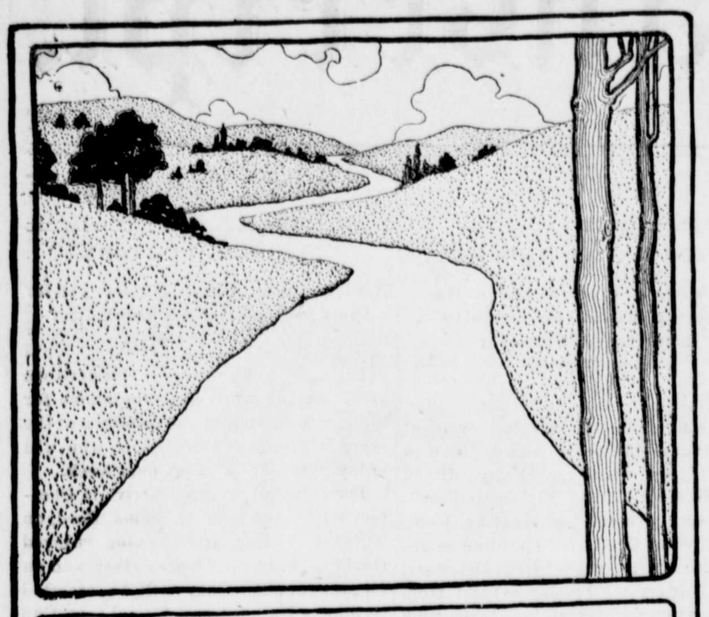

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January 20, 1900. Melitota, Kent Co., Md.

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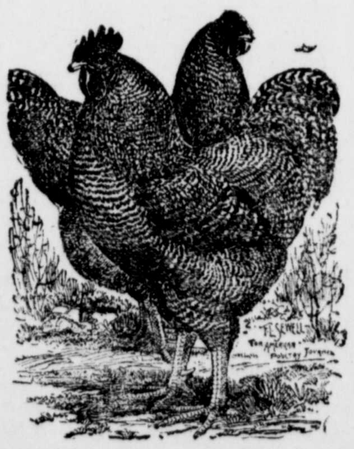

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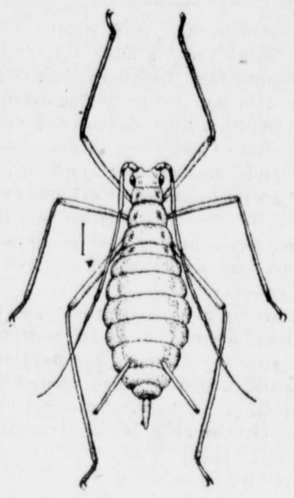
THE PEA LOUSE.

Some of the Secret History of This Insect and Her Natural Enemies.

The destructive green pea louse has been known less than one year. It was first discovered and reported to me May 18, 1899. My first observations upon it were made May 24. From that time to the present I have had it under constant observation and have its life history practically complete. The adult insect is small, being about an eighth of an inch in length. Its color is green, conforming very closely to that of the pea plant. There are two forms of the female represented by wingless and winged individuals. Both these forms are shown in the accompanying illustrations. No male has ever been found, and we infer from our general knowledge of this group that none exists. It is a case of parthenogenesis, or reproduction by budding without a male. This is not uncommon in the insect world, especially among plant lice. A glance at the illustrations will give one an idea of the general structure of these insects. Their legs are long and slender and the two tube-like objects projecting back from the upper and hinder part of the body are honey tubes. From these the lice exude a sweetish liquid known as honey dew. Ants are particularly fond of this honey dew and attend various species of plant lice for the sole purpose of securing the sweet liquid, very much in the same manner as we care for our cows for the milk they produce.



WINGLESS PEA LOUSE.

There may be winged and wingless individuals in the same brood of lice; for instance, if a dozen are born to-day, eight of them will develop wings, flight, and thus spread the species over wide areas. A single winged female may start 25 or 30 colonies, not remaining on a plant longer than one day. On the other hand the wingless females remain on the original plant and as a consequence soon stock it with lice so as to cover the terminal growing tip, thus stunting and dwarfing the development of the plant.

