

The home of the genus *Ophiocreas* is the "continental slope," all the other known species having been found between 118 and 580 fathoms except *O. abyssicola*, which came from 2,300 fathoms. Our species probably occurs plentifully in the deep water of the fiords on the southwestern coast of the South Island.

---

ART. LIII.—*A Hunting Spider.*

By TAYLOR WHITE.

[Read before the Hawke's Bay Philosophical Institute.]

THE very large family of predaceous insects known under the title "Arachnida" includes, besides the true spiders, the mites and scorpions. This classification would, to the uninitiated, seem a gathering together of forms which differ very widely one from the other; and so they really do, but at the same time these creatures give evidence of descent from an ancestral Arachnid which was the origin of all these remarkable creatures.

From my own observation certain true spiders are, as it were, a partial copy of the scorpion; they spin no web to entangle their prey, but are provided by nature with a strong pair of arms, terminated by formidable pincers, by which they seize their victim. This pair of scorpion-like arms would seem in a measure to resemble those of the crab, the lobster, and the prawn. They are, in reality, destructive implements, which take the place of the forward pair of legs, and are never used to assist locomotion, but are carried elevated and pointing forward on either side of the creature's head, like a pair of nippers open, and ready for action. The remaining three pairs of legs are solely used in giving movement and stability to the body. The body consists of two main parts—the shorter fore part, to which the pair of claws and the six legs are attached; and the longer after part, or abdomen, which is carried clear of the ground. This dreadful-looking creature, if magnified two hundred times, would be a startling object to meet with in a summer day's ramble, and might lead to undesirable complications. The following account describes their method of catching prey.

Looking at a remarkable spider walking on the window-pane, I became aware that, although seemingly stationary, it in reality was stealthily on the move. This motion would

not have been detected but for a wire netting of  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in. mesh, which was stretched across as a protection to the glass. These cross-wires divided the section of the window into numerous small spaces, and by watching closely for a few seconds it became evident that the creature was gliding slowly forward without any perceptible motion of the limbs. The pair of front legs were of enormous thickness compared with the remaining three pairs, which were those by which it progressed when moving. The very strong thick pair were mostly carried projecting forward, and looked somewhat like a great pair of wide-open nippers, which they in reality were, as the sequel will show. Presently a yellow-bodied blow-fly moved into sight, having been hidden by the woodwork of the window-frame. This kind of fly deposits live maggots on meat, &c., not eggs, as do the larger black flies. This yellow fly I never saw in the South Island of New Zealand during a period of some fifteen years, but on coming to Hawke's Bay they were at once apparent from their undesirable attentions. Have these yellow flies since made their way to the South Island, or are they still absent?

To continue my story. As the large fly walked onward the spider moved at about the same pace behind it; on the fly resting the spider became apparently motionless, yet was imperceptibly moving up to its quarry. After some time the space between the two was reduced to about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in., when the spider made a dart forward and seized the fly with its formidable pincer-like legs. One arm was across the head of the fly, and the other grasped the tail, or opposite extremity, while it also seemed to be biting or sucking the life-juice of the insect at its waist or narrowest part. The fly made strenuous efforts with its feet to move from the place, but its captor, though of lesser bulk, had also six legs, which took such firm hold of the glass that it remained immovable, other than a slight movement of the fore part of the spider from side to side, and a slight rising upward at times, as if for the purpose of lifting the fly from its feet, or rather hold. I did not stay to see the death of the fly, which was a tedious process, and when I returned shortly both spider and fly had disappeared.

This stealthy advance, when realised, "gave one the creeps"; it was like a nightmare, especially when remembering that it was allied to so much ferocity and cunning. A comparison might be made of a man clutching a very large sheep or a calf, one hand resting on the head, the other across the rump, the hands not grasping, but the animal being securely held by the inward pressure of the arms, while the man's teeth were employed tearing open the beast's flank, and he greedily sucking the struggling creature's life's blood.