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## POPULAR AND PRACTICAL ENTOMOLOGY.

### A VISIT TO NIAGARA GLEN.

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After nearly all July sacrificed on the altar of one's profession, three solid weeks of our all too short Canadian summer gone up in smoke and stifling city heat—weeks, too, when every self-respecting entomologist should be clinging perilously at the very top of his bent—it was indeed high time for relaxation. I hurried feverishly down to the Yonge St. wharf and boarded a Niagara boat. I had told no one where I was going, least of all myself. My preparations were stealthy and the contents of my pilgrim's scrip of the most meagre. In one pocket (had you picked it) you would have found a tooth-brush, a comb, a cyanide bottle, and two clean handkerchiefs; in another a small plant-press, made of two stout cardboard covers enclosing a dozen sheets of blotting paper, and carefully tied up with a pair of brown laces, borrowed for the nonce from my Sunday boots; in a third an empty tin of Colgate's shaving-stick (serving the double purpose of a drinking cup and a receptacle for larvæ and other specimens that required preserving alive), a compass, a chisel, and a pair of forceps; while in an inner pocket (defying the Artfullest Dodger to touch)—with perhaps an occasional roguish peep abroad—bulged unabashed (or snuggled contentedly, according to your view of it) a negligé shirt, of a pattern much in vogue a decade or two ago, wrapped closely round a collapsible insect net.

It was already growing dusk when I was landed at Queens-ton village and reported at the quiet, old-fashioned boarding-house where my habits and hobbies being known were no longer subject to comment or disconcerting question. After making arrangements for a night or so's lodging and an early start next morning, I strolled out through the gathering dusk in the direction of the woods at the foot of Brock's monument; after turning a little way down a lane skirted by grapevines, I presently became



aware, on all sides, of tiny rustlings in the foliage, prelude to the drowsy hum and blundering flight of shard-borne beetles; a sound familiar enough, and one that should have surely set me down not more than two or three years or 100 miles away—in the school playground, say, Port Hope, at the height of the June-bug season; but there must have been something peculiar in the keynote of this symphony, for it set vibrating a far more distant chord of memory: a little tilt between the mind's deft fingers, one magic turn of the kaleidoscope we call imagination, and on the instant I found myself a schoolboy in a narrow Kentish lane between chestnut trees and hawthorns, watching at dusk for cockchafers and the occasional prize of a stagbeetle soaring out of the hedge-row. I had no net with me, and though I could tell the beetles were larger than June bugs, capture was out of the question, so I turned in for the night.

Next day I was heading towards the Heights before 6 a.m. For some time I stuck to the main road, for the dew was very heavy; but near the Monument Station I sensed unmistakably the neighborhood of a certain fungus, and following my nose like a questing hound, presently spied, by a clump of red cedar, a small colony of what I was in search of—*Ithyphallus impudicus*—"Stink-horns," to use the vulgar and all too expressive name. Two of the horns, already sinking into putrescence, were tenanted by nearly a score of silphids, dark-winged and with reddish margin on the thorax.

From here, as it was too early for the car-service, I tramped up the belt railway towards the Glen; the sides of the track showed plenty of New Jersey Tea, but it was too soon in the day for insect visitors; on some plants of purple vetch I found great numbers of "the old-fashioned Potato-beetle" (*Macrobasis unicolor*) feeding; and a couple of miles further up, when I was within a few rods of the Glen enclosure, it being after seven o'clock, with the sun hot and strong in its course, came gliding out towards me from the shrubbery that fringed the lip of the gorge, a magnificent yellow-banded snake, larger and stouter than any garter snake I had ever seen before; forward he drove with that wonderful motion that, unaided by limbs, yet rivals in grace and mastery of self-control the most perfect athlete's—rigidity and suppleness



