

The Life of the Caterpillar

third, a fourth and others yet, nor am I able definitely to see the end of the visits paid to the same egg. Each time, the needle enters and inserts a germ.

It is impossible, in such a crowd, for the eye to follow the successive mothers who hasten to lay in each; but there is one quite practicable method by which we can estimate the number of germs introduced into a single egg, which is, later, to open the ravaged caterpillars and count the worms which they contain. A less repugnant means is to number the little cocoons heaped up around each dead caterpillar. The total will tell us how many germs were injected, some by the same mother returning several times to the egg already treated, others by different mothers. Well, the number of these cocoons varies greatly. Generally, it fluctuates in the neighbourhood of twenty, but I have come across as many as sixty-five; and nothing tells me that this is the extreme limit. What hideous industry for the extermination of a Butterfly's progeny!

I am fortunate at this moment in having a highly-cultured visitor, versed in the profundities of philosophic thought. I make way