

The following, from Don Platt's Washington correspondence to the Cincinnati Commercial, will be read with interest by our readers:

WASHINGTON, May 19, 1870.

CRAGIN'S HOWL.

We had in the Senate Chamber, last night, a prolonged howl from the venerable Cragin, on the subject of Mormonism—its evils and remedies. Senator Cragin was afflicted. Senator Cragin felt his chaste soul stirred to its innermost depths by this foul blot on American civilization. That one man should have an assortment of wives filled the virtuous Cragin with wrath and disgust. And so the lofty and chaste Senator lifted his voice in anger and addressed no end of Senators and spectators, who keep mistresses, reminding one of Southey's old story of the philanthropist who remonstrated with his neighbor for that he cleaned his chimneys by scraping them with live geese. "And what do you use?" asked the amazed neighbor. "Ducks," was the response.

The intelligent and fair Cragin began with the Mountain Meadow Massacre, and traveled down through all the crimes imputed by slander to these poor Mormons for twenty-five years. One would feel ashamed, if any shame were left after so many such exhibitions in the Senate, at this show of ignorant prejudice and blind fury.

At the elbow of this vociferous specimen of Senatorial chastity sat a Senator from one of the new States, who amused a dinner party the night before by an account of his constituents: "Were you to rake hell from supper till daylight, you could not get together such a collection of unmitigated scoundrels. All the Penitentiaries of the Union vomited their contents on our devoted lands. We had criminals escaping conviction and convicts escaping punishment. All disguise and thin pretense were thrown off, and crime became distinction. If a man, comparatively speaking, came among us with the remnant of a conscience, or a rag of character, he was forced, in self-defense, to appear wicked as the rest, and could find security only in the desperation that made crime a boast and infamy a road to favor. They murdered Indians in the name of the whites, and whites in the name of the Indians. The honor heretofore recognized among thieves ceased to exist, and a scoundrel was safe only in the readiness to rob, steal from and murder his brother scoundrel. These are our pioneers—these the founders of our empire."

And yet over this world of iniquity, the eloquent Cragin floated with his eyes shut, to attack a community of people who, however bigoted and ignorant, are yet moral, orderly, and law abiding. It is the concurrent testimony of all, friend or foe, that the moment one passes into Utah from an adjoining Territory, the fact is made patent by the quiet, cleanliness, order, and kindness of the people. Yet over the half civilized and iniquitous territories, our armies are to march in a raid upon these poor fanatics.

It is no exaggeration to say, that for every Mormon crime named by the chaste and virtuous Cragin, one hundred can be recorded as done by the very people on the border he would have to use as volunteers in his war.

But this polygamy is a fearful thing. It is a twin relic of barbarism, and the Republican party is pledged to its annihilation. The Republican party is pledged to a good deal that remains yet unfinished. It is pledged to an economical and honest administration of the Government, and yet, while this St. Joseph looks far over the continent to pick out a handful of poor fanatics to punish, under his Senatorial nose the most abominable extravagance and corruption go on unrebuked. Thieves and swindlers, pimps and lewd women, swarm about the lobbies and hurry through the corridors like Norway rats about a granary, each bent upon filling its maw with the hard earnings of an over-taxed people. The accumulated capital of the country, in the hands of unprincipled monopolists, has turned our Government into a huge machine to ride down and crush out the mechanic, farmer and laborer.

Pledges of the Republican party! I like that. To sit in the galleries of either House and listen to the quarrels and abuse below sounds like pirates fighting over their plunder.

And what makes the matter more aggravating is that every piece of rascality is sugar-coated with the nasty cant of religion and morality. Whenever a Solon rises to his feet and says solemnly, "In the name of God—amen," you

may bet your inner greenback that he has hid under his coat-tail some infernal swindle.

I have not the patience to listen to or to argue with these people, for that I know that they are not sincere, and there is, therefore, no justice or reason to which one can appeal. Now that polygamy is brought in immediate contact with the Christian civilization, to say that in its suppression we must appeal to the criminal enactment and the bayonet, instead of reason and the Bible, is to say that our civilization is a failure, and our moral teachers impotent humbugs. Already the intelligence reaches us of discontent that culminates in serious division in the Church. For the Government, after twenty years' toleration, to attempt to suppress the evil that comes of ignorance, is to heal the dissension and unite the Mormons. As in the Territory all are free to express their opinions—and as none are held in duress or suppressed by force, the interference of the Government is uncalled for and unwise.

