Was the writer successful in protecting his peach tree?

Why not?

We have been brought up to fear insects.

We regard them as unnecessary creatures that do more harm than good.

We continually wage war on them, for they contaminate our food, carry diseases, or devour our crops.

They sting or bite without provocation; they fly uninvited into our rooms on summer nights, or beat against our lighted windows.

We live in dread not only of unpleasant insects like spiders or wasps, but of quite harmless ones like moths.

Reading about them increases our understanding without dispelling our fears.

Knowing that the industrious ant lives in a highly organized society does nothing to prevent us from being filled with revulsion when we find hordes of them crawling over a carefully prepared picnic lunch.

No matter how much we like honey, or how much we have read about the uncanny sense of direction which bees possess, we have a horror of being stung.

Most of our fears are unreasonable, but they are impossible to erase.

At the same time, however, insects are strangely fascinating.

We enjoy reading about them, especially when we find that, like the praying mantis, they lead perfectly horrible lives.

We enjoy staring at them, entranced as they go about their business, unaware (we hope) of our presence.

Who has not stood in awe at the sight of a spider pouncing on a fly, or a column of ants triumphantly bearing home an enormous dead beetle?

Last summer, I spent days in the garden watching thousands of ants crawling up the trunk of my prize peach tree.

The tree has grown against a warm wall on a sheltered side of the house.

I am especially proud of it, not only because it has survived several severe winters, but because it occasionally produces luscious peaches.

During the summer, I noticed that the leaves of the tree were beginning to wither.

Clusters of tiny insects called aphids were to be found on the underside of the leaves.

They were visited by a large colony of ants, which obtained a sort of honey from them.

I immediately embarked on an experiment which, even though it failed to get rid of the ants, kept me fascinated for twenty-four hours.

I bound the base of the tree.

with sticky tape, making it impossible for the ants to reach the aphids.

The tape was so sticky that they did not dare to cross it.

For a long time, I watched them scurrying around the base of the tree in bewilderment.

Teven went out at midnight with a torch and noted with satisfaction (and surprise) that the ants were still swarming around the sticky tape without being able to do anything about it.

I got up early the next morning, hoping to find that the ants had given up in despair.

Instead, I saw that they had discovered a new route.

They were climbing up the wall of the house and then onto the leaves of the tree.

I realized sadly that I had been completely defeated by their ingenuity.

The ants had been quick to find an answer to my thoroughly unscientific methods!

The writer saw thousands of ants crawling up his peach tree.

Then he noticed the leaves of the tree were withering and found there were aphids under the leaves.

They were being visited by the ants.

In an effort to stop them, he bound the base of the tree with sticky tape and of course, they couldn't cross it.

By the next morning, however, they had solved the problem: they were climbing onto the leaves from the house wall.

According to my dictionary, 'pests' are 'small animals or insects that harm or destroy food supplies'.

But for me, they are more than that: they are insects and small animals that spread disease and damage property, too.

Whatever they do and however you define them, pests have been a major problem to man throughout history.

Man has tried to control or exterminate these creatures, but never with very much success.

In some ways, insects are the worst pests.

Ants, locusts, and beetles damage property, woodwork, crops, and harvest, and in this century, we have sprayed crops with insecticides and pesticides to protect them from insects.

The problem now is that there are some insects that have become immune to pesticides.

Rats and mice eat our food supplies too and spread disease, and people have tried to kill or catch them with poison or traps.

But again, they are still with us.

We haven't managed to exterminate them.

Let's not forget, however, that for farmers, certain birds are 'pests' too.

In Britain, seagulls, pigeons, and other birds often fly down in their hundreds (or even thousands) to pick up seeds when farmers are planting crops.

Years ago, farmers used to stand scarecrows in the fields to frighten away birds, but I'm not sure how effective they were.

We have tried different things, then, to control pests, and we have managed to hold some pests in check.

However, some are a big problem, both in the major industrial nations and in the Third World.

While locusts are a terrible problem in countries like Sudan and Ethiopia, rats are still a problem in most large cities in the world.

We might control pests to a certain extent, but we shall never get rid of them.

We may learn more about the behaviour of insects, but we are no less likely to lose our irrational fear of them.

The ant is an insect which shows great ingenuity at finding its way around any obstacle in its path.

Had the peach tree been planted on the opposite side of the house, it might not have survived the severe winters.

The reason for the ants' swarming up and down the tree was that they were milking a kind of honey from the aphids on the leaves.

By reading about them, we may increase our understanding, but this will not dispel our fears.

Most of our fears are unreasonable, but we find it impossible to erase them.

The tree occasionally produces sweet and juicy fruit.

I had been completely defeated by the inventive creatures.