

Horticulture.

THE GYPSY MOTH IN MASSACHUSETTS.

How One of the Most Dangerous Pests Was Introduced—Millions Spent in Fighting It.

BY J. F. CASS.

The story of the march and dissemination of the gypsy moth in Massachusetts is an interesting one. How that from a half-dozen eggs of the moth accidentally blown out from the window of a naturalist in the town of Genowood, and who had brought over a few of the insects from Europe in the line of work as an experiment in silk culture, and which has thrived and spread in the adjoining region until it has threatened to destroy entirely the trees and shrubbery encountered in its resistless pathway. And that now, as told in a recent article in the New York Times, after the expenditure of \$1,000,000 in the last few years in the effort to exterminate or hold in check, the end is not yet in sight. That state has lately made another annual appropriation of \$150,000 with which to fight the moth. The first work of the kind was done in 1893, and has been continued each year since, and until it is not sure in the estimation of some, but that "the remedy is worse than the disease."

The gypsy moth itself, either in its larval state (the caterpillar) or as a winged insect, in its general appearance, might not occasion any particular attention and pass as one of the common tree or tent caterpillar class of insects, its color markings being different to some extent, however. Its presence in Massachusetts did not attract much notice for several years, when the exceedingly voracious habits of this variety of leaf-eating insect led to the recognition of its dangerous character. Unlike the common tree and tent caterpillar, which is destructive to the foliage of a limited number of the deciduous and fruit bearing trees, it is not particular in its feeding habits—either as to the extent or variety of forage demanded. It feeds upon the leaves of all the cultivated and common—both evergreen and deciduous—varieties and species of shrub and tree growth almost without exception, and also vegetables and other plants of economic importance; so that not only were the orchards, farm crops and gardens of the old Bay State liable to become destroyed, but also the ornamental and forest tree growth, as well.

The gypsy moth is not more difficult to keep in check, perhaps, nor is it more quickly spread over a large extent of country, than the other and more common varieties of the caterpillar kind. The females of the gypsy moth, though winged, do not fly. So that their power of locomotion and of spreading in their

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native habitat are somewhat limited. This wise provision of nature (for such it seems to be), however, in the semi-artificial conditions and environments found in their new home on this side of the Atlantic, is interfered with. Passing vehicles on the public streets and roads it has been found, were a large means of causing their wide distribution. One of the insects could thus be transported for miles, and in a few seasons thoroughly infest a considerable section of country. One of the branches of work of the Gypsy Moth Commission of Massachusetts is in the nature of special police inspection of passing vehicles, so that the dreaded insect may not be carried out of the infested district in that way.

It is easily conceivable how that were such an enemy and gregarious and destroyer of tree and vegetable life to remain unchecked for an indefinite period whole widely extended districts of country would eventually be converted into mere treeless plains, and with all the other attendant evils following. Yet nature, surely, always in its own perfect way makes provision wisely for the prevention of such a calamity. "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther," is the word never disputed. While in its most prosperous career the enemy of nature's economy is struck down through the attack of some disease condition, and the balance and natural order of things is again properly restored. In both the vegetable and animal kingdoms this natural life regulating and restoring power and principle is often very plainly observable. It often occurs that this form of insect will go on steadily increasing from year to year until its ravages would seem to threaten the most serious destruction of vegetable growth over large districts of country, when again the tide turns and it passes away and leaves little trace behind, for a time, of its existence.

Tacoma, Wash.

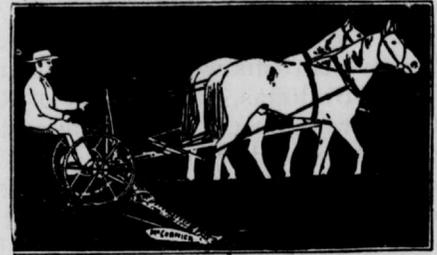
FRUIT CROP PROSPECTS.

FROM IDAHO.

EDITOR RANCHE AND RANGE: The fruit prospects are fine for this section of Idaho. Some orchards are reported as having a light yield; but on the whole there is going to be the largest crop of fruit in the history of the Potlatch country. Peaches are a full crop; apricots, about one half; prunes (principally Italians are grown here) are loaded and should be thinned; cherries are a good crop; apples and pears, over loaded. The November freeze did no material damage, except to sweet cherries and strawberries. Royal Ann trees are badly injured and a great many strawberry plants were killed. Crops of all kinds are doing well. Early cherries are ripe and strawberries are coming in freely. Peanuts do well here, and some are looking extra fine this year. E. P. SMITH.

Juliaetta, Idaho, June 1.

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