



Figure 31.—*Tapinoma sessile* (Say), odorless house ant: *a*, Lateral view of worker; *b*, ventral surface of apex of gaster; *co*, the transverse, slit-shaped cloacal orifice.

or erect hair on each side of clypeal emargination best seen in profile. Body color variable, ranging from more or less uniform brown to uniform black.

Biology and Economic Importance

This common and widely distributed ant is one of our most adaptable species, occurring from sea level to 10,500 feet. It nests in a wide variety of habitats, ranging from sandy beaches, pastures, open fields, woodlands, and bogs, to houses. Most nests in the soil are beneath objects such as stones or logs, but this versatile species also nests under the bark of logs and stumps, in plant cavities, insect galls, refuse piles, and bird and mammal nests. Nests in the soil are indefinite in form, shallow, and of little permanency. The colonies range in size from a few hundred individuals to many thousands, and contain numerous reproductive females. The individuals of the various colonies are not antagonistic to each other, but are hostile to the introduced Argentine ant. Mating takes place in the nest between males and their sister females, but nuptial flights have also been observed. Although females have been observed to establish colonies independently, it is also highly possible that the ants may form new colonies when one or more fertile females leave the parental colony accompanied by a number of workers. Workers are active and rapid, and normally travel in files. When alarmed, the workers dash around excitedly in an erratic manner, quite often with the posterior part of their abdomen elevated. Workers also emit from their abdominal glands an odor which has been likened to that of rotten coconut. In Mississippi, male pupae have been noted from April 16 to 30, and males and winged females from May 1 to 15. In bogs in southeastern Michigan, Kannooski has observed nuptial flights from June 26 to July 15. Few ants exceed *sessile* in their love for honeydew. Not only do workers eat honeydew avidly, but they assiduously attend such honeydew-excreting insects as plant lice, scale insects, mealybugs, and membracids. In some instances, workers have been observed transporting live plant lice. When mealybugs have been disturbed by collectors, the worker ants have tried to pick them up and carry them away. Workers visit the floral and extrafloral nectaries of plants in search of their glandular