

## THE HOUSEHOLD.

## SOME NOXIOUS INSECTS.

Noxious insects may be briefly defined as those insects which injure man.

Obviously they may do this in two ways. Either they inflict direct injuries on his person, or they indirectly injure him by damaging his property. In either cases they are the result of civilization.

To the genuine savage no insects are noxious, not even those bloodthirsty parasites which we call by the general name of "vermin." A savage cares nothing for vermin of any kind, and it is not until man is far removed from savages that he begins to object to their presence.

As to secondarily noxious insects, a savage has no conception of them. He does not till the earth, and consequently has no crops to be devoured. He possesses neither flocks nor herds, and therefore even such insects as the tsetse-fly and gad-fly have no terrors for him. Neither does he wear clothes, so that he is not even aware of the existence of the clothes moth.

Take, for example, the most noxious insect which an agriculturist fears, namely, the locust, and see how it affects a savage, say a Bosjesman.

To the South African farmer the locust is the most fearful of pests. A swarm of locusts will mean absolute ruin, for the creatures will destroy in a single night the harvest on which the owner depends for subsistence.

But to the Bosjesman the locust-swarm is an unmixed blessing. He has no crop that the insects can destroy, but he finds in the locust-swarm an abundant store of food without the trouble of hunting for it. He hails the approach of the distant swarm, and as long as it remains in his neighborhood he enjoys to the full the chief luxury of savage life, i.e. eating to repletion day after day, and only sleeping off the effects of one meal to begin another.

Take, again, the great Palm Weevil, the huge jaws of which are so destructive to the palm-trees, and so noxious to the cultivator.

The savage exults when he sees the traces of the "gru-gru," as this larva is called, for it forms one of his most dainty articles of food, and all the more valuable because it requires no cooking. The gru-gru is simply cut out of the tree, held by the head, and eaten alive, as we eat oysters in this country. Many a savage and white man also, when leading a savage life, has been indebted for his very existence to the Palm Weevil. To the cultivator of the palm this weevil is one of the worst of noxious insects. To the same man, when travelling out of the reach of civilization, it is a priceless doom.

Then there are the various Termites, the terror of civilized man, the destroyers of his furniture, books, and papers, the devourers of every piece of woodwork in his house, and sometimes the underminers of the house itself.

The savages value them for the various ways in which they contribute toward his livelihood.

In the first place he eats them. In this country we revolt at the idea of eating insects, but in savage lands the Termite is eaten, not as a matter of absolute necessity, but of choice. Indeed, a savage king, to whom a traveller presented some apricot jam, declared it to be the best food he knew next to Termites.

Then, the nests which these insects rear are of great service to the savage. There are several animals, popularly called Ant Bears, which feed chiefly on the Termites, or White Ants, as they are wrongly called. These creatures are furnished with enormous claws, with which they tear out the whole interior of the nest, leaving nothing but the shell of clay, baked as hard as brick in the sunbeams.

Such empty nests serve several purposes. In the first place they are utilized of ovens, in which the native hunters can cook the animals killed by them.

Then such savages as build huts find that nothing makes so good a floor for their houses as Termites' nests ground into a powder mixed with water, beaten down until quite smooth and level, and left to harden in the rays of the tropical sun.

Lastly, they serve as tombs for the dead. The corpse is thrust into the empty nest through a hole left by the Ant Bear, the aperture is closed with stones and thorns,

and there the body may remain undisturbed by any foe except man.

Every reader of this magazine has, I presume, seen the common Water-Boatmen insects, which are shaped so much like boats, swim on their keel-shaped backs, and use their long hind legs as oars. All of them possess sharp, strong beaks, capable of penetrating the human skin, and depositing in the wound a poisonous secretion, which causes a dull throbbing pain lasting for several hours.

There are many species of Water-Boatmen but those which belong to the genus Corixa, and can be known by the flattened ends of their bodies, have the sharpest beaks, the most virulent poison, and consequently are the most noxious when handled. Even in England these Corixæ are apt to be rather unpleasant insects, but there are some parts of Mexico where the lakes swarm with Corixæ of very much larger dimensions than any British species.

Yet these insects, noxious as we might think them, are very useful to the comparatively uncivilized natives, who eat, not the Corixæ, but their eggs.

At the proper time of the year the natives sink large bundles of reeds in the water. In a week or two the reeds are thickly covered with Corixa eggs, which are scraped off and the reeds returned to the water. In fact the Corixa is treated very much like the mussel in the French breeding beds. The eggs, after being scraped off, are pressed into cakes, which are cooked and used for consumption, under the name of "haoutle."

Even the dread mosquito, the only insect which a savage can have an excuse for ranking as noxious, is really of direct value to some savage tribes.

