

## Entomology.

### The Wheat Midge.

THE ravages of this pernicious insect appear to have been less wide-spread this year than usual, though we have observed and heard of its presence in various quarters. Now that the farmers have for the most part threshed their wheat, they can tell to what extent the grain has been affected by this insect, and we trust that they will employ some of the long winter evenings in writing out their experience and acquainting their brother farmers with it through our columns. Those who have been troubled with the midge we strongly advise to plough under their wheat stubble as deeply as possible, and burn all the chaff and refuse left from the threshing; they will thus destroy a large proportion of the larvæ of the insect, and prevent, to some extent, its re-appearance next year. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." If farmers will not make some little effort—take some little trouble to prevent the recurrence of a particular insect foe—they cannot expect to receive much pity when they come to bemoan their wasted crops next year.

So much as regards prevention; but is there any cure? It is very hard to say. We believe that there is a cure, but it is not easy to apply it, and if there should be expense attending it, some will at once cry out that "the remedy is worse than the disease—we will have none of it." Some months ago (C. F. May 1, page 134), we spoke of the parasites of the wheat midge, and the possibility of introducing them into this country; we also mentioned that we were in correspondence with an English Entomologist on the subject. Mr. Francis Walker, F. L. S., of the British Museum (Entomological Department), London, England—a well-known authority on *Diptera*, the order to which the midge belongs, as well as on other insects—wrote to us on the subject some time ago. We did not publish his remarks before, as we hoped to receive some farther information; but now all attempts will have to be deferred to another season. He stated as follows: "I doubt much whether the parasites of the wheat midge can be introduced successfully into Canada. I can hardly attend to that matter this year, and I know only three Entomologists who are acquainted with the tribes of insects to which the parasites belong, and I have written to them about the matter. In many cases I think that insects are more kept in check by other means than by their parasites. *Platygaster tipulæ* is the chief parasite of the wheat midge; the British species of *Platygaster* are very numerous; there are probably several species in Canada, and perhaps one of them may become a parasite of the wheat midge. I hope that some Canadian Entomologist will study there the species of that genus, and of other parasitic Hymenoptera, and their economy. Besides the wheat midge, there may be in Canada some species of *Cecidomyia* feeding on grapes, and each attacked by a species of *Platygaster*; the latter, when it assumes the fly-state, might be placed close to the wheat midge, and perhaps in time it will take to it as its prey."

There are a large number of species of *Cecidomyia* known to inhabit North America, and two are mentioned by Baron Osten Sacken, in his monograph on this family, as feeding upon the wild grape. The habits of these, however, are different from those of the wheat midge, the former producing a gall, and the latter not. Another midge attacks the gooseberry, causing the fruit to become prematurely red and rapidly putrid. It is a well-known insect, and may be found to have parasites which could be utilized as Mr. Walker suggests. The experiment is worth trying; but our own impression is that it is very unlikely that the parasite of one midge would take to another, except where it was shut out from its own proper species, and then where both are ex-

posed to its attacks, it would prefer the species natural to it rather than the other. The great difficulty in the way of effecting these experiments successfully, and of introducing a midge-parasite from one country to another, is the extreme minuteness of the objects, which demand an amount of time and patience for observation that few of us can afford to give them.

### Entomological Quackery.

WE clip the following paragraph from the *Iowa Homestead* of July 22, 1868:

THE CURECULIO.—A correspondent of the *Canada Farmer*, writing from Sarnia, says that he saved his plums from the cureculio in the following manner: He put woollen rags around the base of the trunks of his trees, having first steeped them in tanner's oil, renewing the application of oil after every heavy shower. He put chloride of lime in a saucer in the fork of the tree. He spread white cloths on the ground under the trees, poured sulphuric acid on the lime, and the fumes brought down all insects from the trees. He also tried jarring the trees, and by these means he succeeded in raising a large crop of plums.

This reminds us of a letter to a noted quack which we once came across, and which read as follows: "Dr. Cureall—Dear Sir: I had a pain in my stomach yesterday; so first of all I took a dose of your never-failing electric oil; then I tried a dose of Dr. Humbug's infallible elixir of lime; and lastly I swallowed a dose of cold-drawn castor oil. In three hours' time my stomach was all right again. Please let me know whether it was the electric oil, or the elixir of lime, or the castor oil that cured me. Yours, truly, Samuel Simpleton."

We incline to believe that it was the "jarring the trees" that saved the plums; and that the "tanner's oil" and the "chloride of lime" might just as well have been daubed on to the roof of the house, for any effect that they had towards keeping off the cureculio. Will people never find out that cureculios can fly, and that attempting to head them off from crawling up the trunks of plum trees by oily bandages is all a matter of moonshine?—*American Entomologist*.

