

Saint Mary's Beacon.

LEONARDTOWN, MARYLAND.
ONE DOLLAR PER YEAR IN ADVANCE.

Some Curious Things.

"Going to dynamite the Sierra?" was asked a friend, who, rigged out in a corduroy suit and mountain leggings, was belting on a snuff-bag-looking tin canister.

"Hardly," was the reply. "I am off for a day on the mountain for a lizard hunt. I want a whippersnapper, so come along."

"Are lizards the only inducement?"

"Not at all. Take your gun and I'll show you mountain quail that will do your heart good and perhaps a glimpse of a deer. Why, look at that, men," said my friend, pointing over the range, where, far away, resting like a dove on the green tips of the Sierra Madre, was the snow top of old Bernardino glistening like a gem. "I'll guarantee a clear view of that, enough to pay any one for a twenty-mile walk; and no, I'll introduce you to the tail-tossers."

All these inducements proved sufficient, and before the sun had risen well over the range we were a mile up the canyon.

"If you see a lizard or a frog or anything alive, take it," were my instructions.

We had taken to the bed of the mountain stream that in two of thousands of years had made the mighty canyon. It was filled with huge boulders, strewn and tumbled about in chaotic confusion, as if streams of rocks had done the work, and water was altogether a secondary consideration. The rocks had done the work, and water was altogether a secondary consideration. The rocks had done the work, and water was altogether a secondary consideration.

"A rattlesnake!" I asked, hauling back and sitting down heavily.

A CRIBS-CHANGEMENT TOOK.

"No," was the reply, given in such a manner that I became convinced that he saw either a grizzly or a mountain lion. "Don't move," and reaching around he hauled out, not a weapon, but a microscope, which with great caution he applied to a small bump on a boulder before him.

"Is that what you are breaking a man all up for?" said I, as the bump became a frog.

"Is that all?" retorted my friend. "Why, man, that frog, or tree toad, I am convinced, is a new species. If I should describe it as *Hyla Jonsenii*, you might perhaps think it of some importance. Why, look at it! It's one of the most remarkable examples of protective resemblance you ever saw."

A close examination of the distinctive cause of all this excitement showed that it was indeed wonderfully protected, and I had almost stepped upon the animal that, safe in its disguise, had not moved. At a casual glance the toad would have been taken for a prominence on the boulder, and now that attention was directed toward it the mimicry seemed all the more striking, as the animal almost exactly resembled the stone in color. The latter was a spotted granite peculiar to the mountains here, the spots being quite large and pronounced and of irregular shape, evidently deposits of dark mica, the remainder of the rock being white or nearly so. This mottled surface was reproduced on the toad's back as if painted, and even the delicate legs, with their tree-tipped toes, shared the ornamentation.

"I've seen green tree toads on green leaves," said my companion, "but this beats them all. It is evidently a tree-toad adapted to a life among the boulders of this stream. Now to show you the perfection of this protection I will start it up and see what the result will be."

The toad was forthwith touched, with a twig and with a mighty leap landed upon a rock that was nearly white, round and smooth. We sat down upon a neighboring boulder and waited for the change that nature was to make in the little herpetin. In five minutes by the watch this had taken place. The black spots that had represented the mica were rapidly fading out, the other portions also losing their dark tint. Quickly the change went on and in a comparatively short time the spotted toad was of almost the exact hue as its new base and as inconspicuous as it had been before, and would, as in the former case, have been passed by as a mere prominence upon the rock. Another touch, and the little creature sprang upon another boulder, from which it was finally driven upon one almost black. Again the curious change was noticed, dark patches coming out and the skin assuming the same tint as it had while on the granite. The spots continued to grow, increasing their diameter until at last they all fused together and the toad became almost black and equally as inconspicuous as before. In an attempt to drive it upon an alder it finally escaped.

HOW IT IS DONE.

