

TWO NEW INSECT PESTS OF SUGARCANE IN NATAL.

By J. DICK.

NOCTUID LARVÆ.

In October, 1942, a local outbreak of Noctuid caterpillars on young Co.281 ratoons was reported from Stanger, and specimens of the larvæ were sent to the Experiment Station. Most of the specimens received were diseased or parasitised and no adults were reared. At the end of December a batch of Noctuid eggs was collected on sugarcane leaves at Mount Edgecombe, and the insects obtained from them were reared to the adult stage. The larvæ closely resembled those received from Stanger and probably belonged to the same species. The adults have been identified as *Spodoptera mauritia* Boisid.

These insects have now been reared for two generations and the following observations have been made. The eggs, which are deposited on the leaves in batches of one to two hundred, are covered with a light brown fluffy secretion. Hatching, in January, took four or five days, and the larval stage lasted 25 to 34 days. The pupal stage required 6 to 10 days. Laying commenced four days after emergence and the adults lived 10 to 12 days.

The larvæ were found to feed on the leaves of maize, sorghum and several varieties of sugarcane, but probably also live on a number of wild grasses. Newly-hatched larvæ did not very readily attack cane leaves, so that infestations in the field would probably have to start on wild grasses, maize or sorghum and spread to sugarcane.

Tachinid larvæ are probably important parasites of the larvæ and pupæ, and the Argentine ant was found to destroy the insects in the inactive prepupal and pupal stages.

Spodoptera mauritia was recorded in Mauritius, but is found all over Africa, Madagascar, India, Ceylon, Philippines, Dutch East Indies, New Guinea, Australia and the Polynesian Islands. Professor Janse² has specimens from various parts of Natal. It is reported to feed primarily on nutgrass, *Cyperus rotundus*, in Hawaii,³ but has occasionally caused serious damage to young cane,⁴ although outbreaks are usually soon controlled by para-

sites.⁴ It has also been recorded as a pest of sugarcane in Mauritius¹ and Formosa⁷. It is not thought likely that this species will become a serious pest in Natal.

DYNASTID BEETLE.

At the beginning of January, 1943, a species of Dynastid beetle was found attacking planted setts of Co.281 cane at Umzinto. The damage caused resembled that described for *Heleomychus licas*,⁶ a beetle belonging to the same family. The adult beetles burrowed into the sticks, destroyed or damaged the eyes, and killed many of the young shoots. The larvæ probably feed on decaying vegetable matter in the soil and were not found attacking the cane. Insects of this family often have a long larval period and a relatively short adult life, and in this instance all the adults had disappeared within a fortnight of the damage being observed. Damage to sugarcane would only take place if the setts were in the ground at the time when the adults were emerging. As this appears to take place over a short period only, the danger from this species is not great.

The insects were identified by Miss van Schalkwyk of the Division of Entomology as *Temnorrhynchus clypeatus* Klug. This species, which was collected from a wild shrub in Natal in 1902, does not appear to have been recorded as a pest.

References.

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- ² Janse, A. J. T. (1937-39) : The Moths of South Africa, vol. iii.
- ³ Muir, F., Swezey, O. H., and Pemberton, C. E. (1924) : Entomology. Report. Comm. Expt. Sta. Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Assoc., 13.
- ⁴ Swezey, O. H. (1928) : Present Status of certain Insect Pests under Biological Control in Hawaii. J. Econ. Ent., xxi, No. 5, 669.
- ⁵ Swezey, O. H. (1928) : Entomology. Rept. Comm. Expt. Sta. Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Assoc. 15.
- ⁶ Van der Merwe, C. P. (1937) : Insects Attacking Sugarcane. Union of South Africa, Dept. Agric. and Forestry, Pl. Ind. Ser. No. 26, Sci. Bull. No. 171.
- ⁷ (1928) : Insects injurious to Sugar-cane in Formosa. Abs. Works Sug. Expt. Sta., Dept. Agric. Govt. Res. Inst. Formosa, 272.

Experiment Station,
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 Mount Edgecombe.
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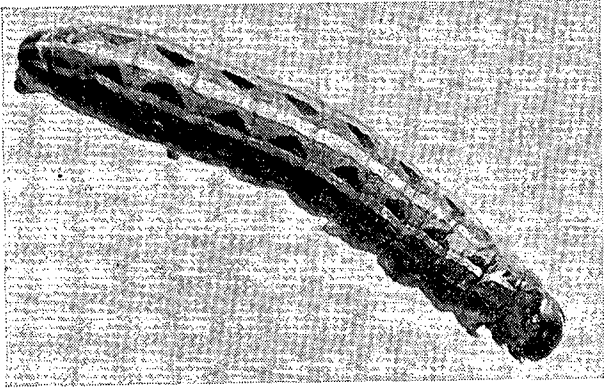


Fig. 1.