Livingstone mentions that the shores of the Lake Nyassa swarm with mosquitoes. The late Mr. Baines told me that no one who has not seen the mosquito swarms that hang on the banks of these African lakes, can form even a conception of their multitude. They fill the air so that they seem to be an almost solid mass. If a lamp be lighted, they put it out by settling on it, while the hum of their wings is almost like the roaring of the sea in the ears of a diver.

Yet the natives can utilize even these terrible pests, which are so venomous that not even a mule could stay on the banks of the lake and live through a night. But the mosquito never seems to travel to any great distance from the water in which it passed through its previous stage of existence, and the natives can avoid it by sleeping in spots far removed from the water's edge.

They do more than this; they sweep the mosquitoes into large bags, press them together and form them into cakes, just as is done with the eggs of the Corixa. These cakes go by the name of "kungo." They are circular, about eight inches in diameter, and an inch of so in thickness. When eaten they are said to bear some resemblance to caviare in flavor.

Before quitting this part of the subject, we must not lose sight of the fact that none of the so-called noxious insects, even though they cause direct annoyance to man, were created for that purpose. Take, for example, the mosquito swarms above mentioned. Man is not the normal food of the mosquito, which can and does maintain existence without ever seeing a human being. But when man presents himself in the tract already inhabited by the mosquitoes, he becomes an intruder and has to suffer the penalty of his intrusion.

I mentioned at the beginning of this essay that the noxiousness of insects is in direct ratio to the civilization of the men whom they annoy.

In the uncivilized days of England the carrot, the turnip, the asparagus, the cabbage, the celery, and other garden plants, were mere weeds, and, in consequence, the insects which fed on them were unheeded by man. Our semi-savage predecessors could find no fault with the cabbage caterpillars, with the turnip grub, the celery fly, or the asparagus beetle, simply because the plants on which they fed had not been brought into cultivation, and their destroyers could not be ranked among noxious insects.

Then there comes the question of counter-balancing qualities.

Take the bee. A child who is ignorant of the character of the bee, seizes it, is stung, and has very good reason for considering it as a very noxious insect.

Afterward, when he learns that the bee furnishes the sweet honey which tickles his palate, he pardons the sting which has hurt

his hand. He has learned one of the counter-balancing qualities of a noxious insect. As he increases in knowledge and civilization, he learns that the wax, which as a child he would have flung aside after draining it of the honey, is by far the more valuable product of the two, and that some of the arts—metal statuary, for example—could not be conducted without it.

Take the silkworm. It destroys the leaves of the mulberry-tree, and injures the crop of fruit which man wants for himself, so that to a race of men sufficiently civilized to cultivate the mulberry-tree, it would be classed among the noxious insects.

But further knowledge about the habits of the creature enables mankind to understand its counter-balancing qualities and so although the silkworm consumes far more mulberry foliage than it did when it was considered merely as a noxious insect, we have learned to compare the value of the silk which it produces with that of the leaves which it devours, and prize the silkworm as a source of national wealth.—J. G. Wood, in *Good Words*.

## WORTH KNOWING.

Keep salt in a dry place.  
Keep yeast in wood or glass.  
Keep fresh lard in tin vessels.  
Keep preserves and jellies in glass.  
Keep meal and flour in a cool, dry place.  
Keep vinegar in wood, glass, or stoneware.  
Sugar is an admirable ingredient in curing meat or fish.

Crusts and pieces of bread should be kept in an earthen jar, closely covered, in a dry, cool place.

Lard for pastry should be used as hard as it can be cut with a knife. It should be cut through the flour, and not rubbed.

In boiling meat for soup use cold water to extract the juices. If the meat is wanted for itself alone, plunge into boiling water at once.

To prevent meat from scorching during roasting place a basin of water in the oven. The steam generated prevents scorching and makes the meat cook better.

Broil steak without salting. Salt draws the juices in cooking. It is desirable to keep these in, if possible. Cook over a hot fire; turn frequently, searing on both sides. Place on a platter; salt and pepper to taste.

Beef that has a tendency to be tough can be made very palatable by stewing gently for two hours with pepper and salt, taking out about a pint of the liquor when half done, and letting the rest boil into the meat. Brown the meat in the pot. After taking up, make a gravy of the pint of liquor saved.—*Floral Cabinet*.

## THE CHEAPEST MEDICINE.

The cheapest medicine is sleep. It relieves languor, cures restlessness, uneasiness, and irritability; it will remedy head-ache, and teeth-ache, and back-ache, and heart-ache; it cures sorrow and nervousness, and will make heavy burdens seem light, and great trials look very small.

