

The Book-Louse.

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When one is turning over the pages of an old book the attention is frequently drawn to a minute, almost colourless, wingless Insect that runs along with comparative swiftness. This is the so-called book-louse,¹ a name we hardly like to use because of the misleading nature of its second half. Let us say at once, to put the reader at his ease, that the Insect known as the book-louse has no relationship to the personal vermin from which part of its name has been borrowed, nor does it resemble it at all in habits, or in anything but a very superficial likeness of form. Still, it has been mistaken for the real thing by many who, happily, have had no close acquaintance with the latter. We have several times been the recipients of specimens of the book-louse sent in carefully-packed sealed tubes accompanied by letters almost imploringly begging us to assure the sender that they were not samples of the loathed one, and asking for instructions how to get rid of such unpleasant-looking creatures. One such communication was from a lady who had recently changed her residence, and found that a certain room swarmed with these Insects which she thought were of the legitimately-detested species, and her object was clearly to obtain an opinion from us which would justify her in breaking her three-years agreement. Our report did not sanction such a course, though we hoped that eventually it relieved her mind.

This little book-louse, though it causes great anxiety to the collector of Insects, may be regarded with unconcern by others. It is destructive without doubt, but unless it has such fragile things as Insects to exercise its minute jaws upon, it causes no appreciable damage. But if it gets into the tightly glazed drawers of the entomological cabinet—introduced perhaps on a specimen received from a less careful collector—it may work great mischief before its presence is suspected. The first sign is a little impalpable dust under one or more of the specimens. Then, if neglected, an antenna may drop off, and the wings begin to look shabby owing to the bright scales being eaten off the surface.

If we secure one of these miscreants in a shallow, glass-topped box, we can view him with a pocket-lens, and learn more of his appearance. The lens is necessary, for mature specimens are only about one-twentieth of an inch in length. With the aid of this instrument it will be seen to present a fairly close resemblance to a worker white ant. The internal structure is very different, but the book-louse² are included in the same order³ of Insect-life as the termites. Like the workers of the latter tribe, the book-louse never develops wings, though a very similar allied Insect⁴ does so. It has the same kind of soft integument as the termite,



Photo. by

H. Main, F.F.S.

THE APLUS LION'S COCOON.

When the aplus lion is full fed it spins a flimsy cocoon of open network, keeping its heap of "old clothes" on the outside. Here it changes to a bryaldis. The photographs show it prior to casting off the grub-skin. Magnified five times.

¹ *Atropos divinatoria*.

² *Psocidae*.

³ *Neuroptera*.

⁴ *Clothilla*.