

## ABUNDANCE OF THE COTTON MOTH IN ONTARIO.

BY ARTHUR GIBSON.

In the Province of Ontario there occurs periodically, in autumn, conspicuous flights of the southern Cotton Moth, *Aletia argillacea*. During September, 1911, an extraordinary flight of these moths was observed in Western Ontario. Mr. W. A. Dent, of Sarnia, Ont., reports that on the evening of September 15th "these moths arrived at Sarnia in countless numbers, for underneath the electric lights in various parts of the town, the ground was covered several inches deep, and for a space of several yards in diameter with their bodies." At St. Thomas, Ont., immense swarms of the moths were also present and attracted a good deal of attention. Mr. S. J. English reported that on September 30th "they were in heaps all along the principal street—Talbot Street—and in other parts of the city." Similar flights were also observed in the United States. In *Science*, Oct. 13th, 1911, Dr. H. T. Fernald reports that the moths were rather abundant, during the last week in September, at Amherst, Mass., and Dr. Henry Skinner, in *Entomological News*, Nov., 1911, states that "from September 23rd to 26th, Philadelphia experienced a large flight of the Cotton Moth, *Aletia argillacea*. They swarmed in some parts of the city and hundreds were resting head down on the electric light poles and on plate glass windows of stores. There were many thousands of them and nearly all that I saw were in perfect condition as though just from the chrysalis. These moths are known to migrate in numbers, but it is quite strange if the great numbers seen here came from the cotton districts in the south. The moths in some places appeared to create considerable alarm, people thinking they would cause damage to plant life here."

The occurrence of this moth in noticeable numbers in Canada is by no means rare, but its appearance during the past autumn in such excessive numbers, as observed in widespread districts, is indeed remarkable. In September last the moths were present in the Ottawa district, but were not abundant. In other years they have, however, been very common in this latter locality. In 1887, Dr. C. J. S. Bethune records \* the moths as having occurred in large numbers at Port Hope, Ont., on October 7th to 10th. During the same year they were abundant at Ottawa, when on October 10th, Mr. W. H. Harrington saw at least 250 or 300 upon the front of the Bank of Ottawa building, opposite Parliament Square. During the same year immense

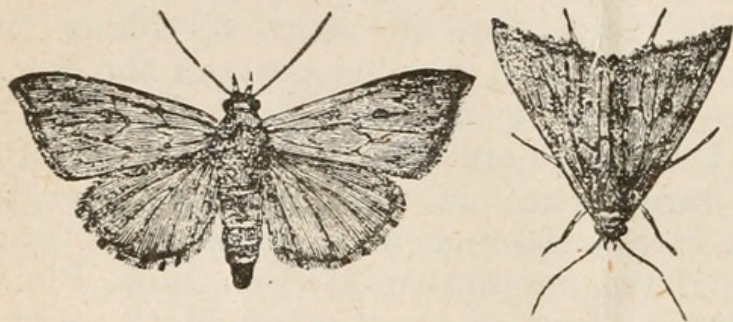
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\*Eighteenth Annual Report, Entomological Society of Ontario.



swarms appeared at Hamilton on October 7th. In the year 1903, on October 5th and 8th, the late Dr. Fletcher and the writer when "sugaring" for noctuid moths, at the Central Experimental Farm, collected many specimens of this moth which had been attracted to the trees upon which the "bait" had been applied.

The fact that these moths migrate to Ontario in autumn from the Southern States is most interesting. The remarkable thing too, is that large numbers of the specimens are in such perfect condition, that one wonders how the moths make such long flights without in some way damaging themselves. Their wings, however, are very closely-scaled, so can withstand considerable knocking about.



THE COTTON MOTH, (AFTER RILEY).

The figure herewith shows the Cotton Moth, with the wings spread, and also illustrates its habit of resting with its head downward. In colour it is brownish-yellow with a purplish sheen. On the front wings are indistinct wavy transverse lines and

near the centre of each a conspicuous dark spot, paler in the middle.

The caterpillars of this moth have caused enormous losses in the cotton fields of the south. Before the year 1873, annual losses from the ravages of the Cotton Worm amounted to millions of dollars, in fact in certain years of general prevalence of the worm, the loss totalled as high as \$30,000,000. Since the above year, however, the insect has been kept largely under control by a change in cultural methods and the use of Paris green and other arsenical poisons. The caterpillars are, therefore, not now, nor have they been for some years, a serious factor in cotton growing.

## THE NATURE OF PARASITIC FUNGI AND THEIR INFLUENCE UPON THE HOST PLANT.

BY H. T. GUSSOW, DOMINION BOTANIST, OTTAWA.

By far the largest number of fungi causing plant diseases are of microscopic character, hence I will confine my remarks exclusively to this large enough group. The average fruitgrower's and the average farmer's acquaintance with microscopic fungi,

Have you seen it here?



Gibson, Arthur. 1911. "Abundance of the Cotton Moth in Ontario." *The Ottawa naturalist* 25(9), 129–130.

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