

THE TIMES

A DAILY NEWSPAPER

Rate of Subscription	
Payable in advance	
1 month \$ 1.00
3 months 3.00
6 months 6.00
12 months 10.00
Single copies 5 cents

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THE TIMES
Port Limon, Costa Rica (G. A.)

THE GROWTH OF PLANTS.

AWAKENING OF ACTIVITY: THE MYSTERY OF LIFE.

What is it that causes the seed in its cold, wet bed to start growing? How many have considered the question? The seed contains a frail germ of the plant that is to be—we must suppose with all its peculiarities potentially defined—together with the store of food required for its development up to the point at which the mechanism is elaborated whereby it is enabled to utilize sunshine and live by its own labour. This food, like our food, is mainly of two kinds—non-nitrogenous and nitrogenous; like ourselves, the young plant must have starch and flesh food, though like some non-mammals, such as the Equinaria, some plants can utilize fat in place of starch; all need albuminous (white-of-egg like) materials such as are contained in our flesh food. The food of the plant has to be digested just as our food has to be, and the digestive agents are closely akin to and in many cases identical with those at our disposal. The digestive agents or enzymes are usually laid down apart from the food materials which it is their function to convert into assimilable forms. Some process of germination in some way involves the occurrence of changes whereby the enzymes are rendered operative.

Seeds will absorb a considerable proportion of water, at least, nearly their own weight. It is a property of solids to condense water on their surfaces; each tiny granule of starch or other solid material within the seed becomes coated with a liquid film; as the surface exposed by the granules is enormous in the aggregate, the power possessed by the seeds of attracting water is very great. Usually only water passes in, as there is a layer near the surface of the seed which has the power of preventing the entry of most salts; it is on this account possible before sowing them to dress seeds with highly poisonous salts, such as sulphate of copper, in order to prevent the growth of moulds on their surfaces; the actual function of the layer in question, however, clearly is to prevent the escape from the seed sugar and other nutritive value to the plant during the earliest stages of growth. Of the few substances in soil-water that can pass into the seed one of the most noteworthy is ammonia, the well-known powerful stimulant; and it is furthermore a noteworthy fact, that not only will this pass into the seed from a weak solution, but it also hastens the rate at which water enters.

Recent observations have shown that leaves are protected by a membrane, similar to that covering seeds, which prevents the escape of soluble substance, such as sugar, into water resting on the leaf surface; this membrane is permeable by ammonia, ether, chloroform, and many other substances which have only a slight affinity for water. When such substances

PASS INTO LEAF.
they at once affect the changes going on within the cells; if but

dose be a minute one. They merely stimulate changes in the direction which there is reason to believe is followed normally, especially during the period when the plant is not exposed to light—changes which may be referred to as downgrade, similar to those attending the digestion of food in the stomach and its conversion into soluble, assimilable forms that can pass into the leaf the effect is one of over-stimulation and lethal—usually the leaf turns brown. The effect may be observed most easily, perhaps, in leaves of the common spotted Japanese laurel (*Acacia japonica*), which rapidly turns almost black under the influence of ammonia or the vapour of ether, chloroform, &c. The leaf of the common laurel turns down; but the browning is attended by the escape of prussic acid, a circumstance from which it is possible to infer the nature of the change that is produced in the leaf.

The prussic acid is liberated from a glucoside being effected by the action of the enzyme. The glucoside is present in solution in the leaf sap; the enzyme is located apart from it in a definite layer in the cell walls. Apparently, as the stimulant penetrates the leaf surface, it determines a flow of solution towards the enzyme, and a certain amount of glucoside is changed in consequence. But there is reason to believe that the stimulant does more than this—in fact, that it to some extent causes the disintegration of the protoplasmic mass in which the enzyme is normally locked up, so rendering the enzyme effective by bringing it more generally into contact with the liquid contents of the cell. It is an interesting fact that many of the shrubby and flowering trees which blossom early in the season contain glucosides of which prussic acid is a constituent; it is probable that growth is stimulated by the liberation and circulation of this substance within their tissues.

Changes such as have been referred to appear to accompany plant growth during all its stages. It is to be supposed, that in the case of the seed, germination cannot take place until the enzymes are let loose by which certain changes are initiated and that some stimulants in a readily available form—mustard seed, for example, owes its extreme pungency to the presence in it of a glucoside together with the corresponding enzyme; these at once interact when brought into contact, giving rise to oil of mustard which owes its efficiency to this plaisterous oil. The mustard oil probably plays an all-important part determining growth in the young plant, and is effective in the way in which it is effective as a condiment.

Beef Treat.

The consumers of beef had a treat given them at the hands of the clerk of the market yesterday, when 105 lbs. of beef was issued to all-comers only for a polite "no!"

The hospitality of the clerk came about in the following manner: A few days ago Mr. Saboria borrowed 104 lbs. of beef from Mr. Moffatt, promising to return it at an early period. Moffatt applied for the beef a day or two after but did not receive it; but much to his surprise the beef

was thrown on a table in the market. Mr. Moffatt refused to accept it then, as he had slaughtered a cow that weighed 116 lbs., and which was just enough to meet the demands of his many customers.

