INSECTS THAT EAT CURIOS.

How the Officers of the Smithsonian Institution Conduct Foes.

Bugs are a source of much anxiety and annoyance to the curators of birds and mammals at the Smithsonian Institution and in the National museum. If given a chance they would gobble up the dead and stuffed creatures, not even sparing the bones and the beaks. Accordingly those in charge have to be perpetually on the alert to combat these small but not contemptible foes.

"It is called 'specimen' to thoroughly poisoned with arsenic when it is prepared there is little or no danger that it will ever be attacked, but the collections in charge of Secretary Langley are gathered together from all parts of the world and very many of the contributions are not properly protected in this respect. This is true particularly of those which come from the tropics, where pepper and pungent spices are considered sufficient for purposes of preservation.

"So they are for awhile, and then, the spices having lost their strength, the enemy begins to get in its work. Not only does this happen with stuffed birds and beasts, but the skeletons that reach the museum with the flesh roughly chipped off them and filled up in the neatest possible compass for transportation are frequently so poorly protected by pounding that maggots get at them and eat the ligaments which join the bones so as to seriously injure their usefulness.

"Some kinds of insects threaten the stuffed collections. One is the familiar moth, which eats the feathers or hair down to the skin and leaves unsightly bald patches. Another is the "dermestes," or common "bird bug," which attacks soft cute holes in the furry skins. But worse than either of these is the "anthrenus"—a beetle about the size of a No. 8 shot, and so small therefore that it does not need much velvet and is not easily found when sought for.

"It is very fond of anything horny, and, getting a chance at a bird, it will begin by eating off the covering of the bill, then attacking the legs afterward and finishing up the shafts of the bigger feathers. If it has an opportunity, it will regularly amputate the horns of animals freshly mounted for museum purposes.

"Of course, it is understood that these three bugs do all the damage in the interval of their being—that is, while they are yet worms. Another sort of bug goes into empty eggs and eats up the living germ inside, where evidence sufficient have left them inside, as they should not do, but it cannot injure the shells and does no harm, except to make a litter.

"The best remedy, or preventive, known is bisulphide of carbon; but it has so terrible a smell that Curator Ridgway will not use it for keeping the birds under his charge. He prefers to employ the "anthrenus" with