ORGANIC EVOLUTION.

How Nature Changes Her Plans to Meet New Conditions.

In the course of organic evolution very many strange and quaint developments present themselves from time to time, not only in the history of a race or genus, but within the narrow compass of the life of a single individual member of such race or genus. Nature changes her plans, in fact, to meet contingencies that occur unexpectedly. Probably few who have any acquaintance with marine fish have failed to notice something strange about the appearance of what are called flatfish, known as the flounder family (or in zoology as pleuronectidae), embracing the turbot, plaice, brill, sole, halibut, flounder, dab, etc. The conformation of the head and of the anterior portion of the body in the adult stage is characterized by a strained and unsymmetrical appearance. In this respect the flatfish differ from all other members of their zoological class.

The question naturally suggests itself why this particular genus should be so different from all other fish, which, as a rule, are remarkable for their symmetrical and graceful appearance. And the answer is very simple. The flatfish, instead of swimming in an upright or vertical position, like all other fish, has for some reason or another taken to the unnatural habit of swimming on its side. It may be on either side—right or left. This enables it to take up what appears to be the lazy position of lying flat on the bottom of the sea, where it can move about freely in search of such food as small marine animals, mollusks, worms, etc. The young fish swims erect in the ordinary manner for some time, but it early shows a tendency to become lopsided and gradually falls over on one side, usually the left, but not invariably so by any means.

The eye on the under side, just so soon as the tendency is shown to fall over on that side, commences gradually to move round to the other or uppermost side and finally takes its place beside the other eye.

This process is strangely brought about through the twisting of a portion of the bones of the head, which gives the latter a decidedly deformed and unnatural appearance. The ventral fins become useless and degenerate. Unpaired fins are developed, the undulatory motion of which enables the fish to swim with ease and even rapidly in the new and horizontal position assumed.—Harper's Weekly.

An Essay on Habit.

A schoolmaster once said to his pupils that to the boy who would make the best piece of composition in five minutes on "How to Overcome Habit" he would give a prize. When the five minutes had expired a lad of nine years stood up and said: "Well, sir, habit is hard to overcome. If you take off the first letter, it does not change 'abit.' If you take off another, you still have a 'bit' left. If you take off still another, the whole of 'it' remains. If you take off another, it is not totally used up, all of which goes to show that if you want to get rid of habit you must throw it off altogether." Result, he won it.

Should Know Her Name.

Some time ago an accident happened to a little girl's doll, Barbara, which consequently had to be sent to a shop where wounded dolls receive attention. Later on the little one called at the shop and asked if her doll was mended.

"I think so," the young man behind the counter said, fumbling over a pile of dolls on a shelf, "but I am afraid I can't tell which one it is in all this lot."

"Oh, you should find her easily enough!" the little one confidently answered. "Her name's Barbara."

The Star Chamber.

The "star chamber" was so called from the place in which the court was held in one of the rooms of the king's palace in Westminster. Upon the ceilings were stars, hence the camera stellata or chamber of stars. It was of very ancient origin and had excessive powers, but could not pronounce the death penalty. It was abolished by act of parliament in 1641 during the reign of Charles I., but this unfortunate monarch was sentenced to be beheaded from this same "star chamber."—London Queen.

NATIONS THAT DIED.

Most of Them Went to Their Doom Fighting, as Did Rome.

Most countries which have died have gone down fighting. The Roman empire perished like that.

The empire of the west became so weak at last that it could make no stand against its enemies. Rome was sacked by the barbarians and eventually became not the capital of a vast empire, but the city of the popes, over which the pontiffs reigned as kings. Finally the city was taken without a real fight by the soldiers of the king of Italy.

The empire of the east had its capital at Constantinople. For centuries it was the greatest power in the world. But it became honeycombed with vice and enervated with pride and luxury; also it grew old and weak.

Then the Turks made a tigerish spring on Constantinople and took it by storm. The last of the Greek emperors died sword in hand, and his descendants are living in England today in very humble situations.

Egypt, once so powerful and famous under the pharaohs, was conquered by Rome and was afterward swamped by the Moslems.

