

you had been with me, I so often saw lovely insects; but I did not know how to save them for you." From novices the enquiry often comes, "What is the best way to relax specimens after they have become dry."

*Killing and Preserving.* Having collected a specimen the first thing, of course, is to kill it. For beetles and hard-bodied insects nothing is simpler than to drop them for a second or two in scalding water; they must be taken out again at once and dried on blotting paper, or upon a cloth. The easiest way, however, for killing all insects is to make a "cyanide bottle." This may be made either by placing a small quantity of cyanide of potassium in the bottom of a wide-mouthed bottle and pouring in sufficient wet plaster-of-paris to cover it; or a hole can be hollowed out in the cork and a piece of cyanide inserted. This can be kept in a place either with a plug of cotton wool, or a piece of chamois leather or linen may be tied over the cork. It must be remembered that the active principle of cyanide of potassium being prussic acid it is intensely poisonous—any left on hand after the bottle is made should be at once destroyed.

Insects put in this bottle will be killed in a few seconds by the poisonous fumes given off by the cyanide of potassium; they should then be taken out and packed away whilst soft and pliable. After a few days they become dry and are very easily broken. If there are only one or two specimens these may be wrapped in soft paper or cotton wool, and put away in a suitable box. If the collector, however, is likely to get several specimens, it will be well to prepare a box or bottle on purpose. Beetles or bugs may be preserved for a long time in clean saw-dust dampened with alcohol; grasshoppers, ants, wasps, bees, flies, etc., although they are far better preserved by being pinned at once after killing, may be packed away like beetles and bugs in tubes of paper. These are made by winding two or three thicknesses of a strip of paper one and a half inches wide around a lead pencil, leaving about one-quarter inch over the end, which is turned in and pressed flat before taking the case off the pencil. Into this short, hollow tube drop the specimens and turn in the other end with the tip of a pencil, or fill up the mouth with a plug of cotton wool. Several specimens, according to their size, may be placed in each tube, and the date and locality having been written on the outside they are ready to be packed away in a dry place. Being slightly elastic and very light they pack closely, and a large number can be sent by mail at the same time.

Moths, butterflies and dragon-flies may be killed in the ordinary "cyanide bottle," and then placed in three-cornered envelopes made by taking small squares of paper and folding them across, almost in the middle, so as to make a triangular form with one flap a little smaller than the other; when the insect is placed between the two flaps, the two edges of the larger one are folded over the lesser, and the specimen is then ready to have the date and locality written on it and to be packed away where it will not be disturbed.

*Relaxing.* The easiest way to soften insects is simply to place them in a covered jar upon damp sand for from twelve to fourteen hours. A few drops of camphorated spirits dropped on the sand will prevent mould from forming on the specimens. Pinned specimens can be either placed in the sand jar or pinned upon a piece of cork and floated on water in a closed jar, or in a basin with a damp towel over the top. Butterflies and moths stored in the envelopes mentioned above are best relaxed by putting the envelopes carefully without opening them, between the folds of a damp towel placed between two sheets of glass. The cloth should be wetted and then wrung out as dry as possible with the hands. Fold it smoothly and spread out the envelopes separately between the folds. Small butterflies and moths will relax in twelve hours and the largest in twenty-four hours. Beetles and bugs in paper tubes may be dropped into warm water and will be ready for setting in a few minutes; wasps, bees and flies should be placed in the sand jar to soften. Mr. W. H. Harrington, who uses these tubes extensively for all kinds of insects, finds that specimens can be conveniently relaxed by putting the tubes on a piece of wet blotting paper in the bottom of one saucer with another inverted over the top. The advantage of this plan is that if specimens should be accidentally forgotten, or it should be inconvenient to mount them at once, the small amount of moisture soon evaporates, and there is no danger of mould.

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