"I have no doubt," said the lizard hunter, "that it would adapt itself to changes of color equally well. How is it done? Well, there are different opinions. The method is found in a large variety of animals, especially lizards, though fish have it to a certain extent. The skin of animals contains pigment and the cells are more or less under the control of the nerves, so to speak. That is, under certain conditions some cells expand while those containing a pigment of another color contract, and thus if pigment cells are arranged in the skin in layers you can easily see how certain changes take place. You must bear in mind, however, that these changes are intuitive on the part of the animal; it cannot help it. It does not deliberately hop on to a white stone when black, and contract itself in any way to produce a change, yet the eye is really the medium, and the secret is, according to my ideas—and they are not mine exclusively—that the cells are extremely sensitive to variations of color. Thus when the toad leaps from a black surface to a white the change is observed by the eye, transmitted to the brain, and by the sensitive nerves to the cells, producing the change. Our common anoles will assume almost any tint of green or brown and a variety of other shades. That the eye is the medium of change is very easily shown and has been demonstrated by experiment. If you should destroy the eye of this toad it would leap from rock to rock without any per-

ceptible change, and the experiment has been tried on a fish by severing the sensitive nerves, by which stripes or spots were produced at will by the experimenter.

A WONDERFUL LIZARD.

"Stir up that mass of leaves," said my friend, as we passed a heap, the droppings from a large live-oak. We had left the brook, that in the higher level was full, and were now following the narrow trail. In setting my gun-barrel under the pile out ran a black lizard about six inches in length. The hunter quickly stepped in front of it, when the little creature, seeing that it was surrounded, raised itself high on its short legs and bowed its head several times, turning its eyes inquisitively upon us.

"I thought I saw one run under the leaves," said my companion, "and I want to show you another instance of a peculiar method of protection. This lizard is black because it lives upon rocks, dark ones, in gloomy places, but down in the valley you will find the same lizard on sunny roads very much lighter in hue—in fact, it also changes its color. But this is nothing to what I hope to show you. This fellow is a tail-tosser; in other words, he can instantly, by a jerk of his body, whisk off as much of his tail as he wishes to require. You can easily see what a protection this is. An enemy in chase seizes the lizard by the tail, and the member is thrown off, and, while the follower is engaged in devouring it, the animal itself is off. This is quite remarkable, but there is more. The lizard can throw off its tail at will to distract the attention of the pursuer. Now, I will make the attack, and you watch the tail while I catch the body part."

The lizard-hunter then began a series of movements with the switch that made the little animal, that was now puffing out its throat in anger or fear and showing a vivid metallic blue patch upon the side, dart about in an undecided way, looking vainly for a loophole of escape. Finally, when the lizard was fully aroused, the switch was brought down just behind it with extreme violence. A whisk of the black body, a gleam of metallic blue, and the lizard was gone, the hunter after it, while I stood with eyes riveted on what for a moment I considered a worm that had escaped from the mouth of the reptile. It was the tail, however, leaping up and down upon the leaves, twisting and contorting itself in a variety of positions and looking exactly like the tail that had been disturbed and was trying to show its displeasure. For fully two minutes this rejected member twisted and withered and then gradually lost its seeming life. In the meantime the lizard had been captured and it was found that the tail had been tossed or cast almost at its base or where it joined the animal.

THE MEANS OF PROTECTION.

"You see the idea," said the hunter. "The lizard thought that he was about to be captured and that harsh methods were necessary, so in an instant he decided to part with his tail, hoping in this way to distract our attention from the body part, which would run off. The tail is jerked off or tossed by a quick side motion of the body, and the moment it is severed the animal darts away as rapidly and naturally the pursuer stops to examine the leaping tail, that to a bird might seem a worm and with any animal would arouse curiosity enough to delay it long enough for the lizard to escape."

"This fellow has had hard luck," continued the speaker, holding up the tail. "You see how much smaller a part of the tail is than the rest. The scales are more delicate and it has a bluish cast quite different from the rest. That means that the lizard has been through this operation before, and this tail that it has just cast had not really attained its full growth."

