

XVII. *Note respecting the Larva of Blaps Mortisaga.* By ROBERT PATTERSON, Esq., *V. P. Nat. Hist. Soc. Belfast.* With a Description of the Larva. By A. H. HALIDAY, Esq., *M. A.*

[Read January 4th, 1836.]

ON the 2d of June, 1834, I had the pleasure of spending the day at Bangor, in the county of Down, accompanied by Dr. J. L. Drummond, and one or two other friends. In the afternoon of that day, Dr. Wilson, of Bangor, handed to Dr. Drummond a living "worm," which he informed him had been passed by a child only three months' old, and that a similar "worm" had been passed by the same child about a fortnight before. Dr. Drummond knowing that it was the larva of some Coleopterous insect, placed it under my care. I therefore, on my return home, procured a small vessel, half filled with fine garden mould, and in this the larva was deposited, and the soil occasionally moistened with a few drops of water. On the 2d of August I removed a little of the earth, to ascertain the condition of its occupant; it was then perfectly developed as a pupa, but soft and white. Whether it sustained any injury either by the replacing of the earth, or by its conveyance from Bangor, is a point I am unable to decide; but on revisiting it on the 11th of August, I found that the unknown "worm" had proved to be the larva of the *Blaps Mortisaga*, and had become transformed into a specimen of that insect, black, hard, and perfect in all respects, except that the termination of the elytra was wanting; on one side more so than on the other.

The *Blaps Mortisaga* is an insect of rather rare occurrence in this neighbourhood. My friend, Mr. G. C. Hyndman, of this town, who has been for many years an indefatigable Entomologist, informed me some time ago, that he had never seen this beetle in a living state. I have been rather more fortunate, as I have captured two specimens in an old dwelling-house in this town, but those were the only two I had ever met with. This scarcity of the beetle, conjoined with the case published by Dr. Pickells, of Cork, made me think the matter worth a little further inquiry. Accordingly, being in Bangor on the 14th of September, I went in company with Dr. Wilson to the house whence the *caterpillar* had been obtained. The grandmother of the child, the same person who had brought the larva to Dr. Wilson, now seemed inclined to deny her former statement. She said she might be mistaken—

that she had seen "worms" of the same kind on the earthen floor of the cabin since that time—that her daughter, to use her own words, "had bid her no to say that sic an unhumanlike thing could come frae her wean"—and finally, that if she saw any more of the worms she would bring them to the Doctor. Accordingly I received two more of the larvæ four days afterwards, and was satisfied from that circumstance that the first statement must have been founded in error.

One of these caterpillars was placed on a table, and under a watch-glass, that a drawing of it might be made. It moved so much about, pushing the glass with it, that a weight was placed close to the glass, and two copper coins at different parts of the circumference. It continued pushing until it had raised the edge of the glass on one of the halfpence, when it easily effected its escape. Being placed in a vessel of loose earth, it immediately began to bury itself, moving round any lump which was too hard to be easily penetrated. In less than two minutes no portion of the body was visible. I had hoped to have been able to make some observations as to its food and habits, but circumstances occurred which prevented me for some weeks from giving it any attention. At the expiration of that time I found it lying dead on the surface, the victim of my neglect; and its size very materially diminished. The other individual had been placed in spirits as soon as received, and thus retains its original dimensions.*

Description of the Larva. By A. H. HALLIDAY, Esq.

[Read 1st February, 1836.]

The Iuliform larva of *Blaps mortisaga* bears, as might be expected, the closest resemblance to that of *Eryx niger*, figured and described by Mr. Waterhouse in the First Volume of the Transactions of the Entomological Society: the only parts which afford distinctive characters in slight modifications of form, being the last segment, the legs, and the mouth.

The body of this larva is nearly cylindrical, but the belly is flat and a little retired within the descending margin of the dorsal

* In a note subsequently received from Mr. Patterson, he states that in crawling along, the larva makes use of two fleshy appendages on the under side of the terminal segment of the body, near the anal extremity, as feet, in the same manner as the larva of *Tenebrio molitor* figured and described by De Geer.