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How A Plant Is Built

Mrs. William Starr Dana

Now we know that the plant, like yourself, began life as a single cell; and we know that the perfect plant was built up by the power which this cell had of giving birth to other cells with like power.

Suppose that a brick were laid upon the earth as the foundation of a wall; and suppose that this brick were able to change into two bricks. Suppose that the new brick were able to form another brick in the same manner, and that this power should pass from brick to brick; and suppose that all these bricks were able to arrange themselves one upon another in an orderly fashion, so that they could not easily be moved from their places.

Now, if you can see this brick wall growing up, you can see something of how the cells of a plant grow up and arrange themselves.

But though it is fairly easy to see how the plant cells form one from another, that does not explain how they come to make a plant, with its many different parts, with its root and stem, its branches, leaves, and flowers.

One thing can divide and make two things of the same sort; but it is not easy to see how it can make things that are quite different from itself.

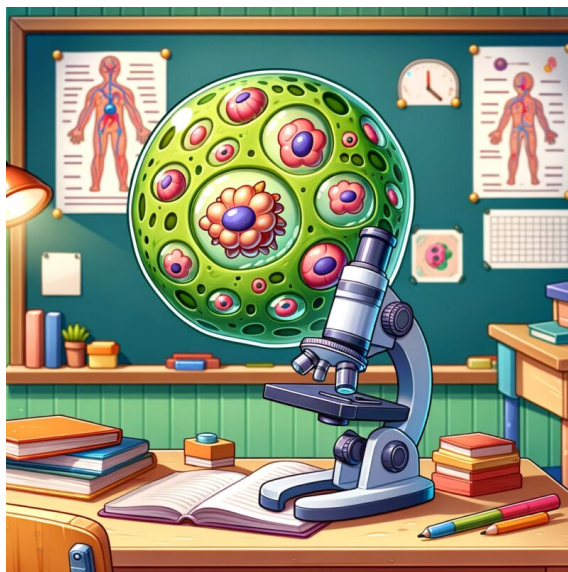
Now, if this difficulty as to the building-up of plants and animals has come into your minds, you are only puzzled by what has puzzled hundreds of people before you; and all these hundreds of people have found the puzzle quite as impossible to solve as the king's horses and the king's men found it impossible to put Humpty Dumpty together again.

A good many questions that we cannot answer come into our minds; but if we look honestly for the answers and do not find them, then we can be pretty sure that for the present it is safe to leave them unanswered.

As cell is added to cell in the building-up of plant life, some wonderful power forces each new cell to do the special work which is most needed by the growing plant.

Sometimes this new cell is needed to help do the work of a root, and so it begins to do this work, and becomes part of the root; or else it is needed to do stem work, and goes to make up the stem, or leaf work, and is turned over into the leaf.

A healthy cell is born with the power to do whatever is most needed.



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