

The Insect Plague.

Of late years Ontario has suffered greatly from what may be called a plague of insects. Many species have increased so greatly as seriously to threaten agricultural interests in many ways.

The damage done by these insect foes is almost beyond calculation. Forests and orchards have been stripped of their leaves and in some instances killed outright by the tent caterpillar. Many very valuable maple forests in the eastern section of the province have been thus destroyed during the past two or three years. Grain and grass are destroyed in vast quantities every year by grasshoppers. Potatoes cannot be grown unless protected by poison from the potato beetle. Other crops also suffer in greater or less degree from these insect pests, and the total damage done to agriculture by this means must be very great.

The cause of this state of things appears to be the destruction of that condition known as the "balance of nature." At one time, before man interfered, things were so nicely adjusted that no insect foe increased unduly. When man appeared and changed the face of nature to meet the requirements of agriculture, this balance was destroyed, and, until it can be restored, we must suffer the consequences with all the patience we can muster to our aid.

Before the clearing of so much land in this province, and before the population had become so great, such continuous plagues of insects were unknown. Occasionally some insect foes would appear, and perhaps endure for a season or two in considerable numbers, but they always disappeared in a comparatively short time, instead of staying with us as they have of late. The reason for this is not difficult to see. In those early days the forests that covered the land were alive with birds of all sorts. Men had not yet reduced their numbers by killing, and in the forests nesting places in abundance existed for these feathered warriors, who sallied out into the fields in great numbers and ruthlessly attacked any insects they might find.

Now these conditions are changed. The greater part of our forests are cut down; on many farms hardly a shrub grows where a bird may build her nest. Robins, wood-peckers, and