

The note, which sounds like *xx*, has a shocking lack of melody; the poets who have sung its praises must have heard it at the distance that lends enchantment; in close proximity the sound is excessively rasping and grating, louder and hoarser than I have heard

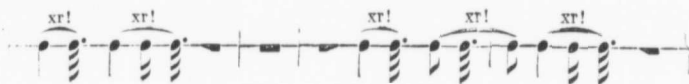


Fig. 47.—Note of *Cyrtophyllus concavus*.

from any other of the Locustarians in America or in Europe, and the Locustarians are the noisiest of all Orthoptera. Since these creatures are abundant wherever they occur, the noise produced by them, on an evening specially favorable to their song, is most discordant. Usually, as I have said, the notes are two in number, rapidly repeated at short intervals; perhaps nine out of ten will ordinarily give this number; but occasionally a stubborn insect persists in sounding the triple note; and as katydids appear desirous of defiantly answering their neighbors in the same measure, the proximity of a treble-voiced songster demoralizes a whole neighborhood, and a curious medley results; notes from some individuals may then be heard all the while, scarcely a moment's time intervening between their stridulations, some nearer, others at a greater distance; so that the air is filled by these noisy troubadours with an indescribably confused and grating clatter. This renders special observation of the notes of any individual all the more difficult, and it is only by great patience and careful selection that it can be accomplished, unless one places himself upon the outskirts of a colony.

Harris gave us the first account of this insects' song. He says in his classical Report: "The musical organs of the male consist of a pair of taborets. They are formed by a thin and transparent membrane stretched in a strong half-oval frame in the triangular overlapping portion of each wing cover. During the day time these insects are silent, and conceal themselves amongst the leaves of trees; but at night they quit their lurking places, and the joyous males begin the tell-tale call with which they enliven their silent mates. This proceeds from the friction of the taboret frames against each other when the wing covers are opened and shut, and consists of two or three distinct notes almost exactly resembling articulated sounds, and corresponding with the number of times the wing covers are opened and shut; and the notes are repeated at intervals of a few minutes, for hours together. The mechanism of the taborets, and the concavity of the wing covers, reverberate and increase the sound to such a degree, that it may be heard, in the stillness of the night, at the distance of a quarter of a mile. At the approach of twilight the katydid mounts to the upper branches of the tree in which he lives, and as soon as the shades of evening prevail, begins his noisy babble, while rival notes issue from the neighboring trees and the groves resound with the call of 'Katy-did, she-did' the livelong night."

McNeill writes of it in Illinois: "This is the true 'katydid,' common wherever there are trees. Its song is better known, and the insect itself less known, because of its arboreal habits, than either of the other katydids. This species moves about so little, that it is not unlikely that in many cases an individual spends its whole life upon a single tree. I have listened to the song of one katydid on a certain tree every evening for more than two months. I have noticed repeatedly that on any evening when they are singing, there are the same number of individuals as indicated by the number of songs. . . . So far as I know this is the only species of Orthoptera in which the male is not smaller and more active than the female. It is the only green-winged Locustid with which I am acquainted that does not have the wings longer than the elytra. These facts are not improbably mutually related. It may be surmised that, in the evolution of species, the katydid that developed in the greatest degree its musical apparatus had the least need of hunting up his partner when the mating season came round, and as it was so well protected by its form and color and arboreal habits as to