

THE RUSSIAN PARASITE OF THE HESSIAN FLY.—Miss Eleanor A. Ormerod, the eminent consulting entomologist of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, in a communication to the *Mark Lane Express*, thus refers to the discovery of this parasite :—

“It is announced in the United States that Professor C. V. Riley, the well-known entomologist to the United States Department of Agriculture, has introduced into that country living specimens of *Semiotellus nigripes*, a Russian parasite of the Hessian fly, in order to acclimatize it. By its aid he hopes to practically exterminate the pests in that country. Curiously enough he obtained this parasite from England, and it is said that quite a number have been reared for the purpose. If this is the case, there should be no difficulty in the way of adopting the same means of getting rid of the Hessian fly in this country, and it would be interesting to have Miss E. A. Ormerod’s opinion on the subject.”

My opinion is that, quite certainly, it would be worse than useless (in this country) to make any such attempt. In the United States of America things are on a very different footing. There are differences in temperature, conditions of climate, and also of area of cropping, and other agricultural arrangements which must affect this question. Likewise there are special arrangements at the Government experimental stations for rearing insects, and skilled Government entomologists who can trustworthily examine the collections before they are turned loose on the country.

The parasite fly (the *Semiotellus nigripes*) is only about one line long, and without the help of a magnifying glass and some technical knowledge it would be impossible for any but skilled entomologists to be certain whether many pests were not included amongst the parasites which they set free. Also it is to be remembered for the most part insects pair, lay eggs, and die very shortly after they make their appearance from the chrysalids, but even supposing these minute creatures lived on awhile, where are they to be taken to?

We do not know what corn is infested until attack is thoroughly set up, for the most part till the mischief is so advanced that the time for action of the parasite is past; and at a vast expense the intended destroyers would in many cases be carried where there was nothing to destroy.

This work of rearing could not be done on a broad scale—that is, by collections from the threshing machine by farmers—and the payment to a staff of collectors, rearers, and distributors would involve enormous outlay.

The present plan of destroying the Hessian fly chrysalids in the fine screenings is much the safest, and also has, for this country, the stated approval of Prof. Riley himself. It is easily done, costs scarcely anything, and causes no loss; and thus, though we destroy the parasites (of which there are several kinds), we also quite certainly destroy the pest.