

Accordingly I procured a quart bottle with as wide a mouth as possible—a fruit jar would have done very well—put in it enough lumps of common fused cyanide of potassium to cover the bottom, and having poured upon this about an inch of plaster of Paris mixed with plenty of water, I had only to await nightfall to commence operations.

The large poison-bottle worked to a charm; scarcely a moth escaped which I desired to take. With the new instrument I became impatient of the time required to take out and pin each specimen as soon as stupefied, and tried the experiment of capturing every uninjured moth seen and allowing them to remain in a layer upon the plaster until it was convenient to return to the house and sort them over, taking a moderate amount of care that they should not be unnecessarily shaken up in carrying.

Rather unexpectedly I found that this treatment did not seem to injure or rub the specimens in the least degree, though sometimes nearly a hundred moths of all sorts and sizes would be piled together, making a stratum an inch or two thick in the bottle.

After this discovery night collecting became easy, nets and boxes were left at home, and the only necessary articles were a lantern and the poison-bottle. Arrived at a tree and carefully turning the light upon the sugared patch, I selected out such moths as seemed desirable, and, removing the stopper, gently touched them from below with the open bottle. When they had flown down into the receptacle, the cork was replaced and the specimens were thus safely disposed of till the following morning, when they could be sorted over at leisure.

Occasionally a very wary moth would fly away at the first approach of artificial light, and I endeavored with laudanum and hydrate of chloral to so stupefy them that they could be readily taken. The laudanum was rather too effective, seeming to intoxicate them; at any rate, after imbibing the mixture, the moths fell off the tree and sprawled around in the grass in a very absurd manner, quite unable to fly away; but still most of them managed to go a considerable distance, and so were lost in the grass. The hydrate of chloral had no effect whatever upon them; some moths which took a considerable quantity of a very concentrated solution—about equal bulks of the salt and of water—remained unaffected.

Sometimes ants were troublesome, biting the trunks of the moths as they fed, and causing them to fly away. In these cases a dose of laudanum was generally effective in driving off the ants for a considerable time.