

FERNDALE SCHOOL.

No. VIII.—THE OX GAD-FLY, (*Oestrus bovis*—Latr.)

"Est lucos Silari circa ilicibusque virentem
Plurimus Alburnum volitans, cui nomen *asilo*
Romanum est, *astrum* Graii vertere vocantes;
Asper, acerba sonans; quo tota exterrita silvis
Diffugiunt armenta, furit mugitibus æther
Concussus, silvæque et sicci ripa Tanagri.
Hoc quondam monstro horribiles exercuit iras
Inachiae Juno pestem meditata juvencae."

Georgicon, Lib. iii., 146-153.

T. This was written at least thirty years before Christ was born, by the Latin poet Virgil. The grand old poet seems to have had his eyes wider open than many of our little dreaming poets of to-day. Jack, did your brother, who is attending the Academy, translate for us what Virgil said? He told me he would send it with you to-day.

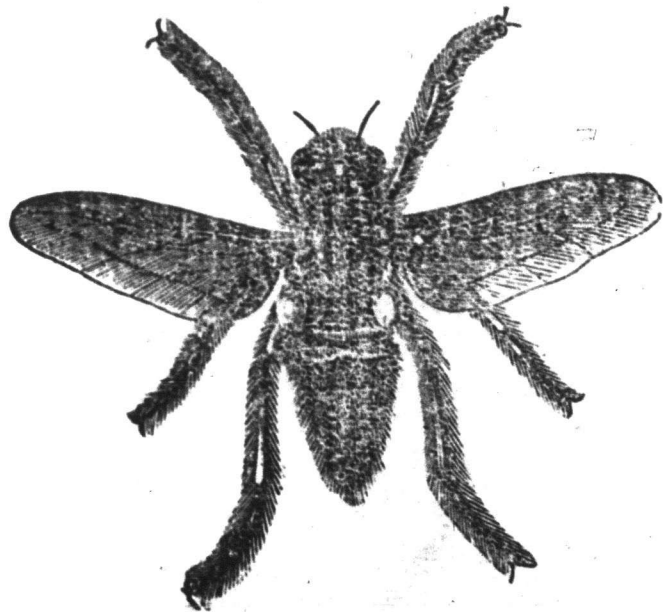
JACK. Yes, here it is. He said he thought he could make English poetry as good as Virgil, any way.

T. Well, if you please, let us hear it.

JACK. (Reading):

"By the grove of Silarus, Italian stream,
And Alburnus the mountain with oaks evergreen,
There fly in the noonday like beams of the sun
Fierce insects with stings and an angry hum.
With Romans *Asilus* it bears for a name,
With Greeks it is *Oestrus*, but stings all the same.
When Jupiter changed fair Io to a cow,
Mad Juno with these carried on the old row.
When the angry hiss of their arrowlike flight
Announces their presence, the cattle take fright;
They dash through the thickets and bellow in pain
Till they shake dry Tanagrus, the wood, mount and plain."

T. Well Jack, you can tell your brother that as to the *English* he has the advantage of Virgil, but as to the *poetry*, it is *vice versa* I am afraid. You know



(Magnified.)

THE OX BOT-FLY (OR GAD-FLY.)

that much Latin. Now, here is this fly enlarged.

For over 2,000 years it has been tormenting cattle and has followed them to every part of the world. Have any of you seen it?

JACK. Yes. All at once on a hot summer day, as soon as the cattle hear the buzz of the fly, they shake their heads, toss their horns, stiffen their tails out straight in the air, and gallop about bellowing like mad.

T. Why, Jack, your description puts Virgil's in the shade. But we have a specimen in our collection, caught by some deft wielder of the net. Let us compare it with our enlarged drawing. How long is it?

CHORUS. Nearly half an inch.

T. Its body is—

CHORUS. Very hairy.

T. It belongs to the order—

CHORUS. Diptera, because it has only two wings.

T. Color of the wings?

CHORUS. Nearly transparent, smoky brown.

T. The hair about its face?

CHORUS. Yellowish.

T. The color of the tips of the abdomen?

CHORUS. Orange.

T. Of the middle of the abdomen?

CHORUS. Black.

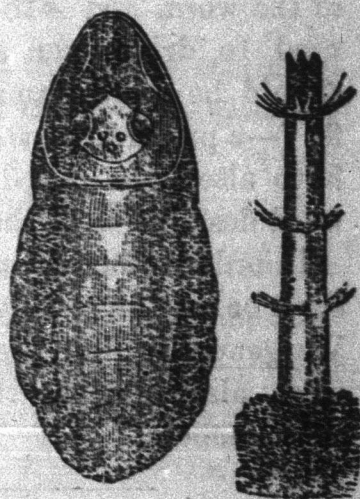
T. Of the portion of the abdomen next the thorax or middle division of the insect?

CHORUS. Greyish white.

T. The thorax is not hairy, but is black—

CHORUS. With white and yellow bands.

T. This fly is found from June to September, endeavoring to place its eggs on the back of cattle. At the end of its abdomen is something looking like a sting; but it is really an ovipositor, that is, an egg placer. If it were magnified under the microscope, it would appear to be a very tiny tube of four joints which close into one another like the tubes of a telescope. Here it is pictured at the right. At the end of each joint is a minute circle of fine hairs. The end joint makes a very small puncture in the skin of the ox and leaves a very minute egg in it. This egg is soon hatched and the small maggot—the larva of the fly—makes its way beneath the skin where it scoops out a little dwelling place for itself during the winter. Here it is sure to be warm enough, and to have abundant nourishment.



Imago issuing from cocoon and ovipositor (magnified.)