

THE SEA-WEED ALBUM.

BY DELTA.



A SEA-WEED ALBUM.

"WELL, children," said Mrs. Bright one evening at dinner, "to-morrow, if all is well, we shall take our long-talked-of holiday. Would you like to go inland, up the Hudson, or to the seaside?"

"Do go to the seaside, mamma," said Arthur, an impulsive fellow of eleven; "what I want is a bath in the sea."

"And so do I," said Clara, a bright girl of ten.

"Yes, do go to the seaside, mamma," said Alice, the eldest daughter; "I'd like to collect sea-weeds. Don't you remember, you promised a good while ago to show me how to prepare them."

"Sea-weeds!" sneered Arthur; "how absurd to gather those ugly, dry-smelling things! What fun can there be in that?"

"Wait till you see," answered Alice quietly.

"As all seem agreed on the seaside, where shall we go?" asked Mrs. Bright. "Long Branch is rather far off for our limited time, and even Rock-away; what do you say to Coney Island?"

"Coney Island by all means," echoed Clara and Arthur.

"That will do nicely, mamma," said Alice.

"Settled," said Mrs. Bright; "I can only spare the afternoon. So that after bathing and lunch you can only have an hour for beach work. But, as you know, Alice, a great deal may be done even in less time, if you work with a will."

"Who taught you to prepare sea-weeds, mamma?" asked Clara.

"Your grandma. When you know something of it, there is no study so interesting as natural

history. But most people, and especially children, require to have the book of nature opened before they can see its beauties, and have to be shown where to look, what to look at, and how to look. And so with the study of sea-weeds."

"Will you teach us?" said Clara and Arthur together.

"Certainly," answered Mrs. Bright, who was always anxious to impart information, but wished first to create an interest, and thus make the desire come from the children themselves.

"What will you do with the sea-weeds when you get them?" asked Arthur.

"Make a scrap-book, like your stamp album. Mamma says you can have no idea how pretty a carefully made sea-weed album is."

Next day was one of glee. It was the first, and perhaps the only excursion of the year. The steamer, lunch and bath were thoroughly enjoyed.

"Now, children," said Mrs. Bright, "the boat starts homeward in an hour; go and gather your sea-weeds and put them into the empty basket."

Off they ran. But they seemed to have scarcely begun when the steamer whistled, and they had just time to get on board. After dinner the basket was produced. Arthur and Clara had gathered quite a heap, but most of it was old, dried, and had to be thrown away. Alice had listened better to her mother's advice, and had selected only what was moist and fresh.

"Now," said Mrs. Bright, "put the pieces you have kept into a basin of fresh water, to clean them

from salt and sand, and leave them there while you get some white paper, an old linen rag, and some blotting-paper. Also, a soup-plate filled with fresh water, and a small camel-hair brush."

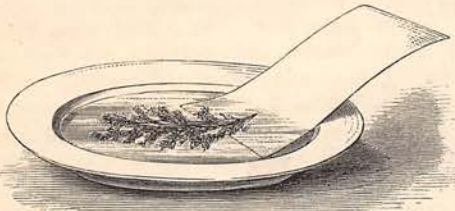


FIG. 1.—PUTTING THE SEA-WEED ON THE PAPER.

"All ready, mamma," said Alice, who had prepared them the night before.

"Now, watch me closely," said Mrs. Bright. "You see I first select a nice piece of weed. Then put it into the soup-plate, where it floats. Then I slightly damp a sheet of white paper, and slip it under the weed (Fig. 1), and raise it till the latter is half dry. Then, with the brush, I spread it out nicely (Fig. 2). My aim is to make a pretty picture. Now, I gently raise the paper with the weed on it out of the water, and let it drip for a second or two. The more taste you have and the more care you take, the greater will be your success."

"Oh, mamma, how pretty!" said Arthur.

"But I have n't finished," said Mrs. Bright. "I now put the paper and weed *on* a piece of blotting-paper, and *over* it a piece of linen rag. Then over that again another sheet of blotting-paper" (Fig. 3).

"Why, mamma?" asked Clara.

"The blotting-paper dries the weed, but would stick to it but for the rag. Now, Alice, do the rest yourself; never mind a few failures. Practice is the best teacher."

"That is fairly done," said Mrs. Bright when



FIG. 2.—ARRANGING THE SEA-WEED.

Alice brought her first attempt. "Now, put yours on top of mine, and so on, till you have finished the whole."

"Shall I make more than one specimen of each kind?" asked Alice.

"Yes, you should keep several duplicates for exchange with other collectors."

"Now, mamma," said Alice, after a time, "I have finished. See what a pile. What shall I do next?"