There is an inside history to this bill which ought to be ventilated. It is understood that a majority of the committee to which it was referred in the Senate are opposed to the unconstitutional provisions. But it never was discussed in committee previous to Senators Cragin and Howard's unauthorized report. I get the fact from Senator Schurz, who attended every meeting for the purpose of discussing the absurd clauses introduced by Cragin. Finding that the iniquity would be delayed, and perhaps defeated by such considerations, Cragin and Howard stole the bill out, and reported it to the Senate as the bill of the committee. That such larceny and lying should pass unrebuked, only proves the utter demoralization of this once imposing body. I asked Senator Nye, who is chairman of the committee, and he told me that the bill had never been under consideration previous to report, but that an informal vote had been taken outside the committee-room, and that Cragin and Howard had carried the measure—Senator Schurz not voting. The fact is, the privilege never was accorded him, the committee being afraid of the clear-headed and impartial Senator from Missouri. These timid gentlemen are not done with him yet.

DO VEGETABLES THINK?

That a plant possesses any faculty like our power of thought, probably no one would claim; but is there anything in vegetable life which for that sphere of creation answers the purpose which reason or instinct serves in human or brute life? It is commonly supposed that all animal life is superior to all vegetable life—that the lowest form of animal, in which vitality is scarcely recognizable, is of a higher order than the highest form of vegetable structure. Certain plants show a greater sensitiveness to touch, and a greater variety of movements, than some of the lowest specimens of the animal kingdom. But is this sensitiveness and these movements purely mechanical, without any feeling or even knowledge of the event on the plant's part? It is easier to ask than to answer such questions, and without attempting their solution—or even to define our idea of what thought means—we propose presenting some curious facts relating to the subject, which we have gleaned from various sources. There may be different theories for accounting for these things and our readers may be able to solve the problem to their own satisfaction. We must confess that to ourselves there has appeared no entirely satisfactory reply to the question, "Do vegetables think?"

No one yet has found anything approaching to an explanation why the seed invariably sends its root downward and its stalk upward. All kinds of reasons have been given: the most common is that plants strive toward the sun. Experiments of the most various kinds have proved that no external causes whatever can be found to account for this inveterate tendency. Some of the experiments are very curious. Acorns and beans placed in tubes full of earth, have been turned and turned about, whirled round wheels day and night, till one would have thought they must have lost all ideas of zenith and nadir; but no, in spite of all ingenious attempts which have been made to confuse the vegetable mind it persists in sending its stalk upward, and its root downwards. One of the most conclusive experiments was made by M. Drouchet: he filled with earth a vase whose bottom was pierced with holes, in the holes he placed bean seeds, so that each plant had every inducement to thrust its roots upward to get earth, and

its stalk downward to have the light and air; but no again! it remained true to the education which every baby seed must receive on leaving its mother, and which every plant must follow or die—it thrust its root downward into empty air, and its stalk upward through the dark thick earth. The first withered, the latter was suffocated, and the infant bean plant perished as a martyr to the law of nature; but it proved its incorruptible autonomy and invincible constancy.

Another peculiar example of autonomy and constancy in plants is shown in creeping and climbing plants which turn in spirals round any support; they will obstinately persist in climbing in the direction of the first spiral turn, be it to left or right. No surprise—no system of coaxing will make the plant forget or change the direction it first began to climb with its infant shoots. What then is this energy—this invincible desire which exhibits itself in the tender baby milky pulp of the first spiral of the twining plant, and which overcomes any obstacle? Some plants, like the ampelopsis hederacea, may be seen climbing a wall, throwing their delicate arms, like feelers, dying of disappointment where they fail to find a resting-place; but where they do, clinging to the wall with little discs like a fly's foot, and so creeping up and up in search of heat and warmth.

As to that strange phenomenon known as the sleep of plants, though it is neither an argument in favor of instinct nor sensibility, it demonstrates a further likeness in their vitality to that of animals. Sleep, indeed, seems an improper expression—it is a sort of vegetable contraction which plants experience at certain times. The leaves in this plant-sleep are drawn together, and become crisp and hard to the touch, and they return to their former state as though extended by a spring. The lotus of the Nile, and the water-lily, as is well known, go to sleep at night, and even withdraw their flowers beneath the surface of the water. Other plants, however, sleep at all hours of the day and night with such regularity and diversity, that Linnaeus made a flower-clock, which he called the dial of Flora, by means of rows of flowers, which expanded in regular succession day and night. But even the flower-clock of Linnaeus is not more marvelous than the oscillating movements of the leaflets of the hedysarum gyrans of Bengal, of which two out of every three united on one stem, and forming the leaves of the tree, oscillate one after the other exactly like the pendulum of a clock, and their ascending movements are with jerks, precisely like the second hand of a watch.