combining to create a new and altogether unique form of energy. I stood between the tracks and watched his advance; strong enough, it looked, to overthrow quite a massive obstacle or thrust it aside, yet gently gliding about a blade of grass without bending it, or flowing like oil round the sides of a stone. Not the slightest notice of me did he take, but lay out along the sand within a foot of the rail and basked in the sun. I stepped over to that side of the track and looked down at him; first his head and neck, and then the markings on his back. There was something strange to my eye in the appearance of this garter snake; the broad zig-zag bands of yellow seemed unfamiliar; the colour itself was not the waspy straw yellow I was expecting, but darker in part, almost red-ocre, like a British hornet; I glanced at the tail: one, two, three, four, five naked joints; it was my first rattlesnake. Just then the rumble of an approaching car forced me to step from the tracks; I had no desire to be marooned for even a moment alone with a rattler on a narrow strip of cliff-edge, so I chose the other side of the right-of-way. As soon as the coast was clear, I returned to my scrutiny; the snake had not moved, though the car had lumbered by within a foot of him, out-rattling a thousand of his kind; but he was startled, probably by the vibration of the ground, and almost immediately slid back into the bushes and so (doubtless) down to the ravine. The keepers at the Glen had not seen one all the season and showed surprise, if not annoyance, that I had not killed this fellow. Snakes are none of them aggressive, but the rattler is, I believe, more than ordinarily sluggish; unless cornered or accidentally stepped upon or jostled, he is perfectly harmless, and in cold weather can be picked up and handled with impunity.

In the rich herbage beside one of the paths that led to the flight of wooden stairs I noticed numbers of little chrysomelians feeding, at least three species, two of them black with four yellow or reddish spots on the elytra (2 basal and 2 apical), one of the beetles proving *Bassareus* and the other *Cryptocephalus*; the third species was of a uniform dark-grey and quadrate in outline, apparently *Pachybrachys*.

I had now reached the Glen itself, and proceeded to hobnob for an hour or two with some old cronies among the ferns. It ap-



pears that when the Glen was Foster's Flats, it harboured a few plants of the Holly Fern (*Polystichum lonchitis*), and I had planned to hunt for this plant, first downstream away from all frequented paths, and then upstream towards the whirlpool. After three hours' unavailing search downstream, I descended towards the river bank for another spell of sunshine and entomology.

Here I came upon a thicket of undergrowth—black raspberries in profusion, a tangle of grapevines, clumps of elder, and a sprinkling of basswood. Halting beside one of these last, before wading into the thicket, I let my eye range over the foliage. Presently I saw a sight that set my heart beating, a pair of tiny longicorns basking on a leaf; it was ten years since I had seen the insect—*Eupogonius subarmatus*—and then, though I had captured the only two I saw, one on a basswood log and the other on a leaf overhead, I knew them for the wariest of their kind. Cautiously as I approached, my quarry dropped off the edge of their leaf before I could get within range. I had now little hope of success, for the insect was extremely small and the ground a miniature jungle of rank grass. I stood, however, and watched the place under the leaf very closely, devouring the ground inch by inch, and presently spied the pair resting on a flat slope of stone, and captured them both with little more ado.

Nothing else was to be seen about the lower ranks of foliage on this tree, but when I got round to the side next the sunken stretch of thicket, more basswoods appeared in the open; the raspberries and the rich drapery of sunlit green beckoned imperiously; I looked at my watch; eleven a.m. The hour was auspicious for sun worship—h-h-h-h-m, bz-z-z-z-z-zm; hullo! I thought, service is just going to begin; here comes the clerk. It was *Pelidnota punctata* settling down on a grapevine, but very lively, and, what was more to the point, quite out of reach; indeed, he only stayed long enough to clear up the mystery of the night before and then make off. Without delay I stepped down into the thicket and, with an eye focussed for small creatures on grass and leaves, proceeded to range about this tangled river-glade.

