

THE PITCHER PLANT.

This plant belongs to the small family *Sarraceniaceae*, which includes only the species *sarracenia*, *heliamphora*, and *darlingtonia*, and its peculiarities are that the leaf stalks, as shown by the cut, are pipe-like, and the leaf proper on the end of the pipe appears as an ear-like appendage. The pipe or tubes extend first along the ground, and then bend upward. The interior of each tube is covered with a network of veins, and the interior glands secrete quantities of water which attracts all kinds of insects, most of which perish. For this reason, these plants have been called, since the time of Darwin, insect-devouring plants. Although their structure is very wonderful, they are not unique, for many other plants have tube-shaped petioles; take, for example, the *Nepenthes*, *Cephalotus*, *Darlingtonia*, etc. Linne knew the species, and gave it the name of Dr. Sarrazin, of Quebec.

These plants are found only in North America, specially in the southern part, where they are known as "pitcher plants" or "fly traps." There are about six species, viz., *sarracenia purpurea* L., *S. rubra* Walt., *S. flava* L., *S. psittacina* Mx., *S. variolaris* Mx., *S. drummondii* Hook., *S. leucophylla* Rafin. The flower is very insignificant, the distinguishing feature of the plant being the trumpet-shaped leaves. This genus grows in marshy land. This is, in brief, a description of a plant which interests us specially, since it has been found on the high lands of the Thuringen forest, where it will have to endure severe winters. We hope that its discoverer did not disturb the roots, so that they may increase in the natural way, as the plants blossom and go to seed.—*Illustrirte Zeitung*.



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to the tree. Not long ago I met a reverend gentleman who sincerely believed in the existence of a poisonous horn snake—not a *cerastes*, which has two horn-like projections upon the head, but one with a "poison sting" at the tip of its tail. He said he himself at one time saw a "horn snake" killed and cut apart with a scythe, and that he plainly observed the scythe was covered and spattered with the unmistakable "white

Knowing that the gentleman was truly sincere in declaring he had seen (what he supposed to be) a horn snake, I was desirous of knowing to what species it really belonged; and not having specimens handy, I placed before him colored drawings of the serpents likely to exist in the locality designated. In a short time he picked out the figure of the pine snake, *Pityophis melanoleucus*, and exclaimed, "That's it!"

—the very same serpent that was pointed out as the "horn snake" to Dr. Holbrook forty years ago.

Its tail does certainly end in a horny point, as is the case with several of our snakes, but it is needless to say there is no venomous gland or duct connected with it in any way whatever, but that it is as harmless as the bill of a baby chick just out of the egg. Indeed, the pine snake is in no way harmful. It is without venom fangs, and is not a constrictor, like the boas.

Some time ago, I saw in a saloon window a card bearing this notice: "Turtle-headed Snakes on Exhibition." I went in with a friend to see what these unheard of serpents might be, and after waiting a short time, the bartender drew from a box a snake about four feet in length, which he fondled and entwined about his neck, and twice put its head into his wide open mouth. This latter performance the snake evidently did not enjoy. There were three serpents on exhibition, all of them being common pine snakes. When

I informed my friend to what species they belonged, one of the audience heard my remarks, and I was flatly contradicted in a menacing manner.

A young Southern lady informed me—and I know she truly believed what she said—that in Eastern Virginia she once saw a dark colored snake drop from a tree, throw itself into the form of a hoop, and roll away with lightning-like rapidity; but, poor darling! she was nearly frightened to death, and what she

seemed to see was but an imaginary picture flashed upon a terror-struck brain. I have heard, from "actual witnesses," many wonderful stories concerning the deadly "hoop-horn snake," but they are all lies or the production of morbid imagination.

The pine snake feeds upon frogs, toads, and the smaller mammals. It is found occasionally in Pennsylvania, frequently in New Jersey, southward to Florida.

Calcined Oyster Shells as a Remedy for Cancer.

In a recent number of the *Lancet*, Dr. Peter Hood, of London, refers to a communication of his published in the same journal nearly twenty years ago, on the value of calcined oyster shells as a means of arresting the growth of cancerous tumors. In a case which he then reported, that of a lady nearly eighty years old, the growth sloughed away and left a healthy surface after a course of the remedy, as much as would lie on a shilling being taken once or twice a day in a little warm water or tea. He now reports another case of scirrhus of the breast, in the wife of a physician, in which the treatment was followed by an arrest of the growth and a cessation of the pain, the improvement having now lasted for years, and no recrudescence having thus far occurred. He urges that the remedy can do no harm, and that the *prima facie* evidence in its favor is stronger than that on which, at Dr. Clay's recommendation, the profession lately displayed an extraordinary eagerness to try Chian turpentine. He would restrict the trials to well marked cases of scirrhus, and insists that no benefit should be looked for in less than three months.

THE PINE SNAKE—SO-CALLED HORN SNAKE.

BY C. FEW SEISS.

