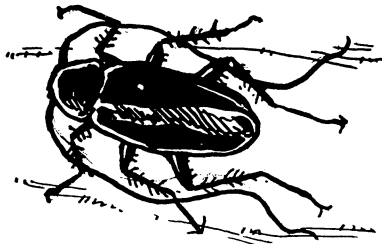


NATURE RAMBLINGS by Frank Thone

ENTOMOLOGY



Champion Conservatives

ISN'T IT ODD how long insects have been in the world without undergoing any essential changes!

Compared with the insects, man is a parvenu, and all his mammalian kin are creatures of yesterday. There is a pretty clear certainty that human beings have inhabited the earth for at least 50,000 years, and there is evidence enough to justify conjecture that he has been here 500,000 years or more. The very earliest and most primitive of mammals, little mouse-sized, opossum-like things, lived in the days of the dinosaurs, say 100,000,000 years back. But insects were abundant in the coal age, which is three times that far away in time, and they existed even earlier.

Not only that, but the coal age insects were essentially the same as some forms that exist today. Coal age cockroaches and dragonflies, for example, are easily recognizable as such, though some of them were giants. There were cockroaches bigger than mice, and dragonflies with bodies a foot long. Nevertheless, cockroaches and dragonflies they were, and in all the time they have had to evolve into something radically different they are cockroaches and dragonflies still.

To be sure, there are many species of insects new since that long-ago time, but even the most advanced of them, the fly-mosquito and wasp-ant families, practically finished their evolution while the mammals were still fairly boiling over with new life-forms, and long before any creature that could be called even pre-human appeared on the scene. In the amber found in the sands of the Baltic there are embalmed mosquitoes and ants that are identical with species now living. And these embalmed insects can count their ages in

millions of years against mere scores of thousands for man and the animals with which man is most familiar.

This conservatism of the insects may have some bearing on the endless warfare between man and the swarming six-legged world that was here so long before him. Several factors determine victory in any war: relative numbers and strengths of the opponents, their persistence against each other, their intelligence and adaptability. In the mankind-insect war, the insects have the advantage of numbers and speed of recruiting, for most insects breed very fast. Insects also have terrific persistence. But that same persistence is in itself an index to the vast psychological chasm that yawns between man and the insect world. Insects do marvellous things by what we call, for lack of a more explicit word, "instinct";

PSYCHOLOGY

Shoppers Choose Dresses In Average Time of 15 Minutes

SCIENCE has been watching women shoppers buying dresses. After watching 200 women customers trying on dresses or "just looking," Esther K. Thor, home economics student at the University of Wisconsin, has emerged with a string of observation and some practical suggestions.

A joint report by Miss Thor and Dr. May L. Cowles, in the *Journal of Home Economics*, states that for each dress purchased the average customer tries on five dresses. Fifteen dresses was the largest number tried on.

Miss Thor, who acted as aid to the shop saleswomen during the experiment, found that no less than half the dresses purchased required alteration to make them fit. This alteration problem caused many women to decide not to buy after they tried on a dress.

Other observations made by Miss Thor are:

Half the women with shopping companions consulted them about the dresses. Some women asked advice from the saleswoman or observer. But only three women brought men along on the dress hunt.

Customers showed little interest in learning trade names either for materials or colors.

Judging by comments, over half the

customers considered the fit of a dress the most important factor in its suitability. Prices were uppermost in the shoppers' minds. Seventy-one of the 200 women shoppers definitely declared at the start the price they wished to pay. And all but one of these chose a dress of that price. Over half the women who bought dresses completed their selection in 15 minutes or less. Only two customers dragged out the job to over an hour. Miss Thor advocates that customers be more specific in telling saleswomen why they decide against a given dress. This information would help the retailer, and indirectly the manufacturer, to gauge consumer demand and would in the long run lead to more satisfactory products, she declares. She also advocates that manufacturers and retailers should investigate reasons why dresses do not fit, and should consider more carefully the sizes needed for their clientele. The dependence that women customers put on the judgment of saleswomen and companions shows that saleswomen, and women customers too, should learn the basic principles of clothing selection and design, the investigator declares.

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In the 28 year fight that has been waged on the gypsy moth in this country, some 50 kinds of wasps, beetles and other possible moth enemies have been tried as attackers.