

## ANT WAYS

### SLAVE-MAKING ANTS

You have already learned that ants in their nature of living show the virtues of intelligence, thrift, and foresight or laying something for the future. But there are some kinds of ants that possess evil habits which would make them be called criminals if they were human beings. These are the slave-making ants. These insects capture ants of another kind and compel them to work for them. These conquerors are called Amazon ants and those enslaved are the Dusky ants. The Amazons, many of you perhaps know, were women in the olden times who fought wars of their own.

Let us see how these Amazon ants enslave their brother insects. These slave-makers advance on the nest of the dusky ants like soldiers in companies of eight to ten feet long and three or four inches wide. They march eight or ten abreast. When the nest is reached, the raiders overpower any resistance on

the part of the owners: they rush and fall on the occupants; if any should attempt to fight, it is bitten through the head or thorax and killed. The invaders then leave the nest, each carrying a grub or a pupa. These are given to enslaved nurses in the raiders own nest. The captured grubs or pupae when they become fully-developed ants, serve the lordly and lazy slave-owners all their life. The raiders do not even trouble to feed or clean themselves: the slaves actually put food into their mouths and brush and wash them. It is only when they want to capture slaves that these Amazon ants are

energetic; at other times they are completely lazy. They will slave rather than engage in honest work and they die quickly when they lose their slaves.

Another kind of ants which have this slave-making habit is called the Blood-red ant. They march in disorderly fashion upon the nest of the dusky ant, surround it and overcome any resistance offered. The raiders carry home a number of larvae and pupae which are raised into slaves. But these ants, unlike the Amazon ants, can manage for themselves quite well if their slaves are absent from the nest.

Perhaps after reading these little stories about ants, you have become interested in them and

observed their ways at home. Tell the class if you have some other information about them. There are some kinds of ants that live in dry plains where food is abundant for only short periods. Workers feed



on honey of many kinds at night and go away with their bodies greatly distended with honey. They feed any hungry stay-at-home in the nest and the rest they store in their stomachs. These ants then hang on to the uneven surfaces of the ceiling of special store-chambers and it is from them that the colony is fed when the supply of food is gone.

Then there are ants that cultivate an ant-garden by heaping in their chambers leaves that they cut from trees. On the soil formed by the decaying leaves tiny thread-like plants grow that we call fungi. After a short time the fungi

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produce small white little beads of food that the ants feed upon.

As a whole we have found that ants are admirable insects. It is only the slave-making ants that destroy the reputation of the race. When you meet with an ant, don't kill it thoughtlessly but try to follow it and observe what it is after. It may teach you a lesson in perseverance and industry.

· Something to do:

1. Dramatize the part of a slave-making ant. Relate to the class how it captures a slave.

2. Take the part of an enslaved ant. Tell your classmates how you have been captured, made a slave and what your duties are.

3. Be an ant that stores food in its body for its fellow ants. Tell your teacher how you act as a living storehouse.

4. What do you admire most in ants?

5. Tell the class what you have observed about ants in your home.