

A Danger in Summer



LEADING editorial in the *Montreal Gazette*, not long ago, shows that the public is beginning to take notice of a very common danger. The advent of spring and summer, the article reads, while to some it brings recreation, to others change of employment, and to others still the season of their main activity, is for all alike a time of renewed risks to health and life.

In *Science Progress* for April, Dr. Arthur E. Shipley, F.R.S., Fellow and Tutor of Christ's College, Cambridge, calls attention to one of these—the danger of flies. Although the common house-fly is one of the most widely distributed of the insects that are known, the knowledge that has been collected as to its life history is strangely limited. Linnæus gave it the name of *musa domestica*, and De Geer described its transformation. That was in the 18th century. In 1834 the larva was described. In 1873 the American entomologist, A. S. Packard, noticed an exceptional abundance of the house-fly and spent much effort on its investigation. More recently, L. O. Howard, of the U. S. A., Department of Agriculture, issued a bulletin on the subject. Last year C. Gordon Hewitt, the English entomologist, published a preliminary outline of his monograph on the house-fly—a work which men of science are eagerly awaiting.

Enough is known already, however, to justify the warnings of those who have witnessed the activity of the fly in spreading certain forms of disease. Dr. Shipley, in view of the diseases that the fly conveys from man to man, considers the prince of devils well named the Lord of Flies, and holds that of all the plagues of Egypt, that of flies was by no means the least formidable. The house-fly is practically cosmopolitan. The British Museum collection, though very far from complete, includes specimens from the Mediterranean, India, South America, Nova Scotia, Madagascar, Somaliland, New Zealand and Hong Kong.

The great breeding-ground of the house-fly is in the neighbourhood of stables. Their eggs are hatched in about twenty-four hours. During its lifetime the larva moves actively about, eating decaying matter. In from five to seven days it becomes a dark-brown pupa chrysalis. The period required for complete metamorphosis has