

The Mason-Wasps

is the regular visitor that must be respected. Sight helps, for things take place in the daylight, under my cage; but the Wasps have other means of information in the dimness of the burrow. When I produce darkness by covering the apparatus with a screen, the murder of the trespassers is accomplished just the same. For so say the police-regulations of the Wasps'-nest: any stranger discovered must be slain and thrown on the midden.

To thwart this vigilance, the real enemies need to be masters of the art of stealthy immobility and cunning dissimulation. But there is no dissimulation about the Volucella-grub. It comes and goes, openly, wheresoever it will; it looks round amongst the Wasps for cells to suit it. What has it to make itself thus respected? Strength? Certainly not. It is a harmless creature, which the Wasp could rip open with a blow of her shears, while a touch of the sting would mean lightning death. It is a familiar guest, to whom no denizen of a Wasp'-nest bears ill-will. Why? Because it renders good service: so far from working mischief, it does the scavenging. Were it an enemy or merely an intruder, it would be exterminated; as a deserving assistant it is respected.