

CORRESPONDENCE.

AN ENTOMOLOGICAL GRAVE-DIGGER.

To the Editor of the "Canadian Naturalist."

SIR,—As I was sitting this morning on the lower step of my veranda, my gaze fixed listlessly, during the noontide heat, upon the gravel-walk before me; "thinking," I verily believe, "of nothing," or at most, entertaining a dreamy impression that I was becoming a focus for the concentration of the sun's rays—my eyes were suddenly attracted to an insect whose motions very soon riveted my attention.

I at once perceived that it belonged to the order *Hymenoptera*, but even now that I have the specimen in question before me, I am afraid to name its *genus*: it is, however, similar to the *Tenthredo scrophularia*, if it is not actually that insect. The accompanying sketch may enable you to arrive at a decision on this point: it is the natural size, the length being exactly five lines.



The little creature, when I first caught sight of it, had already commenced, within four feet of the spot on which I was seated, its work of excavation; for as I looked it disappeared, and shortly afterward returned to the surface of the ground tail first; and running backward over a tiny mound it had previously made, deposited a grain of gravel fully as large as its own head *outside* the mound, with the evident intention that it should not roll back again into the cave it was in process of forming. This operation was continued with great rapidity; and ever as it re-entered the orifice I saw minute particles of sand fly upward, impelled purposely by its descending feet.

The care with which the insect distinguished between the larger and the smaller grains was wonderful; those only whose gravity might have caused them to roll down again, had they been placed below the apex of the mound on the side on which the work was carrying on, were conveyed *beyond* the mound; the smaller grains were added to the mound itself without much apparent discrimination.

After a time the work was evidently completed to the satisfaction of the laborer, for it flew away to the grass-edging of a flower-border distant about six feet from the cave, and immediately emerged from thence, dragging after it, for it was running back-