The meat was put on the table Sunday morning and remained there until 9.30 Monday morning unclaimed. So as to avoid putting the clerk wisely doled it out gratuitously.

Raid on Gamblers.

Yesterday morning at 9.30 while honest persons were starting to earn their bread at honest toil others were engaged coveting their friends and neighbours by games of chance.

The notorious Cecil Clough and the man known as "Big Fish" were participants of this lawless and immoral vice—gambling. The son had not too long risen when these men of notable fame closed themselves in a room and with dice (it is stated) were engaged in a game called "paraputa." They were not long at it, became an opponent of this evil vice quickly put the limbs of the law on the trail and like good Irish detectives a few policemen made a rush for the room and nabbed Cecil and marched him off to his new temporary home—the cartel, to await the pleasure of the Police Judge.

"Big Fish" being fleshy, took to his heels and bolted for the back door of the room, where he got an early exit. Once in the yard he did not find it a hard task to scale the fence. But "Big Fish" counted without his host, for before he could make many yards with safety he was rinned to earth by his pursuers, who landed him safely in the college to keep the company of his "Pard" Cecil.

Rudeness.

We published a paragraph in our last Sunday's issue under the heading "Well Merited Fine." The man that was fined and that the paragraph referred to, met our reporter in the street yesterday, and in the presence of witnesses, roughly accosted him threatening to do him bodily harm if he put his name in the paper again. We would have this man to understand that we have nothing against him, but we owe the public a duty and that is to give a correct report of what transpires in the Law Courts and other places. We belong to no party neither will we be scared by anyone. The report we published was from the record of the Criminal Court.

London Hotel Men Become Ravenous.

It is estimated that 150,000 Americans, 100,000 Colombians and fully as many visitors from the Continent will be here in June to witness the coronation pageant. If it were not for the limit set to the caudal in America by the facilities of the steam and motor companies it is believed that the number of American visitors would be much greater than that which is now roughly estimated.

Between Easter and Whit Sunday, when the American invasion will be on, the shipping companies, by utilizing their maximum resources, will be able to provide accommodation for about 100,000 voyagers across the Atlantic.

If it were 100,000 who will come at other times and by other routes, and by less luxurious vessels, we arrive at the 150,000 estimate. That every berth from New York from the middle of June will be occupied is already assured. The steamship companies, to their credit be said, have increased their rates but slightly, if at all, and the example this set might be followed with profit by the hotel keepers of London, who it seems, are determined to engage in the ancient practice of killing the goose that lays the golden eggs.

So numerous are some of these hotel keepers that persons who have been staying with them for years have been notified that unless they submit to an increase of about 50 per cent, above the rates now paid they must vacate their rooms and apartments during the month of June.

Rooms that are now rented at from \$2 to \$5 a day have been jumped in price from \$6 to \$25, and as if this were not enough some of the managers, intent on getting every dollar that can be squeezed out of the visitors, are doubling the price of foodstuffs.

Of course this does not apply to all of the hotels—there are some managers here who can see beyond the end of their noses—and these have not penalized their permanent residents, but are content with a slight advance up a regular rate.

The "Herald" correspondent knows of a score of families who, forced out of their hotel homes by extortionate demands, have engaged apartments in quiet neighborhoods, and if they live up to the threats which they are making hotel life will know them no more.

Royalty Flirting Home to Receive American Battalions.

Copenhagen.—The King and his family are spending their visit to President Taft to receive the American battalions which is due here on May 22. The programme includes an audience of the King and a banquet to be given by the King, a banquet given by the Minister of Marine and other entertainments. Excursions to Copenhagen are being arranged from all points.

Organization of the Army.

BILL PROPOSING SIX INFANTRY DIVISIONS AND ONE CAVALRY DIVISION.

Washington.—Representative Knowland of California has introduced a bill to provide a technical organization of the mobile forces of the United States. The measure directs that the army shall include the infantry, field artillery and cavalry and such portions of the administrative, supply and staff departments as may be required for service therewith.

The bill proposes six infantry divisions and one cavalry division. Each infantry division is to consist of nine regiments of infantry, two of cavalry, one battalion of the signal corps, four ambulance companies, four field hospitals, one ammunition train and one supply train.

The cavalry division is to consist of nine regiments of cavalry, one of three artillery, one pioneer battalion of mounted engineers, a field battalion of the signal corps, two ambulance companies and two field hospitals.

Sterling and Ferguson before the Governor.

J. Washington Sterling and C. G. Ferguson, the two men whom several prominent gentlemen of this city last petitioned the Governor to have deported as undesirable characters, were summoned by the Governor at his office to hear the depositions of several witnesses read and for the swearing to and signing by the witnesses.

This was done so that the men may have a chance of defending themselves.

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THOMAS GOODEN,
Factuario, C.R.

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