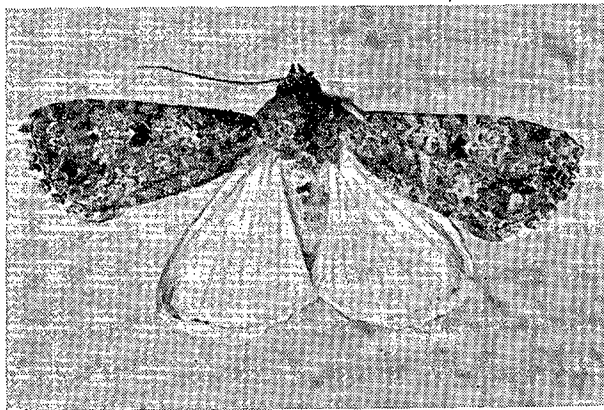


Fig. 2.

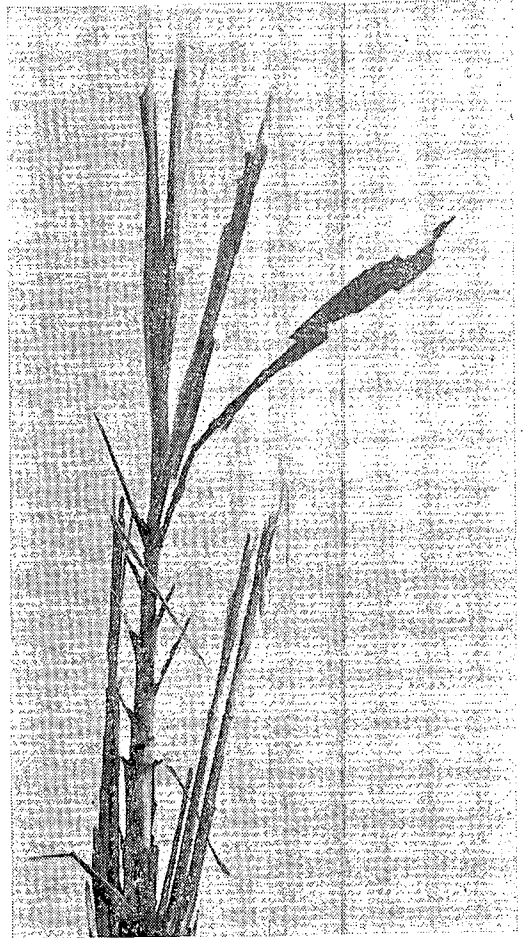


Fig. 3.

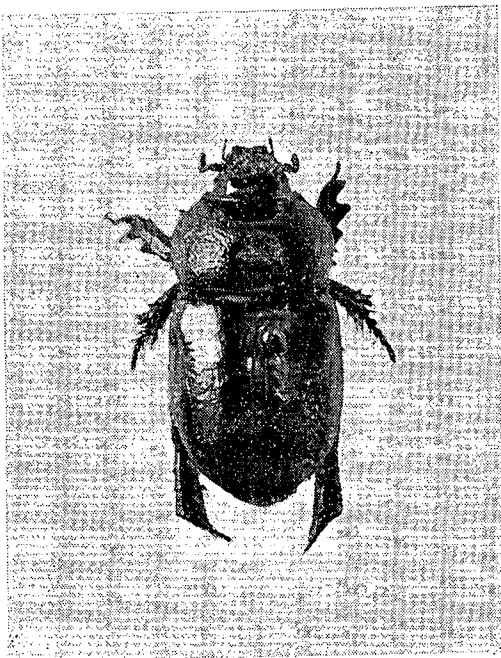


Fig. 4.

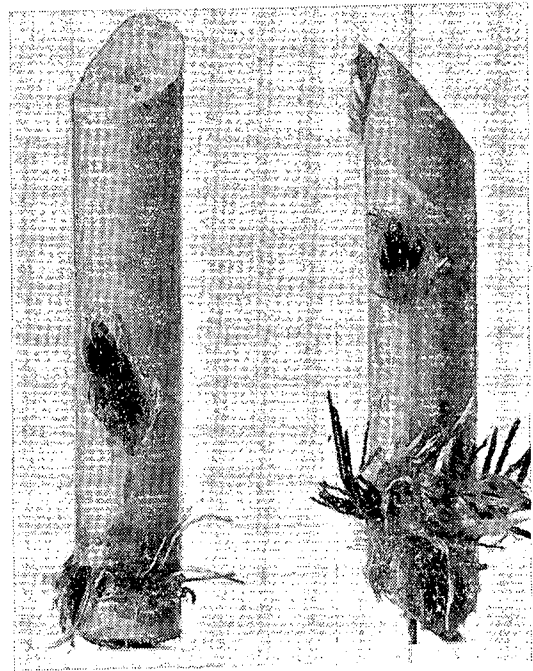


Fig. 5.

Fig. 1.—Larva of *Spodoptera mauritia*, $\times \frac{5}{2}$.
 Fig. 2.—Adult of *S. mauritia*, $\times \frac{5}{2}$.
 Fig. 3.—Damage caused by *S. mauritia*.

Fig. 4.—*Temnorhynchus clypeatus*, $\times \frac{5}{2}$.
 Fig. 5.—Damage caused by *T. clypeatus*.