When weary we should sleep. To resort to stimulants is suicidal; what weary men and exhausted women and nervous and peevish children need is sleep. Many a person dies for want of it, and the point where many a sufferer turns his back from the very gates of death to the open path of life is the point where he sinks into sleep.

No matter how hard a man may work, if he can get good sleep, and feel refreshed and rested in the morning; but when the nights are restless and the morning finds us still weary, it is time to stop and rest. And for people to take tea and coffee and tobacco and stimulants to keep them awake, is to drive away their best friend, and bring on themselves untold sorrows, when they shall seek in vain for that sleep which they have so madly driven away. Do not be defrauded of your proper amount of sleep; retire early, breathe pure air, avoid all stimulants, using nothing to banish slumber. God "giveth His beloved sleep."—*The Christian*.

## ARSENIC IN COLORINGS.

It is now well understood that arsenic is extensively used in the dyeing of cloth, and in the pigment of wall-papers, and that it has given rise to many instances of severe poisoning. In the former case the poison is mainly absorbed by the skin. In the latter, microscopic particles float in the air of the room and are inhaled. One effect of thus

receiving it into the system is to destroy the red blood corpuscles and thus diminish the nutrition of the nerve-centres.

The following is a striking but typical case, and has additional interest from the glimpse it gives us of the considerate character of the present Queen of England.

A gentleman employed by the latter to do a piece of work was furnished a room in the palace. Though it was well warmed and every way comfortable, he found himself quite chilly after retiring, and at length his teeth began to chatter. Attempting to rise to get a large Spanish cloak to throw over him, he was unable to move, and he began to be affected with a severe and peculiar pain. He finally fell asleep from sheer exhaustion.

In the morning, he noticed for the first time that the walls of the room were covered with a brilliant green paper. The truth at once flashed on his mind. On getting out of bed he staggered like a drunken man, and it was with difficulty he could dress. The fresh air soon restored him.

The Queen, on learning the state of the case, had a piece of the paper analyzed. It proved to be highly arsenical. At once she had the paper stripped from every room in the place.

**MRS. HIGGINS' RECIPE FOR UNFERMENTED WINE.**—To five pounds of grapes, after they have been nicely picked over, washed and crushed, add three pints of soft water. Let them boil a few minutes in a porcelain kettle, then hang in a coarse cloth to drain. When the juice is all drained out, add two pounds granulated or loaf sugar. Let this come to a boiling point, carefully removing the scum that may arise. When this is done, put the juice into clean bottles while hot, and cork them with new corks. As it cools tighten the corks by pressing them down hard; then cover with plaster of Paris, wet with cold water to a paste and keep in a cool place. This wine will not be injured by scalding the second time. Cover the bottles well in a cloth wet with warm water to keep the juice from breaking them while hot, or while the hot juice is being put into them. We use the Concord grape, and Hartford Prolific. It would be well to put the wine into bottles that hold about the amount used for a single service.—*Waterville Minn.*

THE semi-annual oiling of furniture tends to give walnut a darker and richer look, and renews its polish. Any housekeeper who has never tried this simple process is advised to do so, and note how quickly all the white spots and blemishes disappear. No matter how old and much abused chairs and tables are, try it upon them. Ten cents' worth of oil, mixed with a little rotten stone, which may be had at any druggist's, will be sufficient to polish the furniture of a large dwelling. Apply a little at a time with a small flannel cloth, and rub until dry and smooth with a larger piece, and finish with dry rotten stone. To clean marble mantles, take one part of powdered chalk, one part pulverized pumice stone, and two parts of common soda, mix with water, and rub well the whole surface, then wash with soap and water, and you will find all stains removed.

**PROMPTNESS AT MEALS.**—Punctuality at meals, and especially at breakfast, on the part of all the members of the household, has a great deal to do with good order and comfort through the day. Nobody has a right to indulge selfishly in a half-hour more of sleep in the morning, if thus the work of the house is put back and delayed. Take the half-hour, if you need it, by going to bed earlier, and thus occasioning no inconvenience. This does not apply to old people or invalids, who need all the sleep they can get, but to young, strong and lazy people. No lad should ever need to be called twice in the morning. Neither should a young lady expect to have three or four knocks at her door before she chooses to arise.

**TO PREVENT DUST RISING FROM A CARPET** when being swept, sprinkle coarse dry salt over it. If the carpet is much soiled, rub the salt well into the fibers with the broom; then give a thorough sweeping, going over the work several times. Salt is better than tea-grounds, as it brightens the colors and sweetens the room.

**BLACK BRICKS.**—The black bricks now employed in the ornamentation of buildings are prepared by dipping them in coal tar, the quality of the bricks taken being the same as those used in other parts of the building. Black mortar is made by mixing with lamp black.