

The Life of the Grasshopper

crying famine at the doors of the Ant-hills, promising honestly to repay principal and interest; on the contrary, it is the Ant who, driven by hunger, begs and entreats the singer. Entreats, do I say? Borrowing and repaying form no part of the pillager's habits. She despoils the Cicada, brazenly robs him of his possessions. Let us describe this theft, a curious point in natural history and, as yet, unknown.

In July, during the stifling heat of the afternoon, when the insect populace, parched with thirst, vainly wanders around the limp and withered flowers in search of refreshment, the Cicada laughs at the general need. With that delicate gimlet, his rostrum, he broaches a cask in his inexhaustible cellar. Sitting, always singing, on the branch of a shrub, he bores through the firm, smooth bark swollen with sap ripened by the sun. Driving his sucker through the bung-hole, he drinks luxuriously, motionless and rapt in contemplation, absorbed in the charms of syrup and song.

Watch him for a little while. We shall perhaps witness unexpected tribulation. There are many thirsty ones prowling around, in fact; they discover the well be-