

HUNTING FOR CATERPILLARS.

By ARTHUR GIBSON,

The study of insect life is so intensely interesting that it is difficult to say which branch of entomology is the most fascinating ; each has its own devotees. One branch of the subject which certainly is exceptionally useful and fascinating, is the collection and study of our native caterpillars. Of late years much has been done in working out the life-histories of American insects, but there is still a vast field in which to make research. The life-histories of our butterflies are fairly well known, but only a very small percentage of the larvæ of even our common moths have been studied. Lepidopterous larvæ can be collected at any time of the year, but the best opportunities are to be found during the summer for acquiring a knowledge of these interesting creatures.

It is strange that most people seem to regard caterpillars as repulsive, horrid things ; but this, of course, can only be accounted for by the fact that they have never really taken the trouble to look at one. None of Nature's children are horrid. It is only our unfortunate uninterestedness that is accountable for such inaccurate views. There is really nothing in nature which is not beautiful, if carefully examined and properly understood, and, even those caterpillars which are thought by many to be most repulsive, are of themselves not at all responsible for feelings akin to disgust or horror. When exhibiting a case of butterflies or moths, it is quite usual for the onlooker to make some remark regarding the beauty of the specimens ; but, when shown the caterpillars of these same species, our visitor, as a rule, shrinks back, and a remark not at all corresponding with the first exclamation is heard. Although presenting sometimes a rather formidable appearance, with the exception of a very few kinds, which are provided with irritating hairs, caterpillars are quite harmless. Some of the Sphingidæ will jerk their heads from side to side and even snap their mandibles, but they are unable to bite anything