

# PRIZE ESSAY.

## CHAPTER I.

### INSECTS DESTRUCTIVE TO THE WHEAT CROP.

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Importance of the subject proposed.—One worthy of the attention of a wise and paternal Government.—The best means of increasing qualified Observers.—European Governments have taken similar steps.—Exertions of Privy Council in England regarding Hessian Fly in 1788.—Premium offered by French Government in 1785.—By Society of Arts in London.—Angoumois Moth.—French Commissioners appointed concerning it.—Difficulty of investigating such subjects from the ignorance of those suffering most from Insects.—The name "Weevil" misapplied to every species of Insect attacking grain.—Importance of properly classifying Insects.—Stages of an Insect's life.—Transformations.—Farmers and Gardeners should become acquainted with them.—Seven Orders of Insects.

When we consider the vastness of the interests depending upon the wheat crop, forming as it does the most valuable item of Canadian exports, and the chief article of food for our population, we cannot be surprised at the anxiety which is common amongst all classes of the community with regard to the alarming devastation of that important crop by insects of various kinds. The mysterious character of the visitation and the uncertainty which generally exists, respecting the origin, nature, and habits of these creatures, adds not a little to the alarm which their ravages have caused; it well becomes then, a wise and paternal Government to take such steps as may serve to procure the greatest amount of information on this subject, and thus increase the number of qualified observers throughout the country, by whose combined exertions some effectual method of guarding against these ravages may be adopted. This course has been pursued under similar circumstances by some of the most enlightened countries of Europe, who have not considered the interests of Agriculture a subject beneath their notice, or the devastations of insects which might scourge their countries with famine, as a matter of little consideration.

We learn from Young's Annals of Agriculture,\* that when an alarm was excited in England in 1788, by the probability of importing in cargoes of wheat from North America the insect known by the name of the Hessian fly, the privy council sat day after day anxiously debating what measures should be adopted to ward off the danger of a calamity more to be dreaded, as they well knew, than the plague or pestilence. Expresses were sent off in all directions to the officers of the Customs at the different our ports respecting the examination of cargoes—despatches were written to the Ambassadors in France, Austria, Prussia, and America, to gain that information, of the want of which they were so sensible; and so important was the business deemed, that the minutes of Council and the documents collected from all quarters fill upwards of two hundred octavo pages.†

In the year 1785, many provinces in France were so ravaged by cock-chafers,

\* Annals xi. 406.

† Kirby & Spence.