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LIGHT TRAPS AS A MEANS OF CONTROLLING

INSECT PESTS.

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Collecting at light, as it is popularly termed, has been a favourite method of securing certain kinds of insects, almost since the time when collecting was in its infancy, and that insects were so attracted was probably known before entomology, as we know it, was even dreamed of. We might, in fact, suspect it of being as ancient as the knowledge of fire itself. While the collector, however, has used this knowledge to procure specimens for his cabinet; it is only within recent years that attention has been called to the possible use of light traps as a means of controlling certain insect pests. On the face of it, what seemed easier? Moths and beetles, too, were known to dash themselves against the light, at times, in vast numbers. All that had to be done, then, was to place light traps at convenient distances apart and provide means for the destruction of the attracted insects. Indeed, a bonfire occasionally replenished would answer every purpose. The method was, in fact, a repetition of the candle and the clothes moth on a large scale. Yes, on the face of it there was certainly promise of success, but, alas, even a casual investigation soon brought other things to light. It was seen at once that the advocates of light traps had overlooked several important details and one important fact which in itself was sufficient to make the whole idea abortive. To begin with, insects are only attracted to bright light in comparatively limited numbers even under the most favourable weather conditions, among which may be mentioned warmth and cloudiness. A perfect night must combine these at a time when the moon is below the horizon or not visible, and provide, in addition, a stormy atmosphere with preferably a light rain falling. Such conditions occur but rarely, so much so, in fact, that they have been absent during the last three years. Thus, meteorological conditions alone, will often materially affect the value of