

Every one has, no doubt, heard of the Sacred Beetle of the Egyptians, which was worshipped by them as a god, and revered in various ways. It was called the Scarabæus, and belongs to the tribe we are now considering. "Hor-apollo"—according to Louis Figuier—"the learned commentator on Egyptian hieroglyphics, thinks that this people, in adopting the Scarabæus as a religious symbol, wished to represent at once *an unique birth—a father—the world—a man*. The *unique birth* means that the Scarabæus has no mother. A male wishing to procreate, said the Egyptians, takes the dung of an ox, works it up into a ball and gives it the shape of the world, rolls it with its hind legs from the east to the west, and places it in the ground, where it remains twenty-eight days. The twenty-ninth day it throws its ball, now open, into the water, and there comes forth a male Scarabæus. This explanation shows also why the Scarabæus was employed to represent at the same time *a father, a man and the world*. There were, however, according to the same author, three sorts of Scarabæi; one was in the shape of a cat, and threw out brightly shining rays (probably the Golden Scarabæus), the others had two horns (Coprîs)."

There is a colossal granite figure of a Scarabæus brought from Egypt in the British Museum, and other smaller representations that we have seen appear to have been worn as amulets, suspended from necklaces or bracelets. It is supposed by some that the plague of "flies" inflicted upon this people in the days of Moses consisted of swarms of this beetle, thus rendering the object of their superstitious worship a means of punishment; but we can hardly think that so innocent and harmless a creature, in other respects, would have been chosen by the Almighty for such a purpose; we do not, however, insist upon any particular view of the subject, as so little is told us in the pages of holy writ.

In Canada we have one species (*Canthon lævis*, Drury), which bears a strong resemblance to the Egyptian Scarabæus in appearance and habits, it is not very common, but is, however, generally distributed throughout the Province of Ontario. There are also several species of another genus (*Coprîs*), which possess similar habits but differ in their striated wing-covers, and in the extraordinary curved horn with which the head of the males is armed. A remarkable peculiarity of these insects exists in the structure and situation of the hind legs, which are placed so near the extremity of the body and so far from each other, as to give the insect a most extraordinary appearance whilst walking. This peculiar formation is, however, particularly serviceable to its possessors in rolling the balls of excrementitious matter in which they enclose their eggs. These balls are at first irregular and soft, but by degrees, and by continued rolling, they become rounded and harder; they are propelled by means of the hind legs, and the insects occasionally mount on the top, when they find a difficulty in urging them along; probably in order to destroy the equilibrium. Sometimes these balls are an inch and a half in diameter; and in rolling them along the beetles stand almost upon their heads, with their heads turned away from the balls. These manœuvres have for their object the burying of the balls in holes, which the insects have previously dug for their reception; and it is upon the dung thus deposited that the larvæ feed when hatched (MacLeay). These rhinoceros or unicorn beetles—as they may be termed—frequently fly into houses through open windows, when attracted by light in the warm summer evenings. They are especially abundant on sandy soils.

Another family of Dung-beetles (*Geotrupidæ*) performs a similar important part in the economy of nature, by feeding upon and burrowing under newly fallen dung. Its species, however, do not make up pellets and roll them along the ground, as those above mentioned, but content themselves with sinking shafts immediately under the mass of excrement, and there hoarding up the supply of food for their young. They are much more common in this country than the preceding, and may often be observed on a warm summer's evening, when the shadows are growing long, hovering about the droppings of some horse or cow, and preparing to do their part in the removal of a nuisance, and the fertilization of the earth.

Yet another family (*Aphodiidæ*) must be briefly noticed, before we leave these useful creatures. One species is almost the first beetle to greet us in early spring, as it flies about the manure of the hot-bed, and expands its coral-red wing-covers to the sun. It is the *Aphodius fimetarius*, Linn., and is common in England as well as in Canada. Another tiny species (*A. inquinatus*, Fab.) swarms in the spring along the highways, resembling a fly as it hovers in the air, but easily distinguished when captured in the hand, or otherwise arrested in its flight; both of them feed upon horse-dung. The species of this family are especially numerous in the temperate regions of the northern hemisphere, and devote them-

selves entirely to the destruction of animals.

In the collection of Coleoptera, just described.

Fig.



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