There is a peculiar charm about moving cautiously through sun-lit spaces or standing at gaze like a pointer on the still hunt for tiny game in the all but breathless glare of July heat. It



takes a trained eye to render visible the sadder-hued and more sluggish forms of all this multitudinous insect life, but it was not long before I began to realize that the wilderness of my choice, so far from being a desert, was a thronging conventicle of fellow sun-worshippers. It was, I recall, while slowly poring over the surface of a tall and stately teasle, from the heart of a neighbouring berry patch, that I spied one of the first members of this congregation. At first I took it for a large yellow-and-brown-banded hymenopter, the velvety sheen of its elytra giving the effect of shimmering wings, but under the lens of my unwavering stare it soon steadied into the form of *Bellamira scalaris*, the first I had ever seen alive; unfortunately it had not come to stay through the service, for hardly had I shaken free from some clinging ropes of thimbleberry vine, than I saw the coveted object hurry to the edge of his perch and soar away into the air, translated from my gaze like some beatific vision into the empyreal vast. Possession is nine points of the law, but of entomology it seemed just then to a beetle-fancier the one and only point worth naming in his whole avocation.

My disappointment was quite keen and lasted for a long time; even now the recollection rouses a fresh pang, as an old wound will throb anew in bad weather. But other sights and better luck (both abundant that day) soon drove all this into the background. Before I left the thicket I had captured one specimen of *Oberea bimaculata* (resting, for a wonder, on the *upper* side of his raspberry leaf), one specimen of *Plagionotus speciosus*, and seven specimens of *Desmocerus palliatus*, always on the under side of the foliage of elder, usually early elder, whose blossom, long over, had been replaced by clusters of crimson berries. What a magnificent insect the Knotty Cloak is! with his gleaming wing-covers of Prussian blue based with bright yellow; unfortunately, his colours fade; cabinet specimens become actually dingy in the course of years, the yellow in particular losing all its vividness.

At the edge of the thicket, before emerging, I glanced up into a large basswood and noticed a pale yellow object apparently about the size of a cecropia moth depending from an upper leaf; it had not the thin, shrivelled serenity of dead foliage, but, whatever it was, it hardly bent the leaf or its stalk where it hung. Suddenly remembering that I had an insect net with a three-jointed handle



in my pocket, I drew it out and fitting it together scooped the enigma into the silken bag, where it writhed and struggled with moth-like flutterings; it was a tiny bat.

High up on the same tree I now spotted (in its favorite attitude) another specimen of *Eupogonius subarmatus* and conceived the happy idea of utilizing the creature's instinct of escape to secure its capture. It evidently loved to sit up on the spacious platform of a linden leaf and "take the sun"; when approached it would nearly always run (or roll) to the edge of its resting-place and drop over; all I had to do was to hold the net well under its perch and then jar the insect into activity. This went like clockwork, and I spent two or three hours in systematic search about bass-wood foliage. Blatchley does not mention the linden among the creature's food plants, but I took over a dozen specimens that day of *Eupogonius subarmatus*; they were all found basking on linden leaves, and, with a single exception, on being approached, they all launched themselves obligingly into the captivity of my insect net.

It was nearly three p.m. when I decided to make a trip beyond the paths, upstream, in search of the Holly Fern; I first made my way to the last drinking fountain in the Glen, a lovely cold spring that wells out from the base of a giant block of limestone. Here as I turned away refreshed, I saw dangling in an old spider's web—dead but undamaged, and surely a most unusual victim of those silken meshes—the large and handsome longicorn, *Tylonotus bimaculatus*, the only specimen I have ever taken.

From now on I was a botanist, and though I saw no signs of the Holly Fern, I had the good luck to find a little colony—three or four plants—of Ebony Spleenwort in a grove of hemlock and cedar. Altogether, it was with great reluctance and a fast-declining sun that at last I tore myself away from the Glen and took the car to the monument. Here I spent two hours searching for a wood where report had whispered to me of the Broad-leaved Beech Fern. It was, thus, already dusk when, in spite of the very doubtful clue, I brought my search to a successful close and returned to my lodgings, tired but determined to have one more look in the morning for the apocryphal and probably long extinct Holly Fern of Foster's Flats.