NOTE BY ED. C. F.—We have invariably recommended our readers to save their plums from the cureculio by means of the "jarring process," and gathering up and destroying all fallen fruit. Any of the other methods that so frequently go the round of the press we believe to be utterly worthless.

### An Insect Powder.

A well-known German traveller, F. Jager, in his "Sketches of Travel in Singapore, Malacca, Java," (Berlin, 1866), describes the powder of the *Pyrethrum roseum* as a specific against all noxious insects, including the troublesome mosquitoes and those which attack collections. He says:—"A tincture prepared by macerating one part of the *Pyrethrum roseum* in four parts of dilute alcohol, and, when diluted with ten times its bulk of water, applied to any part of the body, gives perfect security against all vermin. I often passed the night in my boat on the ill-reputed rivers of Siam without any other cover, even without the netting, and experienced not the slightest inconvenience. The 'buzzing,' at other times so great a disturber of sleep, becomes a harmless tune, and, in the feeling of security, a real cradle song. In the chase, moistening the beard and hands, protects the hunter against flies for at least twelve hours, even in spite of the largely increased transpiration due to the climate. Especially interesting is its action on that plague of all tropical countries, the countless ants. Before the windows and surrounding the whole house where I lived at Albay, on Luzon, was fastened a board six inches in width, on which long caravans of ants were constantly moving in all directions, making it almost appear an uniformly black surface. A track of the powder, several inches in width, strewn across the board, or some tincture sprinkled over it, proved an unsurmountable barrier to these processions. The first who halted before it were pushed on by the crowds behind them; but, immediately on passing over, showed symptoms of narcosis, and died in a minute or two, and within a short time the rest left the house altogether."

THE PLAGUE OF INSECTS.—The Insect Exhibition held in Paris has led to the formation of an Agricultural Entomological Society. The objects of this Society are the propagation of useful insects and the destruction of noxious ones.

## Poultry Ward.

### Ontario Poultry Association.

A MEETING of this Association was held in the Agricultural Hall, on Monday, 9th inst., but, owing to the unfavorable weather, there was not a large attendance. After the usual preliminary routine business, the Secretary read a communication from Mr. R. S. M. Bouchette, Commissioner of Customs, in reference to imported poultry, which was published in our last issue, and from which it appears that these importations are not exempt from duty, as some of the members had been led to believe. The subject of the proposed Fall Show was then discussed, but taking all things into consideration, it was not deemed advisable to hold one at this late season of the year, and the project was therefore abandoned. This will, no doubt, be a disappointment to many intending exhibitors, some of whom have imported birds from Europe at considerable expense. The Society have, however, encouraging prospects for a good exhibition next year, and several communications were read which show that through their means considerable interest has been excited throughout the country in improved breeds of poultry, and a number of reports were furnished of the success achieved at various agricultural exhibitions by birds procured at the last poultry show in Toronto. Col. Hassard's Cochins, in particular, had won distinction wherever they had been exhibited; and one breeder had raised from a pen of his birds forty chickens during the past season. The Brahma Pootras furnished by Mr. T. McLean had also given entire satisfaction; and in other breeds a marked improvement in the poultry yard was manifest wherever the Society's stock had been introduced. Some important measures were discussed with a view to putting the Association on a still better footing, and a committee was appointed to consider them more fully, and report, if possible, at the next meeting in December.

### Brahma Pootra Fowls.

To the Editor of THE CANADA FARMER:

SIR,—On seeing the cuts of the dark Brahmas in the CANADA FARMER (vol. 5, No. 1), that were imported by Mrs. Varley, of Toronto, and always having a fancy for fowls, the splendid representation rather gave me the hen fever. I consequently attended the Ontario Poultry Show held in Toronto last April, for the express purpose of purchasing; but was rather surprised to find that the birds were held so high, the first prize pair of dark Brahmas imported being valued at fifty-five dollars, and the second prize pair, imported, forty dollars. However, I purchased the second prize pair, imported by R. A. Wood, Esq., Toronto; also a cock and two hens of the light Brahmas from him; but the dark hen proved barren. Consequently, I again visited Mr. Wood's poultry yard in order to purchase another, as he told me when I purchased the first lot that he expected more out soon; and I found that another pair had arrived, and also that he had purchased the first prize pair imported by Mrs. Varley, as above referred to, and that he had a fine lot of chickens raised from them, all of which I purchased (with the exception of one of the cocks, that died July last); and now, having Mr. Wood's entire stock, in addition to my own, it makes me a yard of over fifty birds, second to none in the Province. There are a number of pairs of imported fowls among them, including birds that took the first and second prizes at the last Ontario Poultry Show, and I shall spare no pains nor expense in breeding and keeping them pure, and shall supply customers with fowls and eggs at prices that cannot fail to give satisfaction. For list of prices see advertisement in this number.

H. M. THOMAS.

Brooklin, November 8th, 1868.