

The magnitude of these ants, their voracity, and remarkable tact in discovering saccharine matters, render them repulsive, troublesome, and costly insects in a house. I have had the greater part of a tub of sugar-candy, left in my store-room at Poona, and weighing nearly half a hundred weight, consumed by them during a few months' absence from home; and my friends have related to me instances of similar depredations carried to the extent of the consumption of a whole tub of sugar-candy. However incredible the fact may appear, I will not omit to notice an instance of their instinct literally bordering upon human intelligence. It was the practice in my family to leave the dessert, consisting of fruit, cakes, and particularly China preserved fruits, constantly standing upon a sideboard in an inclosed verandah off the dining-hall: a cloth was thrown over it, and to prevent the access of insects, the legs of the table were placed upon low pedestals in little stone pans filled with water. When I first took possession of the house, the inhabited part was not infested with this species of ant, but the attractions of the sideboard soon occasioned their introduction. The channel of water surrounding the pedestals did not prove a sufficient barrier; the pans were shallow, and the channel not wider than two lengths of medium sized ants: when the water was low they waded across, and when the pans were full they boldly pushed over, and succeeded in catching hold of the opposite bank with their fore-legs ere they sunk, and once over, they soon reached their rich repast by the legs of the table, and in the morning I found hundreds congregated on the China sweets: they were put to death, but each succeeding day presented similar hordes of equally bold and successful adventurers. I now had the legs of the table surrounded daily with a belt of turpentine, just above the level of the water, and this proved effectual, either from its nauseous and deleterious scent, or from its clamminess holding them by the feet. For some days the sweets were unmolested, but eventually the ants found their way back to them, although not in such numbers as before, and I did not readily discover by what means. The edge of the table was about an inch distant from the wall, and with greater facilities of access, they did not risk the danger of passing the gulf between the table and the wall, but reduced to extremities by my precautions, the largest ants now essayed to pass it, holding on the wall by the hind legs, whilst the front legs were stretched out to touch the edge of the table, and the contact enabled very many to cross. The table was now removed from the wall beyond the maximum stretch of the largest ants, and I flattered myself I had triumphed over their perseverance and ingenuity; but, to my infinite surprise, in a few days the sweets