

Fig. 50.



"The head, antennæ, and thorax of this fly are black; the hind body is tawny, more or less widely marked with black on each wing, and clothed with fine greyish hairs. The egg-tube of the female is rose-coloured; the wings are blackish, except at the base, where they are tawny, and very narrow,—they are fringed with short hairs and are rounded at the tip; the legs are pale red or brownish, and the feet are black. The body measures about one-tenth of an inch in length, and the wings expand one-quarter of an inch or more. After death the hind body contracts and becomes almost entirely black." (Harris, *Injurious Insects*, p. 570.) The antennæ of the female are about half the length of the body; those of the male three-fourths. The former are composed of sixteen oval joints twice as long as thick, and clothed with a number of hairs; the latter have short, round joints, each with

a chord of rather long hairs.

After these flies come forth from the pupa state in the spring they speedily, set to work to lay their eggs on the leaves of the spring wheat, now appearing above the surface of the ground, as well as upon that sown the autumn before. From this batch of eggs another brood is soon hatched, the work of destruction goes on, and late in summer the second generation of flies comes forth. The larvæ of the summer brood are found almost always under the sheath of the leaf just above the first joint; their suction of the juices at that point weakens the stalk so much that a high wind very soon bends it down, and even breaks it off when the straw approaches ripeness. Of course the size and value of the grain is also immensely lessened by the absorption of the sap, which ought to go to filling out the ear. The winter brood attack the young plant lower down, and injure it at the root, frequently killing it outright.

Having now traced the life of the insect from the laying of the eggs in one autumn to the same point in the following year, we may turn our consideration to the remedies for the foe, which, as in the case of the wheat midge above, may be classified as natural and artificial.

Natural Remedies.—Though we are, unhappily, so very deficient in natural checks to the spread of the wheat-midge on this side of the Atlantic, our case is very different as regards the Hessian fly. It is preyed upon and devoured by a number of parasitic insects, whose combined attacks are computed to destroy nine-tenths of every generation of this pernicious foe. Mr. Say described one of the most useful of these parasites under the name of *Ceraphron destructor*. It is a shining black four-winged fly, about one-tenth of an inch in length. "In the month of June, when the maggot of the Hessian fly has taken the form of a flax-seed, the *Ceraphron* pierces it through the sheath of the leaf, and lays an egg in the minute hole thus made. From this egg is hatched a little maggot, which devours the pupa of the Hessian fly, and then changes to a chrysalis within the shell of the latter, through which it finally eats its way, after being transformed to a fly. This last change takes place both in the autumn and in the following spring. Two more parasites, discovered by Mr. Herrick, also destroy the Hessian fly, while it is in the flax-seed or pupa state." (Harris.) A fourth has been found by the same observer to attack the eggs of the enemy. "This egg parasite is a species of *Platygaster*. It is very abundant in the autumn, when it lays its own eggs, four or five together in a single egg of the Hessian fly. This, it appears, does not prevent the latter from hatching, but the maggot of the Hessian fly is unable to go through its transformations and dies after taking the flax-seed form. Meanwhile its intestine foes are hatched, come to their growth, spin themselves little brownish cocoons within the skin of their victims, and in due time are changed to winged insects, and eat their way out."—Harris.

It is owing almost entirely to these minute allies that our crops have been preserved to so great an extent, of late years, from the ravages of the Hessian fly. For a time the pest inflicted great damage, but its enemies soon increased and gathered strength, and have succeeded in keeping it within due bounds. Assuredly, we should feel deeply grateful to the merciful Creator, who has provided such effectual, though apparently insignificant, means to save the fruits of our fields from destruction.

Artificial Remedies.—These are often attempted, but seldom with entirely satisfactory results. The best precaution to take—where the insect has shown itself in numbers and where the wheat-midge is not apprehended—is to sow the next crop of fall wheat as late as can be done with safety in the autumn—about the middle or towards the end of September

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