The great moguls used to reign in India. In the days of Queen Elizabeth the mogul, or emperor of Delhi, as he was sometimes called, was so powerful that he thought it a vast condescension on his part to receive an embassy from the maiden queen.

But as time went on the great rajahs, or tributary kings, rebelled against the moguls. India was rent asunder by the wars between rival rajahs. This gave the Europeans a chance.

France at first held the upper hand and nearly conquered the land. But then England drove France back and seized the empire of the great moguls for herself. The heir of the moguls still enjoys a pension given by the British government.

Poland used to occupy a big place on the map of Europe. At one time it was much larger and stronger than Russia.

But Poland perished through her own faults and follies. The mass of the common people were slaves in all but name; hence the nobles and the people never stood together in times of danger or disaster.

Poland was a big country, but it was divided against itself, and Russia, Prussia and Austria combined were more powerful. They all three joined hands, and each took a large share of Poland in 1772.

In 1793 the trio of robbers made a second swoop. Only the ghost of Poland was left. Another year saw the end of the tragedy. The last remnants of Poland were swallowed up by Russia, Prussia and Austria.

The fate of the republic of Venice is one of the most dramatic in all history. Its doges ranked as the equals of the proudest kings. Its alliance was coveted by the greatest powers. All real power rested in the hands of the dreaded council of ten and the secret three. The latter was a trio of living mysteries and were known by name to practically no one in Venice.

So the government of Venice was a terror to its own people and the outside world. Then Napoleon came upon the scene, and "the Lion of St. Mark licked the dust."—Pearson's Weekly.

Best Time to Fiddle.

Above the clanging of the engines Nero's fiddle squeaked its loudest.

"Funny time to play the fiddle when Rome is burning," scoffed the fat senator.

Nero chuckled.

"Best time of all. I can't disturb the neighbors."

And then the great man screeched forth the notes of "Ain't It a Shame, a Burning Shame?"—Chicago News.

His Part.

"Oh, ye-es," remarked Ketchley in a self satisfied way, "Lulu and I will start out in married life under very favorable circumstances. Her mother gives us a neat little home, her father furnishes it, and her uncle De Long has given a carriage and pair. Besides, Lulu has a snug income in her own name."

"What part do you furnish?"

"Well, principally the name—principally the name."—London Answers.

THE SQUID'S HUES.

Why the Creature Is Able to Change Its Color.

One of the most interesting of the discoveries of science is the secret of the means whereby certain animals change color. The most familiar and celebrated example in this line is the lizard called the chameleon, but there are many other creatures both on land and in the sea that possess a similar power.

Noteworthy among them is the common squid. If a specimen of this interesting kind of mollusk, fresh out of water, be laid on a table and watched, its hues will change so constantly that literal waves of color seem to be passing over it from moment to moment. That this happens in response to impulses conveyed through the nervous system of the animal is manifest, a mere tapping with a finger on the table causing a rush of the color waves described.

The secret lies in the fact that immediately beneath the skin of the squid is a sort of network of small channels, in which are frequent larger spaces occupied by pigment cells. These cells are under direct control of the nervous system, which causes them to contract or expand. When they contract the color disappears, which is what happens when the squid dies, for then it turns dead white, although its normal hue in life is reddish brown.

Even in death, however, the pigment cells beneath the skin of the squid may be distinguished by the eye as minute specks. In life these specks expand to the size of a big pinhead and run together, thus producing the brown tint. It is substantially the same phenomenon that is accountable for the rapid changes in color observed in the chameleon, in many fishes and in various other creatures—changes which are evidently for the purpose of disguise, enabling the animal to escape observation by assuming a likeness to its surroundings. Thus the common sole imitates with its coloration whatever kind of bottom it may be resting upon, whether pebbles, sand or what not.

The pigment cells referred to are called "chromatophores," and sometimes they contain two or more different kinds of pigments, some of which disappear, while others persist, the result being that, as in the case of the chameleon, a considerable range of colors may be displayed.—Saturday Evening Post.

Not Like a Tax Receipt.