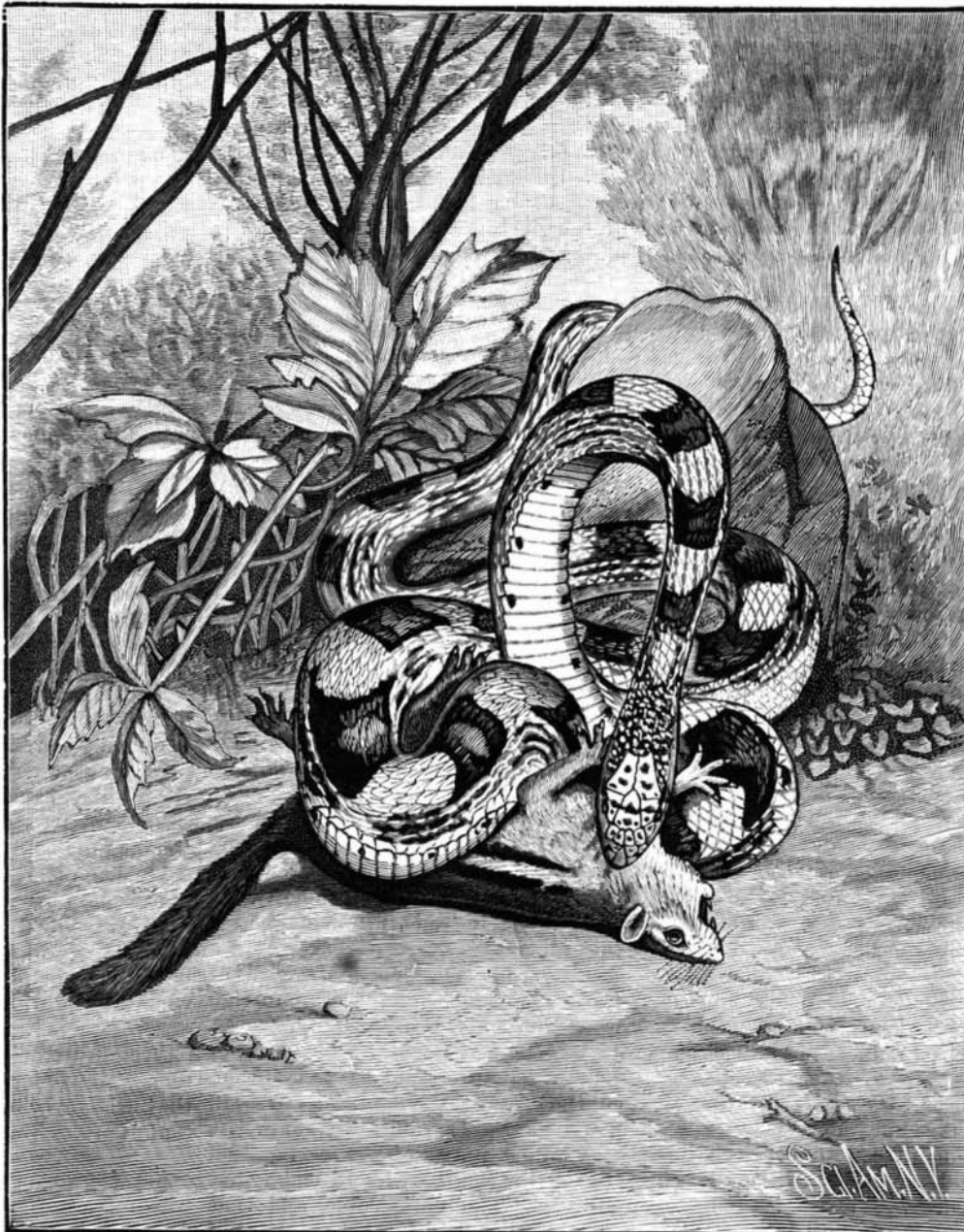
Gonston, in a curious book entitled *Hist. Nat. Serpentibus*, published in England in 1653, says: "In America are found asps with stings in the tail, where-with they strike and kill." To the present day there are people in America who firmly believe in the existence of a deadly horn or hoop snake. Only last summer, a Philadelphia daily paper, noted for its veracity, published a clipping from a Virginia paper, stating that in a certain locality in said State the horn snakes were so numerous as to be destructive to young oak trees. The account says the snakes (in mere play I suppose) rolled hoop-like down the hill and struck their poison-horned tails into the trunks of the trees, and "a witness" observed that the leaves upon the trees thus stung would wither and turn brown in two hours, and the trees themselves were completely destroyed!

It is to be deplored that "witness" neglected to secure and preserve specimens of such rare ophidians—serpents injurious to vegetation! He would certainly have made himself both famous and wealthy.

Wasps, bees, and scorpions have a sting or lancet-like instrument at the end of the abdomen or tail, generally furnished with a poison duct; but serpents have venom weapons in the form of teeth only, never in any other situation. The so-called venomous horn and hoop snake never existed in America or in any other country. They are impossibilities and myths.

The venom of serpents is not injurious to vegetation. That delicate seeds will throw out roots and sprout in dilute snake poison has been repeatedly demonstrated. A hole bored in the trunk of a tree and filled with serpent venom would cause no perceptible ill effect

poison" from the snake. Now, snake poison is a fluid generally of a pale yellowish tint, and several drops (two to four) is the amount contained in each venom gland. The "white poison" which my friend saw upon the scythe was simply a portion of the food of the snake after having passed through the process of digestion. It is found in the excrements of all serpents. Many birds, especially birds of prey, give off large quantities of much the same "white poison."



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