

Why the Primrose Blooms at Night.

Our evening primrose does not bloom in the dark hours for mere sentiment or moonshine, but from a motive which lies much nearer her heart. From the first moment of her waking welcome she listens for murmuring wings, and waits that supreme fulfillment anticipated from her infant bird. For it will probably be found that those blossoms which open in the twilight have adapted themselves to the crepuscular moths and other nocturnal insects. This finds a striking illustration in the instances of many long tubular-shaped night-blooming flowers, like the honeysuckle and various orchids, whose nectar is beyond the reach of any insect except the night-flying hawk-moth. It is true that in other less deep nocturnal flowers the sweets could be reached by butterflies or bees during the day if the blossoms remained open, but the night murmurers receive the first fresh invitation, which, if met, will leave but a withered half-bloom to greet the slipper of the sunshine. This beautiful expectancy of the flower determines the limit of its bloom. Thus, in the evening sun on the evening primrose, the insect visits, the evening primrose will remain open for the butterflies during the following day, when otherwise it would have drooped perceptibly, and extended a less warm welcome. I have seen this fact strikingly illustrated in a spray of mountain-laurel, whose blossoms lingered in expectancy nearly a week in my parlor, when the flowers on the parent plant in the woods had fallen several days before, their mission having been fulfilled. In the house specimens the radiating stamens remained in their pockets in the side of the blossom cup, and seemed to brace the corolla upon its receptacle. These stamens are naturally dependent upon an insect agency for their release, and the consequent discharge of pollen, and I noticed that when this operation was artificially consummated the flower cup soon drooped off, as if the W. Hamilton Gibson, in Harper's Magazine.

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