

OUR INSECT ENEMIES

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Our Insect Enemies by Theodore Wood

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PREFACE.

IN the following pages I have attempted to trace the life-histories of some of the more prominent of those insects which are prejudicial to our interests, pointing out in each case the particular manner in which they are injurious, and, as far as possible, the range and extent of their ravages. In so doing, I have avoided all unnecessary technicalities, in the hope of rendering the work of interest to the general reader, rather than to the comparatively few whose avocations compel them to regard the subject as one of personal and special importance.

With a single exception, I have treated the insects described in accordance, not with the particular crops which they frequent, but with their present system of classification, in order to dispense with the vast amount of repetition which would otherwise be necessary. Many species, of course, feed indiscriminately upon a variety of cultivated plants, and would thus require frequent mention, were the arrangement of the work to be based upon the food-plants,

instead of upon the natural order of the insects themselves.

The *Aphis*, however, in its various forms, seems to merit the distinction of separate treatment, for its numbers are so inconceivably great, its powers of multiplication so extraordinary, and its diversity of food so extreme, that it must undoubtedly be ranked as by far the most injurious member of the vast tribe to which it belongs. To this insect, therefore, I have given first place, and have then proceeded to describe its manifold assistants in the work of destruction.

Finally, I have endeavoured to call attention to the invaluable character of the assistance rendered to us by the smaller birds, whose real merit we still fail to appreciate, and which are but too often considered as holding a position diametrically opposite to that which in reality they occupy. The rook, the starling, the titmice, the sparrow, and many others, are the best allies of the farmer, and he who allows them free and undisturbed access to his fields and plantations will seldom need to complain of any great losses caused by insect agency.

ST. PETER'S, KENT, *April*, 1885.

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