

## Termites

Have you ever gone downstairs one early morning and found a mound of earth near your stairs? Perhaps you just glanced at it indifferently but your mother must have given an exclamation of annoyance as she said, "ANAY again! Oh, we will soon have the roof of our house on our heads." She might have asked you if you happened to know of any way to destroy any or white ants. Now what do you really know about these destructive insects?

Their correct name is termites, although they are often called white ants. This is probably because the workers of most kinds of termites are white, but termites really are not ants. During certain seasons of the year the adult termites fly away from the colony, usually in large swarms. At night they are attracted by the light and enter our houses. "Ah, it will rain tonight," is the belief of the old people when they see these flying termites.

The next morning many pieces of broken wings may be seen about the lamp but few if any termites. Those that escaped begin to establish new colonies, each colony being started by one male and one female, or the king and queen. Before starting the colony they break off their wings if they did not get them broken off accidentally in the flight, because wings are in the way when burrowing into the ground or wood. The place selected for the colony depends upon the particular kind of termites. The ground termite seeks a suitable place in the ground and the house termite one in some crack or crevice of wood in the house or furniture.

Termites are found all over the world. There are more than thirty kinds in the Philippine Islands. Unfortunately the most common kind is also the most destructive. This termite destroys the framework of houses by eating them

away and leaving them shell-like and weak. It may eat books, furniture, clothing, and other material too. Though this termite eats away the timbers of buildings it is believed that in order to get moisture it must keep a connection with the ground. The queen and young stay not in the house but in the ground. The workers of these insects first enter the house from the ground. Sometimes they build their tunnels over stone or concrete walks or foundations in order to get to the wood of the house.

The best way to destroy this termite is to find these tunnels and follow them to their colony and then destroy the colony and the queen, above all others, for she lays the eggs.

Termites may also be poisoned. A kind of solution called Paris Green is blown into the canals of the nest with a dry sprayer. The workers get this on their bodies and spread it through the channels. All are poisoned that eat it. Other termites eat the dead bodies and get poisoned.

One kind, called the house termite, lives in small colonies in boards of the house, picture frames and furniture. Their presence may be detected by the small piles of little round pellets of waste from their bodies that they drop thru the openings of the boards. They are often called *gorgojo* or *bucbuc* (borer). It is difficult to keep this kind of termite from entering a house because they fly into it in their winged state and it is difficult to get rid of them because they do not need to keep a ground connection. About all that can be done is to destroy as many as possible of the flying termites and watch for the presence of a colony before it gets large enough and then pouring or squirting kerosene into their small tunnels. The best slogan to adopt with termites is "DANGER! Be always on the alert for them." And destroy them at the first signs of their presence in the house.