

PRACTICAL AND POPULAR ENTOMOLOGY.—No. 27.

THE HEPIALIDÆ, OR GHOST-MOTHS.

BY ALBERT F. WINN, WESTMOUNT, QUE.

The moths forming this family are not at all common in collections, are not strikingly beautiful, and are not particularly injurious to vegetation, but are so utterly unlike their relatives that a few general remarks may be of interest. The Hepialidæ are distributed through all parts of the world, most of the North American and European species being small or medium in size, expanding from a little over an inch to about four inches, the colours being mostly of various shades of browns, grays, yellow and white. In warmer lands, for example Australia and New Zealand, species are found of lovely colours, very large expanse of wings and heavy bodies. The male of one of the commonest European species, *H. humuli*, is of a pure white colour, and this, coupled with its odd habit of hovering in large numbers over the meadows, just at dusk, has caused it to be known as the Ghost-moth, and the family are often spoken of by this name, though also known as Swifts, on account of the rapid flight of some of the smaller species.

The scientific name is derived from the Greek *ῥπιαλος*, which means a shivering fit, a nightmare, a fever attended with violent shivering. Those who have hunted for these moths will appreciate the aptness of the name.

In North America there are a number of species, and in every Province of Canada one or more of them is to be found, but good series of specimens are in few collections, not because the moths are really rare in nature, but because their habits and life-histories are little understood. Unfortunately, also, the literature on the subject is meagre, and the question of which of the species on the lists are really distinct, and which are varieties or synonyms, is a very puzzling one.

The best known species in the East is probably Harris's Silver-spotted Ghost-moth, *H. argenteo-maculatus*, but as I am more familiar with the habits of our local species, *H. thule*, Strk., it will probably be best to select this. The Island of Montreal seems to be the headquarters of this moth, though its habitat extends to Ottawa in a westerly direction, probably north as far as the base of the Laurentian Mountains, but lack of entomologists to the east and south makes it, at present, impossible to limit the range in these directions. It is very regular in appearance,