

DIONÆA MUSCIPULA.



CHARACTER GENERICUS.

Perianthium pentaphyllum.

Corolla pentapetala.

Germen depressum, crenatum.

Stigma patens, fimbriatum.

Cl. Decandria Monogynia.

CHARACTER SPECIFICUS.

DIONÆA foliis ciliatis.

Carnivoro generi varia est acquirendæ prædæ ratio. Ab hoc nempe vi corripitur; ab illo venatione fatigatur: alterum venenum lethale morfu inflat, et id omne otiosum deglutit, cui aufugiendi potestatem ademerit: est etiam quod multiplici utitur dolo, incautaque animalia in casses suos illaqueat. Non tantum animalibus majoribus inest hæc prædandi cupido, sed et minimis; præcipueque insectis, quorum plurima interdum vel in suam speciem graviter sæviunt.

Quod vero dictu omnino mirum videatur, sunt etiam plantæ ad insectorum damnum et perniciem natæ, quæ vel a viscoso foliorum aut florum quibus incaute insident, humore implicantur, vel illius partis quam irritabilem nuncupant physici, pressura includuntur. Ita se rem habere certissime demonstrat species illa Apocyni,
botanicis

botanicis nomine Apocyni androsæmifolii probe cognita: in cujus floribus antheræ quæ profundius intra corollam latent, adeo convergunt, ut sint quasi tegmen nectariis subjacentibus; quorum in medio manet gutta liquoris dulcis et mellei quo potissimum delectantur insecta. Antheræ levissimo tactu irritabiles, multo arctius inter se conveniunt; quo fit ut musca, seu aliud insectum floribus insidens, et proboscidem ad mel exugendum e fundo corollæ protendens, antheris irritatis et subito convergentibus irretiatur, misereque detenta pereat.

Est tamen multo mirabilius exemplum irritationis hujus vegetabilis in planta quæ in tabula depingitur. Cum enim foliorum superficies facillime exasperetur, et singulum folium ad margines serie spinularum seu vallorum cingatur, tactumque, subito in longitudinem arctissime convergat; necesse est ut quicquid insectum ibi malo fato advenerit, nisi ociissime aufugiat, non secus ac mus in muscipula capiatur; plerumque etiam firma et valida pressura occidatur. Irritabiliorem reddit hanc plantam plenus et meridianus solis calor.

America Septentrionali innascitur, in uliginosis Carolinæ locis præcipue reperta. In Angliam circiter vigintiquinque abhinc annos illata est, et a celeberrimo ELLISIO nomine *Dionææ Muscipulæ* descripta.

Quo præcipue consilio insita sit illi mira hæc indoles quam jam tractavimus, philosophos omnes hætenus effugit, latebitque, ut credo, posteros.

Magnitudo ejus plerumque est ut in tabula depicta: nonnullas tamen ipse aliquando vidi quibus caulis multo procerior. Numerus staminum non semper certus est, et idem.



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DIONÆA MUSCIPULA,

OR

VENUS'S FLY-TRAP.



GENERIC CHARACTER.

Calyx five-leaved.

Corolla five-petaled.

Germen depressed and crenated.

Stigma spreading and fimbriated.

SPECIFIC CHARACTER.

DIONÆA with ciliated leaves.

Various are the methods by which animals of a carnivorous nature obtain their destined prey; some seizing the victim with resistless violence, or hunting it down till it is exhausted with fatigue, or inflicting a deadly poison by their bite, and thus securing it beyond all possibility of escape, and afterwards swallowing it at leisure: others exerting every artifice of insidious ingenuity, and entrapping the unwary animal into their snares. It is not only amongst creatures of the larger kind that this predacious disposition prevails, but even throughout many of the smallest tribes of nature; and particularly amongst insects, of which several kinds might be adduced which occasionally prey even on their own species.

What

What is still more extraordinary, there are not wanting amongst vegetables some instances, in which the smaller animals meet their fate by alighting on the flowers or leaves; being either held fast by a viscous exudation from the surface, or confined by the pressure of the irritable parts of the plant. One of the most curious instances of this kind is in a species of *Apocynum*, well known to Botanists by the name of *Apocynum androsæmifolium*. In the flowers of this plant the antheræ, which are situated pretty deep in the flower, converge, so as to form a shelter for the nectaria lying below them, and in the centre of which is contained a small quantity of that sweet juice so peculiarly attractive to insects. The antheræ are possessed of a very great degree of irritability, and suddenly converge much closer on being touched; when therefore a fly, or other small insect alights on the flower and inserts its proboscis into the centre, it is suddenly caught by the converging antheræ, and detained in this miserable situation till it perishes.

But a still more wonderful example of vegetable irritability occurs in the plant represented on the annexed plate. In this plant the surface of the leaves is irritable in the highest degree, and each leaf being furnished round the edge with a series of spiny processes, and converging longitudinally when irritated, with a very considerable degree of pressure, it follows that whatever insect is so unfortunate as to alight on the leaf, is, (unless it be extremely nimble) caught as effectually as a mouse in a trap, and is even generally squeezed to death by the pressure. The plant is most irritable during the warm part of the day, and in full sunshine.

It

It is a native of North America, and is principally found in the swampy parts of Carolina, from whence it was introduced into this kingdom about twenty-five years ago, and was described by the late MR. ELLIS by the title of *Dionæa Muscipula*.

What particular purpose in the Oeconomy of Nature is answered by the imprisoning power of this extraordinary vegetable, it is extremely difficult, and perhaps impossible to determine.

The general size of the plant is as represented in the plate, but I have seen the stem much taller than in the specimen here figured. The number of stamina is not always constant.



Shaw, George. 1790. "Dionæa Muscipula or Venus's Fly-trap, Dionæa muscipula [Pl. 40]." *The Naturalist's Miscellany* 2(XIII), <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.310692>.

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