

The Cicada: leaving the Burrow

retreat impossible. The miner shores up his galleries with pit-props and cross-beams; the builder of underground railways strengthens his tunnels with a casing of brickwork; the Cicada's larva, which is quite as clever an engineer, cements its shaft so as to keep it open however long it may have to serve.

If I surprise the creature at the moment when it emerges from the soil to make for a neighbouring branch and there undergo its transformation, I see it at once beat a prudent retreat and, without the slightest difficulty, run down again to the bottom of its gallery, proving that, even when the dwelling is on the point of being abandoned for good, it does not become blocked with earth.

The ascending-shaft is not a piece of work improvised in a hurry, in the insect's impatience to reach the sunlight; it is a regular manor-house, an abode in which the grub is meant to make a long stay. So the plastered walls tell us. Any such precaution would be superfluous in the case of a mere exit abandoned as soon as bored. There is not a doubt but that we have here a sort of meteorological station in which observations are taken of the weather outside. Underground, fifteen inches down, or more, the