Accustomed to have the political boss of his ward provide him with a tax receipt, an organization follower went to the same boss with a demand for a favor. "Will you get me a marriage license?" he asked. "That I can't do," explained the politician, "because you have to appear in person when you get a marriage license." This answer to the political worker seemed evasive, and he demanded to know: "How is it that you can get me a tax receipt every time there is an election? The marriage license costs just the same." To this further inquiry the politician gave a long explanation, but it was not quite satisfactory to the humble worker in the cause of organization.—Philadelphia Record.

Chicken Fritters.

Sift a cupful of flour, melt a tablespoonful of butter in a small cupful of warm water and pour by degrees on the flour, salt to taste, beat well and add last the stiffly beaten white of one egg. Mince cold chicken, season with salt, paprika, a little chopped parsley and a tiny bit of onion. To a cupful of chicken add a small half cupful of thick white sauce. Mold into small balls, dip each in the batter and drop from the spoon into very hot fat. Drain on brown paper in the oven. Arrange on a napkin and garnish with lemon and parsley.—Circle Magazine.

Waiting For Himself.

On leaving his lecture room one day an absentminded professor pinned a notice on the door to the effect that he would be back at 4 o'clock. Returning some time earlier than he had expected he was attracted by the notice. He read it thoughtfully, looked at his watch, and, seeing that the professor would not be in for fully ten minutes yet, sighed and turned away to kill the time till he himself would return.—

THE GOOD-FOR-NOTHING.

He Lolled About All Day, but Managed to Keep Out of Debt.

A prominent judge once arrived in a strange town and, wishing to ascertain the way to the best hotel, stopped before a loafing, cumbersome fellow leaning on the corner fence. This fellow answered his queries in such a drawling, apathetic way that the judge, with growing repugnance, wondered what the man might be good for.

So, looking him over with a not too kindly eye, he asked him what he was working at.

"Oh," replied the other, with a broad yawn, "I'm takin' it pretty easy."

"Don't you know, sir, that we are all put here to toil?" demanded the judge somewhat testily.

"We're here to keep a-goin'," the other rejoined, leaning over the fencepost. "I don't believe, though, in goin' into hysterics over work or doin' anybody else's. I believe in actin' natural."

"If you mean"—

"Now, when I was young," the fellow drawled on, ignoring the inquisitor's last attempt—"when I was young everybody said I was cut out for a good-for-nothin', an' I ain't done what I'd call a hard day's work since. Still, I've managed somehow to git enough eat an' drink to keep a-goin'. I let things come an' go easy-like an' leave the worryin' to others."

"There'll come a day of reckoning, my man!" put in the judge, with unsuppressed disgust.

"Reckonin'?" His eyes languidly gazed afar off. "Now, some folks—a lot of 'em—stew about that. I don't. When the Lord calls me up to throw my load in on the weigh scales, I'll throw it right in an' pick out a shady, cool spot where I can take it as easy as I do now," with a lazy chuckle.

"And what have you got to the good to weigh—what have you accomplished?" insisted the judge hotly.

"Accomplished? Now, as I said before, mister, work never worried me much, but here's this house here," pushing a thumb wearily over his shoulder. "Jim Stetson put that up several years ago, an' I stood round an' watched an' put in a word now an' then as to how I'd put 'er up if I was doin' it myself. Then there's them two stores an' barn over yonder, worth nigh onto six thousand—Stetson had them built. Next he put up the bank, the opera house an' then the hotel you're lookin' for, I"—

"I suppose you stood around and threw in a little advice, as usual?" interrupted the judge sarcastically.

"I did that!" the drone rejoined, with an unexpected burst of enthusiasm. "An' I was there when they built Stetson's big mill round the corner there. That mill was nothin' but a shack when Stetson started it up—he was a young man—but it grew an' grew an' ground out enough money so's Stet could build pretty much the whole town. Stetson"—

"Let up on Stetson, man; he's a captain of industry. The question is, What have you accomplished?" uttered the thoroughly harassed judge.

