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IF we were inclined to be captious we should take exception to the title of this work. Mr. Darwin, as we shall presently show, presents a vast body of evidence to substantiate his opinion that insects, and animal matters generally, are not only captured by, but dissolved and absorbed by, certain plants. Neither he, nor any one else, has ever pretended that any plant actually devours any insect. In the case of the higher animals, the first process in the art of dining is that of prehension,—the hare must first be caught. The animal does this consciously, and by an effort of will. In the various insect-catching plants, prehension is a much more mechanical process. Certain hairs and certain glands exude a sticky secretion, which, we may presume, is attractive in some way to the insect. As a bird is caught with bird-lime, so the unhappy insect is detained a prisoner by the secretion from the plant, escape being rendered the more impracticable by the fact that the hairs, sometimes the whole leaf, or considerable portions of it, exhibit a kind of reflex action, by virtue of which, when stimulated by the impact of the insect, they move as the leaflets of the sensitive plant do. The unhappy insect is thus literally vivisected: a fact we commend to the notice of the amiable and well-meaning band of anti-vivisectionists. But, to proceed, while prehension of food is the first step both in the higher animals and in these fly-catching plants, the succeeding stages are different. There is no mastication in the case of the plant, there is no swallowing process, and, therefore, we are technically right in objecting to the term "insectivorous" as used in this volume. It may be thought that this is mere quibbling, and so, in a sense, it is; but in another sense we hold it to be justified by the necessity of putting some check on the *ad captandum* style of writing which is beginning to pervade scientific literature, a style which will impede rather than advance the real progress of science. We admit the temptation is great. The general public have, in too many cases, been so fed on unwholesome, frothy literary diet, that there is little chance of their sympathizing with, much more appreciating, the severely simple style in which scientific writers should express themselves.

Let us at once hasten to say that the author of this book is guilty of no such faults of expression. If objections may be raised to his title, none can be made to his style. On the contrary, Mr. Darwin's book may be held up as a model of what a treatise should be that is addressed to intelligent readers, a majority of whom, it is to be presumed, have no special acquaintance with the matters under consideration. In style it is strongly marked with Darwinian characteristics. The opening passage, indeed, allowing for difference of subject, is drawn up almost precisely in the same way as that which ushers in chapter one of the 'Origin of Species.' We have laid before us the circumstances that led the author to pursue his researches in the first instance, so far back as 1860; then, step by step, we are treated to the history of those researches; fact is added to fact, inference to inference, till at length the body of evidence, direct and indirect, becomes so overwhelming, that there is as little chance of controverting Mr. Darwin's conclusions as there is for a fly to escape when once it has been caught in the cruel embrace of a sun-dew. The modesty, the perfect candour, the scrupulous care to acknowledge the labours of others, even in the most trifling particulars, are as apparent in this as in the rest of Mr. Darwin's books. These Darwinian characteristics, as we venture to call them, are only equalled by the apparently inexhaustible patience with which he has pursued his observations and experiments throughout many years. All this must be acknowledged even by those who refuse to accept the validity of Mr. Darwin's reasonings and conclusions. The statement of facts he himself puts forward may always be confidently relied on. The statements of others which he cites may not in all cases be so trustworthy; and yet Mr. Darwin himself seems to attach as much importance to them as to his own researches. The ordinary reader will probably do so too, but the scientific reader must be more eclectic in this respect, and, indeed, is certain to be so, for he will soon find that the degree of perfection of Mr. Darwin's observations is, to say the least, considerably above the average of that of other people.

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the orange hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*), in which plant the glands in question are almost exclusively confined to the spots mentioned, suggests the idea that absorption of nitrogenous matters may be necessary for the full development of the seed or of the embryo within it. Indeed, as in the case of Mr. Darwin's other books, the suggestions for further investigation, the new lines of research opened up for would-be naturalists, are numerous and important.

The plants specially alluded to in this volume are the sun-dews (Drosera), Venus's fly-trap (Dionæa), bladder-wort (Utricularia), butter-wort (Pinguicula), and some others. The pitcher plants, Nepenthes, Sarracenia, Cephalotus, &c., are only incidentally alluded to, but, no doubt, they have similar properties, as we have frequently extracted half-digested insects, including cockroaches, from the pitchers of Nepenthes, while Dr. Hooker has observed the gradual digestion of morsels of cartilage by the same plants.

Throughout the volume but little reference is made to Mr. Darwin's theories of evolution and natural selection, though it is easy to see how the facts would fit these theories as well as they do the ideas of adaptation and design. In conclusion, we lay this book down with increased admiration for Mr. Darwin as a discoverer and expositor of facts, and with great satisfaction at the increase to our knowledge of plant-physiology given us, as well as the ample promise of further additions as the direct consequence of the present publication.