ITS WINTER QUARTERS

We inferred one year ago that clover was probably the natural and native food plant of this louse, but could not prove this by actual observation last year. We did, however, colonize the lice upon clover plants in flower pots and kept it breeding for a long time in that manner. We were convinced that it could live upon clover and predicted that clover would eventually prove its winter abiding place. Such has proven true. In one instance this spring the louse destroyed 20 acres of clover in Charles county, and we have found it more or less abundant in every clover field examined this spring. After the peas are cut the lice go back to clover, feeding until late fall or even all winter. They winter in the adult and mature form, down in the thick clusters of both red and crimson clover. Some persons think that they would be destroyed by cold, but such is not the case. No doubt adverse weather conditions will destroy many lice, but ordinarily they resist cold very well. For example, I might state that a colony on peas in my laboratory under observation, were frozen solid December 23. The plants were killed and the lice were like little balls of ice. I was almost certain that I had lost all "my treasure." However, I was hopeful and supplied the little frozen lice with a fresh pea plant from our green house where I was forcing them. To my amazement the same little frozen creatures were caring for their newly born children December 28. Other colonies were frozen at intervals during the winter, and in all cases revived when the weather moderated. We found the mothers producing living young on January 27, in the open field back of the the U. S. Department Agricultural building in Washington. I should have said in the beginning that these pests are not produced from eggs, as in the case of most insects, but the young are born alive.

HOW THEY FEED.

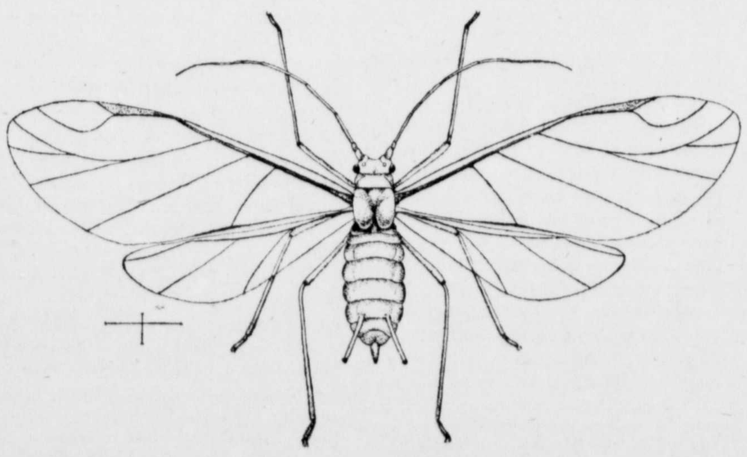
These insects so not eat a leaf like a grasshopper or potato bettle, but obtain their food by sucking the sap or juices. Its mouth is composed by a long lance-like beak which it inserts into the tissues of the plant, drawing its nourishment in that manner. Such materials as Paris green, London purple and the like would have no effect on these insects. They could stick their beak through a layer of Paris green and not be injured in the least. They must be destroyed by the use of soap solutions, tobacco decoction, kerosene emulsion, etc. This material does not kill them except where it touches them. They breathe through little openings along the sides of their bodies and not through their mouths. The otl or soap actually smothers them by closing up their breathing organs.

HOW THEY PRODUCE.

As stated above the young are born alive. The female reaches maturity in from 12 to 15 days after birth and begins to produce living young. As an illustration of the productiveness of one of these pests, let us consider the following facts recorded from the study of a single louse born March 4. She reached maturity March 16 and four days later gave birth to 12 young; in other words at the age of 16 days she was mother of 12 children. The following day she gave birth to 11, the next day 8, and continued to produce daily until April 17 when one was born, and the mother died. She was at that time the mother of 111 and had grandchildren almost beyond computation. I had a friend of considerable mathematical ability attempt to figure out her progeny and when he reached 1,777,480 he decided he would be obliged to have more time and paper to get the exact figure. The first young one of the old lady described above was placed on a plant on March 19, reached ma-

(Continued on Third Page.)

Syrphus fly and its young feeding upon pea louse. a, pupa; b, adult fly; c, worm enlarged; d, worm feeding on louse; e, a natural enemy of the Syrphus larva c. (All the drawings are by Prof. W. G. Johnson.)



WINGED PEA LOUSE.

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