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Horrid Plant Habits

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Did you ever know that some plants manage to attract insects in ways that are quite disgusting to us human beings?

While spending a morning in the woods, some of you may have noticed an odor so unpleasant that you were driven to find another resting place.

Perhaps you thought that this unpleasant smell was caused by the decaying body of some dead animal; but had you known the truth, you would have laid the blame where it rightly belonged.

And where was that, do you think?

Why, to that beautiful climbing plant close by, with large, thick leaves, and clusters of pale, greenish flowers, that were twisting all about the bushes. This plant it was that caused all the disturbance. It is called the "carrion vine" on account of the carrionlike odor of its flowers. Its pollen is carried from one little blossom to another by tiny flies, drawn to the spot by a smell like that of decaying flesh. These flies would pass carelessly over the sweet-smelling carpet of the partridge vine, they would scorn the invitation of the evening primrose; but the odor which drives us hurriedly from our cozy corner induces them to gather together in hundreds. Whether they come, actually expecting to find decaying flesh, I cannot say.

In some countries grows a plant which not only smells like decaying flesh, but which adds to the deception by its red, beefy look, thus doubly attracting the flies which like this sort of food.



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