The other's enthusiasm suddenly died down as he looked away and said carelessly:

"Me? Oh, yes—well, I'm Stetson."—Spare Moments.

A Fair Exchange.

At a gathering of medical men one of the number was a noted practitioner who is almost as well known for his shabby attire as he is for his skill as a physician.

When the gathering was about to disperse the doctor in question could not find his hat. Instead, to his great surprise, he found a nice new glossy silk hat, which happened to fit him as though made to his order. When he got home he exhibited his headpiece with considerable pride.

The next day, however, a fellow doctor turned up to claim the hat.

"Permit me, my dear doctor," said the second medico, "to apologize for my little trick, which grew out of the fact that yesterday you carried an umbrella, while I had none. It occurred to me that, while my new silk hat would be ruined by the rain, yours would not. Accordingly I took the liberty of leaving mine in place of yours. Many thanks."—Harper's Weekly.

PERILOUS WORK.

Dangers of Railroad Surveying in Mountainous Regions.

Sometimes the work of mountain railroad surveying parties becomes intense and dramatic. The "chief," lowered into a deep and rocky river canyon, is making rough notes and sketches, following the character of the rock formation, and dreaming—dreaming the great dreams that all great engineers, great architects, great creators, must dream perforce. He is dreaming of the day when, a year or two hence, the railroad's paths all have crowded themselves into this impasse and when the folk who dine luxuriously in the showy cars will fret because of the curve that spills their soup and never know of the man who was slipped down over a 600 foot cliff so that the railroad might find its way.

It is then that the work of the surveying party begins to have its thrills. Perhaps to put that line through the canyon the party will have to descend the river in canoes. If the river be too rough, then there is the alternative of being lowered over the cliff sides. Talk of your dangers of Alpine climbing! The engineers who plan and build railroads through any mountainous country miss not a single one of them. Everywhere the line must find a foothold. That is the problem that must be solved. Sometimes the men who follow the "chief" in the deep river canyons, the men with heavy instruments to carry and to operate—transits, levels and the like—must have lines of logs strung together for their precarious foothold as they work. Sometimes that foothold is lost, the rope that lowers the engineer down over the cliff sides snaps. The folk riding months later in the cheerful dining cars do not know of the graves that are dug beside the railroad's path.

It is all new and wonderful, blazing this path for civilization; sometimes it is even accidental. An engineer, baffled to find a crossing over the Rockies for a transcontinental route, saw an eagle disappear through a cleft in the hills that his eyes had not before detected. He followed the course of the eagle, and today the rails of the transcontinental reach through that cleft and the time table shows it as Eagle Pass.—Edward Hungerford in Outing.

Unhealthy to Dine Alone.

The solitary eater is always tempted to take too large mouthfuls and swallow them too quickly and either eat too much or too little. Eating is only one part of feeding and without digestion is not only useless, but injurious. Those who eat in company have to devote a certain amount of time to talking and attending to each other's wants. This makes the period between the mouthfuls longer and gives more time for digestion. Then, again, conversation at mealtimes usually takes a cheerful turn, and the tone of both body and mind is raised, the heart and nervous system act better, the flow of digestive juices is stimulated, and a larger amount of actual nourishment is obtained from a smaller quantity of food.

The Boy Was Not the Fool.

The other day a little boy was sent to a shop for a penny's worth of cobbler's wax. The shopman, thinking of quizzing him, said:

"Won't shoemaker's wax do?"

"Aw dooan't know," replied the lad. "Aw'll go an' see."

He returned again directly and, addressing the shopman, said:

"Mi faither says that shoemaker's will do."

The shopman handed it to him, smiling, and said:

"What is the difference?"

"Well," said the lad, going toward the door, "mi faither says there's same difference as there is between you and a donkey, and that is they're booath alike."

And then he was off like a shot.—London Spare Moments.

Sacrifice Prevented.

"You refuse me because I have a title," said the count bitterly, "but I will relinquish it. I will become a plain citizen."

"How noble of you!" responded the American heiress. "I, too, feel called upon to make a sacrifice. I will relinquish my fortune, and—Why, he's gone!"—Philadelphia Ledger.