"Put the heap between two boards (Fig. 4), and place any weight, say a few books, over them; three or four days will fully dry them."

"We must not forget the sea-weeds," said Arthur a few days after. "Mamma, shall I undo them?"

"Yes; but first turn up the edge of one, to see if they are quite dry. Then remove the blotting-paper and rag from each very gently, so as not to pull the weed off. Most sea-weeds are of a gummy nature, and stick to the paper. But the harder ones sometimes require a little mucilage or paste to keep them in place."

"How lovely," cried Arthur, as each was uncovered, "and what a number of them. Alice, can you spare specimens of each for Clara and me?"

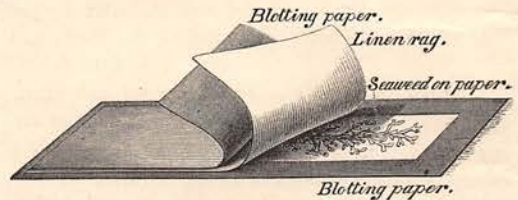


FIG. 3.—DRYING THE SEA-WEED.

"Of course, I can," said Alice. "But, mamma, please show me now how to put them into my album. Here it is."

"When your specimens are large, you can only put one on a page. All you have to do is to touch each corner on the back lightly with mucilage; and put it neatly into your book. If they are small, you can put several, and sometimes a good many, on one page. With a little taste and care you may arrange them very prettily. You have already nine different kinds of sea-weeds from one place, gathered in half an hour, and including specimens of each of the three great classes into which they are divided, viz.: the red sea-weeds (*rhodospermeæ*); the olive-colored (*melanospermeæ*), and the green (*chlorospermeæ*), and at every new place you visit you may get new ones."

"I wonder, mamma," said Alice, "if Cousin Frank in Havana could get me some?"

"Why not write and ask him? Some tropical sea-weeds are exceedingly delicate and pretty, especially those found on coral islands and reefs. And you might also enlist friends in many other parts of the world. Then you have friends near the Lakes, and also the Mississippi; for, you must know, there are fresh as well as salt-water weeds.

And thus, in time, you may have a valuable collection, both of native and foreign sea-weeds."

"What shall I do with my duplicates, mamma?" asked Alice.

"Keep them at the end of your album; you

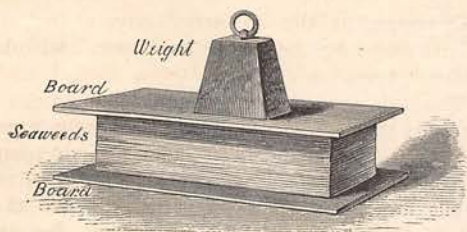


FIG. 4.—THE PRESS.

may soon meet with or hear of other collectors glad to exchange specimens."

"But what *are* sea-weeds?" asked Arthur.

"They are plants, which grow in water, just as grass does on land, and are usually fixed to the rocks by roots. Those you found on the sands had been broken off by the waves. A few, however, float about; for example, the celebrated gulf-weed, which has a place in American history. You remember that Columbus' small ships, just before he discovered this continent, got entangled in the 'Sargasso Sea' of gulf-weed, and the men were frightened lest they should not get out of it."

"Are sea-weeds only found at the edge of the sea, mamma?" asked Alice.

"They are most abundant near the sea-shore; but I have no doubt that they exist all over the sea-bottom, wherever they can get root-hold and a suitable place to live. Like land plants, they cannot live everywhere. Deep-sea weeds are generally very delicate, rare, and valuable, because difficult to get."

"Are sea-weeds of any use?" asked Arthur.

"Certainly. There are various uses for them. Many kinds of fish live on them, just as cows and sheep feed on grass. In Gothland the great bladder-weed is used to feed pigs, and hence called 'swine-tang.' In times of scarcity, even horses and cattle thrive on it. Several kinds of sea-weed are eaten as a delicacy in North-western Europe. In Ireland a sweetmeat is made of dulse. In

Kamschatka they make a fermented drink of sea-weed. In China and Japan they make soup of a swallow's nest which is constructed of a peculiar variety of sea-weed.

"Again, laver is used as a medicine. Iodine and other valuable chemicals are got from sea-weeds. Others make glue and varnish. When dried they are used for fuel, and also manure. And, no doubt, some kinds of sea-weed found along our coasts might be often used as an edible vegetable."

Acting on her mother's advice, Alice wrote to her uncles and cousins, and, before long, fine specimens came from most of them; so that, in time,



GULF-WEED.

she had a truly beautiful sea-weed album, which any of our readers may also have if they live near the sea and choose to take a little trouble.