To return, however, to phenomena denoting sensibility and instinct. We may note that plants may be put to sleep by narcotics, as well as destroyed by poison, and that in the sensitive plant, a drop of sulphuric acid placed on the root of the leaf, not only kills the leaf itself, but when it contracts at the first touch of the poison, all the leaves shut with a sympathetic shudder. The sensitive plant being the most delicate creature in the whole range of vegetable sensibility is necessarily a stranger to none of its symptoms. It goes to sleep regularly in the evening, gathering all its leaves up, and toward midnight it gives them a gentle quiver like a bird or a little lady rousing an instant from sleep, turning over and going to sleep again, and with the first rays of the sun it distends its leaves, and stretches itself out in the sunshine. The exquisite sensibility of this delicate creature is so great that a shock, a noise, a too loud voice, and even a strong smell, gives it convulsions. In the West Indies, if you come upon it suddenly, not properly announced, your very shadow is sufficient to give it—not an attack of nerves, for it has been proved to have none, but a fainting fit; but all these isolated symptoms are nothing to the fact that a whole field of them may be thrown into a state of alarm, if their advanced guard discovers an enemy. You may walk up to a bed of them, and by touching the nearest ones with a cane throw the whole republic into a state of terror; from leaf to leaf, from branch to branch, fear takes possession of the whole commonwealth—the enemy is in sight. This proof of sympathetic sensibility, extraordinary as it is, does not, however, surpass the exhibition of sensitiveness made by a plant on a journey in the carriage. When the carriage began to move, it shut itself up in a fright—it was a motion it had not been accustomed to; however, it was gently treated, and getting reconciled to the motion, its confidence returned, it opened its leaves, and seemed quite happy. When the

carriage stopped, the courage of the sensitive plant failed again—something dreadful had surely happened; it shrank itself up in a fright, and so remained until the carriage went on once more. After a few experiments the plant was educated into being a courageous traveler, and it got quite resigned to the little incidents of travel, and never fainted again on any occasion. But what shall we say of the dionaea muscipula of North Carolina, which belongs to the same family, yet is by no means as innocent, since it passes its whole existence in alluring flies into its clutches and putting them to death. Every leaf of the dionaea is a villainous fly-trap. As soon as the insect alights on the leaf, which the perfidious plant carefully baits with gum to attract it, the leaf, which has a hinge in the center, doubles up and catches the fly a prisoner; when he is dead the leaf opens, and he is allowed to fall out. The trap is set again, and the dionaea muscipula goes on catching flies to the end of its wicked existence.

We must confess that to ourselves there has appeared no entirely satisfactory reply to the question, "Do vegetables think?"

It is well known to every botanist, horticulturist and farmer that fruit trees set more fruit than they perfect or ripen. To illustrate our thought we will select a single spray of—say an apple tree—though it might be of any other fruit tree, just as well. The tree of which this spray is a part has set a profusion of fruit, and the whole crop has progressed to a certain size, with uniform health and vigor. But now the tree has become conscious, by some means, that by reason of drouth, injury, sickness or other cause, it will not be able to ripen and perfect all the apples it has begun. Let us suppose that the spray we have selected has upon it five of these apples that are perfectly grown, all of which have thus far been equally healthy and vigorous. But it has now become evident to the tree that the whole upon it cannot be perfected, and that a part must be sacrificed as the only means of saving the remainder. And here two questions are to be determined: first, the number of the growing apples that are to be sacrificed; second, the selection and identification of the particular individuals that are to be thus disposed of.

These two questions—or one, if you prefer—are only to be settled by the tree itself. It alone first determines the necessity of any sacrifice, and then it, alone, fixes the number that must be lost, and ordains the particular individuals that are to constitute this number. Let us now return to our selected spray, with the five apples upon it; and we may suppose that two of these are of the number to be sacrificed. Mark, it is not simply two-fifths of these, but it is two specific individual apples, of these five apples, that are to be lost. And now for the process of destroying these particular apples, after they are appointed by the parent tree, to die. The tree which has condemned and sentenced these selected apples to destruction has yet to become their executioner. This it has the power to do in only one way, and that is to withhold nourishment from them. This is done, and as a consequence, they are literally starved to death.

From the time the fate of these victims is determined the nourishment for their support is rigidly withheld from them, and so they inevitably wither and die. Again two certain ones of these five are of the condemned number. All the leaves of this spray, and each of the selected apples that are to be perfected, being three in number, continue to receive their full and proper supply of nutriment, while the victims are wholly deprived of all sustenance, and so wither and die. The same is true of all other parts of the tree as of this part; and so of all other trees and of all plants, no less than of the apple tree.

Among the confervæ, or jointed algae, is a genus called oscillatoria, the members of which might almost be mistaken for a number of worms writhing together. These shift their position with very considerable alacrity. If, for example, a patch of them be placed in water in a plate, and a black bell glass be inverted over them in such a manner as not to quite touch the bottom of the plate, the confervæ in a very short time will be found to have glided out at that side of the bell glass most exposed to light. They have been observed to travel in a few hours to a distance of ten times their own length. The young of certain species of them, too, when separated from the mother plant, move onward in the water with velocity until they reach a shady spot, when they take root and remain fixed.—*Haney's Journal.*