WASP STORING KATYKIDS IN A WELL

By E. S. Tucker, Bureau of Entomology, U. S. Dept. of Agric.

Two years ago in August a correspondent at Osage City, Kansas, sent me some specimens of a narrow-winged katydid, which were identified as *Scudderia curvicauda* De G., and in his letter he stated that they had been drawn up in a bucket of water from a well 30 to 35 feet deep, where the insects were floating. A few days before these bodies were taken he had observed a large black wasp in the act of carrying one of the same kind of katydids into the well and saw the wasp drag its prey into a cranny of the rocks, about a yard below the surface of the ground. No definite description of the wasp was given further than that it was over an inch long and "slender-waisted." One or two torpid katydids were seen lying on the very edge of rocks in the wall near the spot where the above example had been stored away, from which position any of the bodies might easily slip and fall off into the water below. The number of bodies floating in the well had been increasing during the week until twenty or thirty were visible. In the meantime some of them, probably a dozen specimens, had been drawn up in buckets of water and thrown away. One of these specimens evinced faint indications of life by movements of its mouthparts.

The question was asked if these bodies showed signs of having been stung and if eggs had been laid upon them by the wasp. To prove that the bodies were stung, the act of stinging must be witnessed, and since the specimens had become partly macerated, no evidence of eggs could be detected, though there remained no doubt, judging from the habits of rapacious wasps, that the katydids had been stung when captured, and the wasp's intent upon storing them would naturally be for the purpose of depositing an egg in a safe place with each body.

Having concluded that the wasp had appropriated the well as her rightful property, the correspondent wanted to know if she intended to stock the crannies of the wall with paralyzed katydids so that her progeny when hatched from the eggs laid with these stored bodies could be reared upon them. In such a case, he asked if a host of wasps would likely hatch out soon as perfect insects. A brief explanation of the life history of robber-wasps was given in reply. However, as the matter stood, the bodies of katydids which fell into the water became decomposed and rendered the water objectionable for use on account of danger of pollution. According to the owner's statement, this trouble had never happened before to his knowledge, at least within fifteen years. He had already considered the advisabil-
ity of cleaning out the bodies of the insects in order to keep the water pure. The wasp, of course, should be caught and killed to prevent further introduction of bodies into the well.

My desire to obtain the specimen if possible and know definitely what kind of wasp was doing the work led to further correspondence, which brought the information that unsuccessful attempts had been made to capture a specimen because the insect was exceedingly wary, although two wasps then frequented the well. They were mentioned as being the largest black kind of solitary digger-wasp common to the country. They flew very swiftly and were seen to alight only when they entered the well. Shortly after the receipt of this communication the correspondent visited me and pointed out in a collection of insects the wasp known as *Proterosphex pennsylvanica* L., which he positively declared was the kind that came to the well.

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**NOTES ON ASPIDIOTUS DESTRUCTOR (SIG.) AND ITS CHALCID PARASITE IN TAHITI**

By R. W. Doane, Stanford University

For many years the Transparent Cocoanut Scale, *A. destructor* Sig., has been an important enemy of the cocoanut and other palms in many parts of the tropics. During the last few years it has been doing particular damage to the cocoanut trees in the Society Islands. On some of these islands many of the trees have been killed and others so badly affected that they bear no nuts. On some of the coral islands the conditions are still so bad that practically no crop is gathered. On Tahiti and some of the more important of the other islands, plantations that a few years ago were yielding no nuts are now in full bearing again and the trees are looking fine and thrifty. In the interests of one of the planters I visited these islands last summer to study the conditions that controlled the appearance and disappearance of this pest. None of the planters has any idea of when the insect was introduced there, but few of them, in fact, realize that it is an insect that is causing the so-called "blight" on their trees. But as it is now common on practically all of the South Sea islands it probably found its way into the Society Islands very early, as Tahiti is a central point, from which ships come and go to all south Pacific ports. A few years ago it must have begun increasing very rapidly. I was told that in Tahiti the "blight" was so bad and spread so rapidly from one part to another that it seemed that all the trees would be destroyed. At one time so many of the plantations were affected, par-

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