

not often, for publicity and superstition are not compatible companions. To-day in this country there are thousands of people who, if they spy a butterfly unfamiliar to them, hasten to learn if it be not the precious prize. Scarcely a year ago a newspaper printed an account of a butterfly caught near New York which was unique and for which \$3,000 was paid at once by the nearest Museum. Such items and such inquirers have become the bane of every Museum Curator's existence. Such hordes of *Pieris rapæ* or *Anosia plexippus* come in the mails, each inquiry demanding an answer! A little less than twenty years ago a prominent newspaper was guilty of printing a more startling variant of the myth. It was to the effect that the United States National Museum had just paid \$20,000 for an American butterfly. An employee was forced to devote several months of his entire working days to writing denials and pacifying visitors who came with specimens worth less than a penny for which they hoped to get thousands.

A similar myth which has got into print scores of times is that of the arctic flea. It differs much in detail. The price that it would fetch (a pair being wanted) was sometimes as low as \$1,000, but it was more often up to the traditional \$5,000. It was invariably wanted by the Hon. Mr. Rothschild. Some said the creature inhabited the fur of the arctic fox. Others cited the sea otter and called it the more elusive, as at the moment the animal was killed the parasite left the body. It is said that Mr. Rothschild has sent expeditions at the cost of tens of thousands to hunt arctic mammals until the identity of the desired flea should be forever established and the types deposited in the Tring Museum.

It is quite possible that some good-natured student of fleas would give five dollars for some new arctic species.

All this suggests two lines of inquiry: Has \$5,000 ever been paid for a single entomological specimen; if not, how much has? On the other hand, is it possible for any one in North America, excepting less than a dozen trained experts, to make even a moderate living by collecting insect rarities? Any dealer in insects might be inclined through self-interest to exaggerate the first, since he has rarities to sell, and to under-estimate the other, since he is constantly importuned to buy.