

# IF INSECTS WERE BIGGER.

By J. H. KERNER-GREENWOOD.

In the following article the insects and the scenes represented are from actual photographs.



WE are (save a few contented ones) so apt to be perpetually complaining of the disadvantages and drawbacks of life that we hardly even stop to realize how much more severe and discouraging mundane conditions might be. Suppose the temperature of a really hot day were two hundred degrees Fahrenheit in the shade, instead of a paltry eighty-five or ninety! Or one hundred below zero on a wintry one! Then we might really complain if hailstones were of the size and shape of cannon-balls, and it hailed twice a week.

Or take our insect pests. What a terrible calamity, what a stupefying circumstance, if mosquitoes were the size of camels, and a herd of wild slugs the size of elephants invaded our gardens and had to be shot with rifles, unless Maxim guns were to be employed for the purpose! Truly, in these respects we

are a lucky race, living under almost ideal conditions.

It is true we are still molested by hordes of wild animals of bloodthirsty propensities. These wild animals only lack the single quality—namely, that of size—to render them all-powerful and all-desolating, and this quality they have not been able to attain owing to the lack of favouring conditions.

How easily it might be otherwise. Suppose, for example, that a few yards from the office of this Magazine, in Covent Garden Market, a terrible Puss-moth larva were to have escaped from his cage or his keeper—if, indeed, he were not to have developed into gigantic proportions in a single night—what a panic would be caused!

How the irate grower of tomatoes and grapes, when offered a price that would not pay the carriage of his precious freight from Worthing to Covent Garden, thinks with envy

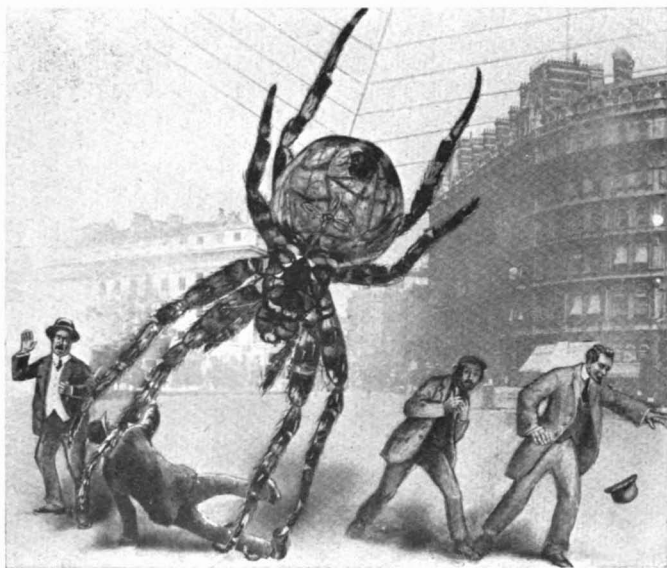


TERRIBLE ATTACK BY A LARVA OF THE PUSS-MOTH AT COVENT GARDEN.

of the Puss-moth, who, when alarmed or angered, ejects a fluid of an acrid character on its tormentors, and, taking a tip from the insect, seizes a syringe and, plunging it into the tank of an adjacent motor, proceeds to likewise wreak his vengeance. In the first illustration of this article we see the larva of the Puss-moth in a belligerent mood. No wonder the spectators cower back in terror before such a repellent monster.

One day we will imagine London to have been startled by the sudden visitation of a monster *Araneus diadema*, somewhat larger

brain through colliding with an electrically-driven engine. Yet the *Araneus diadema* has frequently been seen in the neighbourhood of Trafalgar Square. It is easy to imagine them hiding themselves in their silken cells spun amongst the leaves of the plane trees that adorn the Square; or hidden in the stones of the classic front of St. Martin's Church. Only instead of being twenty or thirty feet in diameter, the spider with the foregoing name is but half an inch or so from head to tail, which, as I said before, ought to be regarded as a great mercy to mankind.



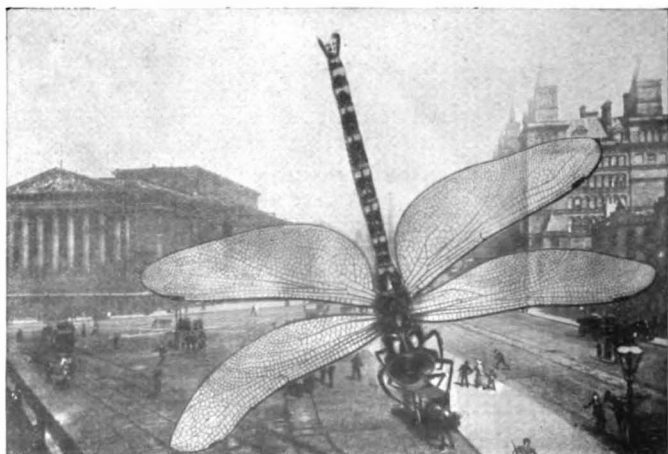
THE ARANEUS DIADEMA SPIDER DESCENDS UPON TRAFALGAR SQUARE.

