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### LADYBIRD THREATENS AMERICA

#### FOOD AND FERTILISERS RUINED BY A BEETLE

Army of Destroyers Marching and Flying North

#### SCIENCE SEARCHING FOR A REMEDY

America is in the throes of a war more bitter than any fight with human foes.

Her battle with the insect pests that are invading her land from all sides grows fiercer and fiercer, and she is undoubtedly fighting with her back to the wall in defence of her homes and people.

"If the insects stopped fighting among themselves," says a famous scientist, "they would wipe us off the face of the earth;" and the recent experiences of America certainly go to support this astounding statement.

The latest menace is the bean ladybird, an oval beetle a third of an inch long, that has marched and flown into the United States from Mexico, and appears to be doing for the bean crop what the cotton boll weevil is doing for the cotton crop.

#### A Dangerous Bandit

The position is really extremely serious. This ladybird is a bandit of the first magnitude, and the future of the bean in the U.S.A. is regarded with the greatest concern. Already entire plantations in Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Western Kansas have been destroyed, and the army is still advancing north.

The bean ladybird is not affected by climate. In the pupa stage it hibernates through the winter, and, although it comes from warm Mexico, it can survive temperatures far below freezing point. As soon as the beans are up and flourishing in the fields out of the pupa stage comes the ladybird and begins to feed on the leaves, at the same time laying eggs in large clusters on the undersides, where they and the larvae that hatch out are very difficult to detect.

#### Tiny Insect's Amazing Gluttony

In this way they multiply amazingly. One farmer in 1919 planted an acre of beans, from which he received a crop that realised nearly £100, and in addition his wife canned sufficient beans for the family for a year. In 1920 the acreage was doubled, but the ladybird arrived that summer, and as a result the total yield was not sufficient for the needs of the farmer's family, and there were, of course, no beans for the market. The pest attacks leaves, stalks, and pods—all fall victims to its amazing gluttony; the plant is left a mere mass of shreds.

The most serious danger, however, is not the loss of the beans as food, but the fact that the plants attacked possess the double agricultural value of supplying food and fodder and of fertilising the soil. Beans are particularly valuable

### The Joy of Spring in the Parks



Despite the cold weather and biting winds with which Spring was ushered in, the parks are showing signs that Winter is past and that Summer will soon be at the door. Children everywhere are feeling the joy of life, like this happy little maiden who was photographed trundling her hoop in Hyde Park.

for this latter purpose because their roots take nitrogen from the air, and this is formed into nitrates that enrich the soil. With the bean crop destroyed there will be a shortage of nitrates, and that means the ruin of other crops.

"It is difficult to imagine a pest with a more complete combination of destructive vices," says a scientific expert.

The first bean ladybirds appeared in Arizona from Mexico many years ago, but it is only lately that they have begun to spread so alarmingly. A single female lays as many as two thousand eggs, and these hatch out and develop into adults in less than a month. Then ten days later each of the newly-hatched females herself begins to lay eggs, and so the creatures multiply. The winged insects fly from place to place, and marked specimens have been found to fly five miles in two days.

The United States Government entomologists and scores of other scientists, realising the tremendous menace, are studying the pest and trying to find some way of fighting it effectively, but

so far without success. An insect foe of the ladybird is being sought in Mexico, the native home of the pest. There are parasite enemies, but they do not seem to do any really serious harm; and methods of spraying with poison are out of the question on large plantations. As the bean crop of the United States supplies £20,000,000 worth of food a year for human consumption, besides replacing in the soil the equivalent of about three million tons of nitrates, the seriousness of the danger can be appreciated. Already people are talking of the time when baked beans, hitherto one of America's cheapest foods, will be a dollar a tin.

It seems strange that this ladybird should be almost alone among its kind in feeding on vegetation. With one or two exceptions all the members of the ladybird family are insect feeders, destroying vast numbers of plant lice, scale insects, and other pests.

They are true friends of man, but this bean ladybird is an enemy of the human race of the very worst kind.

### SHAKESPEARE'S LOST PLAYS

HAVE HIS BEST WORKS BEEN DESTROYED?

Boxes of Papers That Vanished in a Fire

#### SCHOLAR'S STARTLING THEORY

By Our Literary Correspondent

Are the best plays of Shakespeare lost to the world? This is the startling question that is now being discussed in literary circles.

One of the German critics who, with patience and thoroughness, have been studying everything that is known about Shakespeare, and everything he wrote, Dr. Alois Brandl, has written a new Life of the Great Poet, and in it asks the interesting question, Did Shakespeare write, in his last years, plays that were never acted or published, and now are lost for ever?

#### The Later Plays the Best

It is quite possible that, in his busy early years before he was famous, he wrote plays or parts of plays that have not been preserved, but at that time he was only learning the dramatist's art. A far more important point is whether, after he had succeeded and had retired from London to live in comfort at his birth-place, Stratford-on-Avon, he continued writing quietly.

His greatest plays were written in his later years, the last probably being *The Tempest* in 1611, when he was 47. In that year he left London for Stratford; but for three years longer he kept in touch with the London theatres, visiting London, and being visited at Stratford by London poets, and he died in 1616 at the age of 52. What was he doing during his last five comparatively quiet years? Did he go on writing?

Dr. Brandl thinks it is most likely that he did, and that at the time of his death he had recently written plays that were never acted. If that were so, it is reasonable to think that these last plays would be the finest of all.

#### Treasures in a Lumber Room

What became of them? Dr. Brandl says that the poet left two boxes filled with manuscripts and papers; that the boxes were put away in a lumber room; that they were last traced to the house of a Warwick baker, who had married one of Shakespeare's relatives, and there were destroyed in a fire.

It may be that the world lost some of its choicest treasures in that fire. But if the story is true it destroys the very pretty and truthful-sounding fancy that when Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*, as his last play, he meant the magician Prospero to represent himself; and when, at the end of the play, Prospero breaks his wand and practises his magic arts no longer, that is meant as a picture, or parable, of the poet laying down his pen and writing no more.