

THE EUROPEAN HOUSE CRICKET, *GRYLLUS DOMESTICUS*,
NOW IN VANCOUVER

By J. K. Jacob

In September 1934 a cricket came into my possession, which had been found in the Kerrisdale section of this city hiding between the door frame and the wall of a stucco building. Others reported to be of the same species were seen and heard in adjacent houses and on adjacent lots. Moreover from an apartment house on Main street and a dwelling in West Point Grey, complaints were received of *brown* crickets chirping incessantly and disturbing the inhabitants. In none of these latter cases was it possible to obtain specimens.

As soon as Professor Spencer saw the cricket in my collections, he declared it to be *Gryllus domesticus* L. and warned me to be on the look out for further specimens. This identification was checked by Dr. E. M. Walker of the University of Toronto to whom the insect was sent for positive determination.

For purposes of general description, it may be said to be a typical cricket, slightly smaller than our native black or field cricket but is pale yellowish-brown or straw-coloured. The head bears four transverse, dark, reddish-brown bars, and the pronotum, five irregular spots of reddish-brown on the dorsal aspect and a narrow bar of the same colour on each side.

Since two or three foreign insects have, within the last generation, become established in this country in spite of the untiring zeal of the Insect Immigration Department (the Division of Foreign Pests Suppression at Ottawa), it seemed wise to look up the economic history of this cricket. In Europe it seems to give little trouble although its persistent chirping from between hearth stones of cottages may be irksome to some people. I have not its complete distribution in Eastern Canada but Dr. Walker informs me that it has been in evidence in Toronto since it was first found there in the basement of the General Hospital some twenty years ago.

Professor Spencer informs me that he had personal experience with it in the winter of 1927-28 when it was proving a nuisance in vacant lots in Toronto where citizens had thrown tin cans and rubbish, and on city dumps. The measures adopted against it by the street cleaning department, on the advice of a foreman who was certain of his recommendations, consisted of covering the lot where the trash had been dumped with thirty tons of lime—a truly drastic treatment. Mr. Spencer investigated an outbreak in the city of Kitchener where

it had become established in one of the trash dumps in the environs of the city. When freeze-up came, it migrated in large number to houses all around and in some cases a considerable distance from the infested dump. It took possession of basements and cellars, especially those in which home-brew was being made and, spreading upwards through the houses, concealed itself in remarkably small crevices and cracks. From these places it issued at night and did considerable damage by biting large holes in upholstered furniture, curtain drapes, bed clothes and articles of apparel. The following winter, in the city of Hamilton, it increased in the same way as it had done in Kitchener and became a distinct nuisance.

In Ontario it seems chiefly restricted to trash dumps in cities where it finds shelter during winter in tin cans some distance below the surface where it survives the cold which is sometimes very severe. In places where it enters basements of houses it apparently flourishes, remaining active all winter.

In Vancouver, its presence may be viewed with some concern on account of the mildness of the winter. If it takes to entering houses in autumn as do the earwigs, its history, at least in Kitchener, would point to its doing considerable damage here if it bites holes in furniture and clothing. For this reason, careful watch is being kept in the area where the insect was found, to see if any further specimens of this cricket occur.

Acknowledgment. I am indebted to Professor G. J. Spencer and to Dr. E. M. Walker for their assistance and information concerning this cricket.

Later Note. Autumn 1935. Notwithstanding a close watch being kept by citizens on whose property this cricket was found last autumn, no further specimens have been found so far and no complaints about it have been received.