behind, which, if the situation where it is left be favorable, begins in a few days to repair its loss, and in a short time restores its deficient parts and resumes activity. In like manner an error often revives after triumphant controversialists have departed in complacency, rejoicing in their spoils.



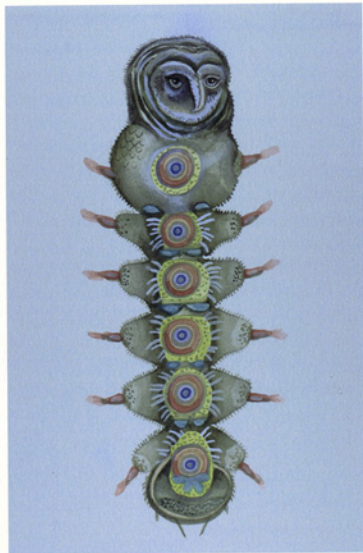
Disappointment, The Influence of. After many disappointments we cannot do our work well. We are disheartened. The poetry of life has departed, with the loss of our hopes was the loss of our love. The bird whose nest has been robbed several times builds up her last in a very slovenly manner. And we act much as that bird does, if, after repeated failures, we again attempt our disappointing task at all.



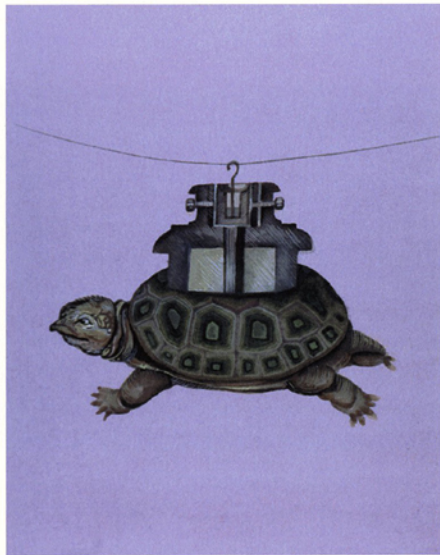
Brightness in Combination with Impurity. The illuminating power of phosphorus appears due to an extremely slow chemical reaction, and it is affirmed that vegetable and animal substances may grow phosphorescent at a certain stage of decomposition, or even without any appearance of putrefaction. Accredited authorities cite a host of examples of fresh or stale meats which have been seen to shine during the night with a more or less vivid clearness. Fish, and especially saltwater fish, when no longer fresh, acquire a phosphorescence which brightens during the first period of putrefaction. Leave for two or three days dead saltwater fish in non-luminous seawater: at the end of that time the water will be covered with a thin pellicle of fatty matter, and will soon become phosphorescent. But it is not only in material nature that we thus find brightness in combination with impurity. Genius itself has been found shining amid moral putrefaction. When so found its light is ephemeral and phosphorescent, but when allied to moral goodness its blaze is like the sun.



Deceivers, The Ingratitude of. The *Volucellae* have a strong resemblance to the humblebee. Certain kinds make use and abuse of this resemblance to introduce themselves fraudulently into its nests and to deposit their eggs therein. When these eggs have hatched, the larvae, which have two mandibles, devour the larvae of their hosts the bees. This is the return they make for the hospitality they have received.



Cast Down, but not Destroyed. The hawk's-bill turtle is the animal which furnishes the valuable "tortoise-shell" of commerce, and is therefore a creature of great importance. The scales of the back are thirteen in number, and as they overlap each other for about one third of their length, they are larger than in any other species where the edges only meet. In this species, too, the scales are thicker, stronger, and more beautifully clouded than in any other turtle. The removal of the plates is a very cruel process, the poor turtles being exposed to a strong beat which causes the plates to come easily off the back. In many cases the natives are very rough in their mode of conducting this process, and get the plates away by lighting a fire on the back of the animal. This mode of management, however, is injurious to the quality of the tortoise-shell. After the plates have been removed, the turtle is permitted to go free, as its flesh is not eaten, and after a time it is furnished with a second set of plates. These, however, are of inferior quality, and not so thick as the first set.



Name Adheres, Though Undeserved, a Bad. Give a man a bad name, and no one credits him with the many good things he does. Give an animal a bad name, and people omit to notice whether it be appropriate and just. The ass is always esteemed as the stupidest of animals, yet if one be shut up in the same enclosure with half a dozen horses of the finest blood, and the party escape, it is infallibly the poor donkey that has led the way. It is he alone that penetrates the secret of the bolt and latch, and he may be often seen snuffing over a piece of work to which all other animals are incompetent.



Crises and the Crisis, The. We have many changes in life, but after all not, perhaps, so many as caterpillars. For the life of a caterpillar seems one continued succession of changes, and it is seen to throw off one skin only to assume another, which also is divested in its turn, and thus for eight or ten times successively. We must not, however, confound this changing of the skin with the great metamorphosis which it is afterward to undergo. The throwing off one skin and assuming another seems in comparison but a slight operation among these animals; this is but the work of the day, the other is the great adventure of their lives. Probably, without heeding the caterpillars, we think too much on changes through which our life passes. No doubt those changes are important; but surely the metamorphosis of the butterfly into wings is trivial compared with the vastness of that last inevitable transformation which we shall undergo, when all our little crises will end in the great crisis of Being.



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Dragon with one and a half oranges
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