"Then they reproduce them?" I asked.

"Certainly, or else what would be the benefit? The tail and all the bones grow again and with an indefinite number of times. The only drawback is that it takes time, perhaps three months or more in the summer, to attain its growth. Sometimes two tails are reproduced instead of one, but this is only in rare cases. In Asia some of the geckos are tail-tossers and a gecko has been seen to throw off its tail and then as if it decided itself, seize and swallow it."

In German army circles a soldier is obliged to write home to his wife once in every month. An old bachelor says this explains why so many Germans came to this country to escape military duty.

"Father," asked little Johnny, "why is it that they always begin their letter with 'dear mother'?" "I don't know, my son," replied his father, "unless it is to sort of blind the eye of the Lord to what is done after the prayer is ended."

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SAM'L SANDS & SON, Publishers.
112 N. Baltimore St., Baltimore, Md.
Jas. 14, 1888.

The Doctor Talks to the Boys.

I have seen a great deal of evil come from the discontent of boys with their home life. As soon as they arrive at the age of sixteen or eighteen years, they think that the farm is too small for them, and that they are the only proper place in which to live. If the parents yield to their persuasions, their boys go to the city, which they find to be already full of boys, looking for something to do. If they manage to struggle along, the majority of those who support themselves lead a life of hard work and privation, and but a very small number make a success of life. Some of those boys—happy indeed if they can do so, make their way back to their homes. Some continue to struggle, ashamed to go back, and still others, a number sad to contemplate, go down toward a life of shame. Do not understand me to say that no boys should leave the country for the city. The mischief comes from boys making a change for the sake of a change, and before they find out what they are fit for; indeed before they have really found what their country home has to offer them. I have tried to show our boys that if they find life dull, and they would have novelty, that each Spring, the wood, the meadow, the stream and the fields are as full of novelties as the most crowded city street. Would they see wonders, each spot that is placed in the ground, each bud that opens upon bush or tree, even each egg that is placed under the old hen, is working out a greater wonder than any city showman can present. Even the common things, the pebble under a foot, the bit of limestone or of coal, has a story to tell, if you will but hear it. While I would not check the proper aspirations of any boy, I would have him first know something about the home he is so ready to leave, and not wait until he returns to it, after some disappointment, to learn that there is "no place like home."—American Agriculturist.

A Blast from a Colored Bishop.

Bishop Henry M. Turner, of the African M. E. Church, is out in an Atlanta (Ga.) paper in a bitter attack on the republican party and Judge Bradley. He says: "The republican party deserted me and seven millions of my race under circumstances of dastardly character." He then goes on to say that when the republicans passed a civil rights bill "a republican Supreme Court, really a conclave of human donkeys there in Washington city, declared the whole thing null and void. The republican party gives that infamous decision a virtual acquiescence by such a dead silence that can not be interpreted other than an approval of it."

Coming to Judge Bradley he says: "As soon as the court sold the rights of the negro out nearly every democratic elector in the State made haste to drop down upon their knees to kiss Judge Bradley's big toe and thank him, and told him as he had robbed the negro of his civil rights they now forgive him for robbing Governor Samuel J. Tilden of the presidency; which he literally did, and the country knows it. I shall believe to the day of my death that Judge Bradley sought to father that abominable decision for the purpose of removing some of the odium which was hanging around his name. But he may rest assured that the maledictions of the Southern negro will haunt him like sulphurated vengeance, and his confraternities will not escape like contempt." The Bishop then goes on to speak for the third or temperance party, that "will finish the work of humanity."

Guillard is a little close. His servant told him: "The postman has brought you a calendar, sir. The date that you want, forget him. 'What shall I give him, sir?' Guillard, with an air of great dignity: 'Give him back last year's calendar.'"

An exchange states that the mean death rate among the rich classes of England is fifty-five years. The mean death rate among the poor people is forty-one years. This proves that rich people are meaner than the poor.

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