

HORTICULTURAL GOSSIP.—XIV.

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THE FOREST TENT CATERPILLAR, (*Clisiocampa sylvatica*).—A few additional facts about this moth may be interesting, as it is now foraging among our orchards in such abundance. It belongs to a large family of moths, the *Bombycidae*, which includes the silk worm and many other beautiful species. The moths of *C. sylvatica* appear about July 1st, and lay their eggs in clusters of 300 or 400 on the twigs of trees, coated with a gummy substance for protection. The eggs hatch out simultaneously with the development of the young leaves in spring, and immediately begin work. At intervals the worms congregate in masses and cast their skins, a fortunate thing for the orchardist, who can destroy them wholesale at such times.

May 27th I found on nearly every apple tree vast gatherings upon the trunks. I watched one individual moult. A slit was first noticeable on the back just behind the head. A few struggles, and a new head appeared from within the old one, just like it, but of a lighter shade; a few more struggles, and the whole body was dragged out of its old skin, which had become too narrow to hold its growing occupant. Their instinct is remarkable. If three hundred of them are knocked down upon the ground and fall at some distance from the tree, they at once make for the tree again—not one mistakes the direction, but with one accord they crawl towards the trunk.

Fortunately for us, this caterpillar has several enemies. Besides being subject to disease and frequently to death at moulting times, there are several kinds of parasites of the order *Hymenoptera* which prey upon it. The Ichneumon fly, (*Physsa Pimpla*), often deposits its eggs beneath the skin of the caterpillar with its long ovipositor. The *Pteromalus Clisiocampæ* is another great enemy, as its name would indicate. It is probably one of these insect friends that is spoken of in the HORTICULTURIST for 1878, p. 19, as saving the orchards in Perth and Middlesex in the year 1877, when the caterpillars were so numerous that fears were entertained that the orchards would be entirely destroyed by them.

In 1872 we read of the *Clisiocampa Sylvatica* visiting the country about Montreal in large numbers and completely stripping many trees