than a mammoth, which, descending upon Trafalgar Square, seized a number of pedestrians in its jaws, and, having hastily dispatched them, proceeded to knock over a couple of the Landseer lions, under the impression that they were animated by hostile feelings, overturned a motor-bus, and, after doing as much damage above-ground as possible, insinuated itself into the Trafalgar Square station of the Underground Railway, where it became wedged in the tube, and was finally dispatched by concussion of the

Then we may easily fancy ourselves reading of the tragedy of the *Dermapteron* which one fine night tore out of St. James's Park, and for twelve hours held the fort at St. James's Palace until a regiment of soldiers succeeded in giving the grim monster his quietus. But at what cost! Eighty and more citizens and soldiers lay dead or mortally wounded at the bottom of Pall Mall. And the *Dermapteron* is not an imaginary insect, springing from the brain of Mr. Kipling or Mr. H. G. Wells, but our



FERCE ONSLAUGHT BY AN EARWIG IN ST. JAMES'S STREET.



A DRAGON-FLY CAPTURES AN UNSUSPECTING FOUR-WHEELER IN LIVERPOOL.

old familiar friend the earwig. A nocturnal insect is the earwig, with curved forceps at the end of its tail. They do not fly by day, but are very wide awake indeed at night, taking food and committing their depredations, as every gardener will tell you.

Can one not conjure up these headlines in the newspapers: "Gigantic Dragon-Fly at Liverpool. Seizes a Four-Wheeled Cab, with Cabman and Horse, and Vanishes. Consternation of Inhabitants." And there is

There is one deadly foe to mankind the tidings of whose arrival would strike terror into the hearts of the most callous. Imagine a gigantic mosquito, hovering like an aeroplane over Piccadilly, dropping its eggs into the lake in St. James's Park or into the cisterns from which we drink, multiplying itself a hundredfold. Such a phenomenon strikes terror to the most intrepid imagination. The mosquito is bad enough in its uniform minute state. In India



EXPLOITS OF A HOUSE-FLY AT THE BANK OF ENGLAND.

nothing to prevent the dragon-fly from acquitting itself of this predatory exploit save the lack of physical proportions.

Nobody dreams of informing his neighbour that a *Musca domestica* was seen at the Bank of England, because there are millions of house-flies in the vicinity; but if he happened to mention that this particular *Musca* was somewhat larger than the late lamented Jumbo, one can well believe the horror and alarm such a statement would occasion. But when an animal so vicious on so small a scale as that in which it is familiar to us is enlarged to the size of an elephant it can readily be conceived how tremendous the destruction it would occasion.

men, women, and children die from the terrible disease which we call malaria at the rate of five millions a year. Deaths at that rate in London would leave not a soul alive in our great capital in little more than twelve months. So that the female gnat, or moth, is sufficiently alarming without being constructed on a scale rivalling that of the legend of the Arabian roc.

Some of us have envied that exception to the rule, the contented farmer, who runs the model farm at Grantham, and whose barley has been so much prized by its late purchasers. Who knows how much of his success he owes to his friend the grasshopper



PANIC CAUSED BY A MOSQUITO IN PICCADILLY CIRCUS.

for eating up those foes to his crops and many other harmful insects? Unlike the locust, whose ears are under its stomach, the ears of the grasshopper are placed at the sides of its two front legs, and it makes its loud chirp by rubbing its rough spiny wings one

against another. The male insect alone emits this sound, in this way calling its mate. The female gives the best reply by answering it in person. It is hard to believe the slim, graceful grasshopper belongs to the same family as that big, fat, nasty insect, the



A LEVIATHAN GRASSHOPPER'S ARRIVAL IN PRINCES STREET, EDINBURGH.

black beetle. The sudden apparition of a mammoth grasshopper in Princes Street, Edinburgh, would be a sight calculated to stir the apathy of the most stolid Scot.

The lacewing fly, as my readers are aware, is a small, delicate insect with long and richly-veined wings of a tender green colour, like that of the body. Its antennæ are long

pits and remaining stationary they rove about in search of their prey, which consists of the different kinds of green fly and plant lice.

From this description we may surmise that were a lacewing fly to spring suddenly into magnified existence somewhere—say in the neighbourhood of the Lyceum Theatre, not



A LACEWING FLY SPREADS CONSTERNATION IN WELLINGTON STREET.

and tapering, and its prominent eyes shine like hemispheres of gold. The larvæ of the lacewings are not unlike the antlion, although somewhat longer and narrower in proportion to the size of their bodies, and less hairy. Their mandibles, moreover, have no teeth on the inner side. In their carnivorous habits they resemble ant-lions, but instead of making

magnified as we see it under a microscope, but a millionfold, the size of a monster alligator—the consequences, besides creating the utmost panic and alarm common to every cab accident, might be of a very serious nature, if they were seized with an appetite for walking gentlemen, chorus “ladies,” or even the harmless, necessary supernumerary.