

and pierce the skin; next follow the flesh-flies some (*Sarcophaga*), so that no time may be lost, having the remarkable characteristic of depositing their young alive; others covering it with millions of eggs, whence in a day or two proceed innumerable devourers. An idea of the despatch made by these gourmands may be gained from the combined considerations of their numbers, voracity, and rapid development. One female of *Sarcophaga carinaria* will give birth to 20,000 young; and the larvæ of many flesh-flies, as Redi ascertained, will, in twenty-four hours, devour so much food, and grow so quickly, as to increase their weight two hundred-fold. In five days after being hatched they arrive at their full growth and size, which is a remarkable instance of the care of Providence in fitting them for the part they are destined to act: for if longer time were required for their growth, their food would not be a fit aliment for them, or they would be too long in removing the nuisance it is given in charge to them to dissipate."

As soon as the various tribes of flies have opened the way, and devoured the softer parts, a whole host of beetles actively second their labours. Wasps, hornets and ants claim a share, and before long what was a putrifying mass is only a heap of dry bones, which are soon covered by decaying vegetables and soil thrown up by worms.

Of these scavenger-beetles, none, perhaps, are more interesting than the *Necrophori* or Sexton Beetles, or, as their name denotes, corpse-bearers, in allusion to the singular habit possessed by all the beetles of this genus. They are not content with merely eating their food when they find a supply, but lay eggs in it and then bury it so that no other insects may get it, but that it may be a provision for their future progeny.

These insects may easily be known; they are almost all bright coloured, being of a shining black, ornamented with bright orange markings and fulvous-down underneath, the under side of the elytra is often of a bright yellow colour, which is very conspicuous when they are flying, these organs then being held erect. They fly and run with great rapidity. When flying they are very difficult to distinguish from Humble-Bees, and have very much the same oscillating mode of flying backwards and forwards before any one trying to catch them. The antennæ are very peculiar, consisting of a slender jointed stem, bearing at its end a round knob composed of four flattened joints joined together. There are several species found in Canada, the largest and handsomest of which is *Necrophorus Americanus*, Oliv. I have never been able to observe this species working; but some of the other species may be easily watched if a trap is set for them in the shape of some small animal or bird

Represents one of our commonest species (*Necrophorus Vellutinus*).



The rapidity with which these small creatures will bury a bird many times larger and heavier than themselves, is astonishing. They seem, too, to be gifted with the same instinct as the vulture, for although they are very seldom found hidden like other insects, no sooner is a small dead animal exposed than some of these insects very soon appear, and, after a short survey of the "subject," soon commence operations. If the ground is soft and suitable, they begin at once by making a furrow all round, about the length of their bodies from the animal; the greater part of this work of burying is said to be performed by the male, but I have been unable to verify this. They nearly always work at night, and stop and run under the body whenever a light is brought near them. As soon as the first furrow is completed, another is begun inside this, and the earth is then pushed out into the outside one; the next furrow is beneath the body, and the progress can be marked by the earth that is pushed out all round it from underneath. There is a good deal of running about and inspecting all the time the work is going on, and frequently the workmen will refresh themselves with a meal from the object of their attentions, after which they will take a rest and then will start again, and work away until nothing is visible. They are not even then content, for they will sink small bodies to the depth of a foot from the surface. In this storehouse they deposit their eggs, and then leave them to take care of themselves, and set off in quest of more work to do. If by chance the object they wish to bury is in an unsuitable place, they will accomplish comparatively enormous feats rather than give up the object. Last summer, I noticed one evening a dead swallow lying on a stone pavement close against a building. As I passed I pushed it up against the wall so as to be out of the