Next day, in order to leave lots of room for my pocket lunch as well as to compel constancy in my fern-search, I most foolishly burned my entomological boats by leaving my cyanide bottle behind. I spent all morning upstream working towards the whirlpool in a vain and tiring (or was it untiring?) search for *Polystichum lonchitis*, and at last about noon gave it up, went again to commune with my little colony of Ebony Spleenwort, and then began my homeward walk along the track.

Here I made a most exciting discovery: the New Jersey Tea blossoms, that early in the morning were quite untenanted and seemed to have lost their fragrance, were crowded with eager guests in the bright sunshine. There is no plant, in my experience, so attractive to beetles as *Ceanothus americana*, and I have a long list of its guests in the shape of captures made on its blossoms; these were mostly of the *Leptura* and *Typocerus* genera of Longicorn, but only a few days before I had added a new find among Scarabs, *Macroductylus subspinosus*, just because the New Jersey Tea was in a new locality; and no matter how old and familiar a blossom is, I always search it carefully in hopes of new finds, if I am in a new district.

But alas! I had no collecting-bottle, nothing but a handkerchief and my Colgate's drinking cup. For some little time I made no discovery beyond a variety (or possibly a new species) of *Trichius*, and soon the four corners of my handkerchief were knotted over specimens of this beetle and the whole handkerchief was redolent of the strangely sweet—if pungent—scent the insect releases on capture—some of the tiger-beetles emit a similar volatile essence with the same sweet but searching odour.

I was about a mile from the Glen when I happened on the first new beetle banqueting in the Tea blossoms—not only a new species, but a new genus; its extremely attenuate outline could belong to nothing but *Strangalia*, and *Strangalia* it proved to be, *Strangalia luteicornis*. It was a happy entomologist, I can tell you, who fitted the stopper of his drinking-cup over that jejune little atomy, and a most unhappy entomologist who had to open the same a score of times and coax a new capture in before any of the inmates found an exit. Handling a basket of snakes, or driving a pig to market would be child's play to that problem. But though



I lost two or three of the entire bag, it was a great catch that I emptied out into my cyanide bottle as soon as I got home: three *Strangalia luteicornis*, four *Leptura subhamata* (all ♂), six *Leptura cordifera*, two *Leptura dehiscens*, and one *Toxotus cylindricollis*, besides not a few specimens of *Trichius*, *Typocerus* and *Leptura* that I had taken occasionally before.

Two days' sun-bath and about 30 hours of revelling among ferns, flowers and insects had made a new man of me, and now, as I lay down the pen with which I have tried to call out of the past the spirit of my trip, dipping deep in the ink-well of memory, it is my most ardent desire to repeat it all in the body next July, and following the lure of *Bellamira*, *Tylonotus*, or *Strangalia*, make one more rare new capture.

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#### ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF ONTARIO.

The 53rd Annual Meeting of the Society will be held at its headquarters in the Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph, on Thursday and Friday, November 2nd and 3rd, and will be presided over by Mr. Albert F. Winn, President (Westmount, P. Q.).

A popular lecture will be given on the Thursday evening in Massey Hall by Dr. L. O. Howard, Chief of the U. S. Bureau of Entomology, Washington, D. C.

It is hoped that the members of the Society will endeavour to be present. Subscribers to the "Canadian Entomologist" are cordially invited to attend and to present papers. Members and visitors will be entertained at luncheon in the College Dining Hall at the noon hour each day.

The Secretary will be greatly obliged if members and others will send him the titles of papers they wish to present (stating the length of time required for reading) as soon as they can, in order that the programme may be prepared in due time; it will also be a convenience if members and visitors will notify him a few days before the meeting of their intention to be present.

A. W. BAKER,  
Secretary.

Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph.





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