

T. Yes, if they had no natural enemies and plenty to eat they would in a few years cover the earth at this rate.

S. Do they do much damage?

T. Not so much as many other insects.

S. And are they found in every part of this country?

T. They may probably be pointed out in every school section in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

S. What are their natural enemies, then, which keep them so much subdued that we suffer so little from their depredations?

T. Very insignificant looking, but very powerful ones. We shall consider them in some future lesson. In the mean time keep your eyes open, and note carefully everything you see.

S. Does the caterpillar feed on the leaves of any other tree than the apple tree?

T. You must try to observe that yourselves. They are pretty general feeders, having been found on the plum, pear, cherry, maple, willow, lilac, red currant, hazel, birch, elm, honey locust, hawthorn and elder.

(*Stroke of the bell.*)

A. H. M.

Pictou, N. S.

THE STARS OF SUMMER.

A singular proof of popular ignorance of the starry heavens, as well as of popular curiosity concerning any uncommon celestial phenomenon, is furnished by the curious notions prevailing about the planet Venus. When Venus began to attract general attention in the western sky in the early evening some two months ago, speculation quickly became rife about it, particularly on the great Brooklyn Bridge. As the planet hung dazzlingly bright over the New Jersey horizon, some people appeared to think it was the light of Liberty's torch, mistaking the bronze goddess's real flambeau for a part of the electric-light system of the metropolis. Finally (to judge from the letters written to the newspapers, and the questions asked of individuals supposed to know something about the secrets of the sky), the conviction seems to have become pretty widely distributed that the strange light in the west was no less than an electrically illuminated balloon, nightly sent skyward by Mr. Edison, for no other conceivable reason than a wizardly desire to mystify his fellow-men. I have positive information that this ridiculous notion has been actually entertained by more than one person of intelligence. And it is not improbable, that as Venus glows with increasing splendor in the serene evenings of June, she will continue to be mistaken for some petty artificial light instead of the magnifi-

cent world that she is, sparkling out there in the sunshine like a globe of burnished silver. Yet Venus as an evening star is not so rare a phenomenon that people of intelligence should be surprised at it. Once in every 584 days she re-appears in the sunset sky—

"Gem of crimson-colored even,
Companion of retiring day."

No eye can fail to note her, and as the nearest and most beautiful of the Earth's sisters it would seem that everybody should be as familiar with her appearance as with the face of a friend. But the popular ignorance of Venus, and the other members of the planetary family to which our mother, the Earth, belongs, is only an index of the denser ignorance concerning the stars—the brothers of our great father, the Sun. I believe this ignorance is largely due to mere indifference, which, in its turn, arises from a false and pedantic method of presenting astronomy as a jumble of mathematical formulæ and a humble handmaiden of the art of navigation. * * *

The reader will find it both interesting and instructive to watch the movements of Venus through the summer. On June 1st, Venus will be near Saturn in the constellation Gemini. But the two planets will rapidly part company, Saturn sinking toward the horizon day by day until it is no longer seen, while Venus, moving eastwardly, rises higher every evening. About the middle of July, Venus, having reached her greatest eastern elongation, will turn upon her track and move westwardly, setting a little earlier every night. At the middle of August she will attain her greatest brilliancy, and will be a superb phenomenon. Being then in that part of her orbit which passes between the earth and the sun, her illuminated disc will be in the form of a crescent. A good field-glass, under favorable circumstances, will show this crescent form of Venus, and a most beautiful sight it is. The crescent will grow larger and narrower in proportion as Venus approaches nearer to the line joining the earth and the sun, and, as she approaches that line, of course she will draw closer to the horizon, until about the end of August, she disappears from the evening sky, to reappear in the east as a morning star in the autumn.

Jupiter will remain in the neighborhood of Spica in Virgo throughout the summer. The surface features of this majestic planet are far beyond the reach of an opera or field-glass, but some of the members of his little family of four moons may occasionally be caught sight of. With an opera glass not more than one or two of these can be seen as excessively minute dots of light half-hidden in the glare of the planet. If you succeed under favorable circumstances in seeing one of these moons with your