

Mr. Slingerland evidently does not know our British *Agrotis tritici*; it is outside my brief to go into the protean forms it exhibits, but when I say that my series comprises some 2,500 specimens, which have received something like twenty-five different specific names, and a mere summary of these occupies 15 p.p. in *The British Noctuae and Their Varieties*, your readers will see that Mr. Slingerland is treading on treacherous grounds when he is dealing with the subject, and suggests that British lepidopterists cannot name their own insects, for this is undoubtedly the ultimate conclusion of his line of argument.

Now, it is quite evident from Mr. Slingerland's remarks (p.p. 302-303) that whatever specimens Haworth (before 1810) described his *subgothica* from, Mr. Stephens (1829) did not describe the same specimens, for he described his from specimens obtained from Mr. Raddon, and the specimens were labelled, "near Barnstaple, Devon." Now, I have to add, as a matter of personal knowledge, that the coasts near Barnstaple, Devon, produce *A. tritici* in immense numbers, and I can assure Mr. Slingerland, and all other American entomologists, that I can match exactly the specimens which Stephens figures, and Humphrey and Westwood copy, with undoubted genuine specimens of *Agrotis tritici*, and I quite agree with my friend, Mr. C. G. Barrett, that these figures certainly represent a variety of *tritici*.

We now come to Mr. Slingerland's first move into the mists of probability, and I would suggest to Mr. Slingerland that probability is not critical science. I refer to Wood's figure, reproduced in the plate, fig. 1b. Mr. Slingerland says:—"I think that a glance at the next figure of the insect that appeared, taken, doubtless, from Stephens's specimen,\* will remove all doubt as to what insect Stephens tried to represent." I object absolutely to this premise. There is not a scintilla of evidence to warrant such an assertion. We want facts and deductions therefrom. We do not now, three-quarters of a century after publication, want an assertion made as being "doubtless," without a single fact to support it.

Now, "up to 1847," Mr. Slingerland very rightly observes that English Entomologists considered *subgothica* a British insect, and a distinct species. Then Mr. Doubleday stated that "Haworth's insect is evidently simply a variety of either *Agrotis tritici* or *aquilina*. The species described by Stephens is American." Now, it is strange that I had never noticed this reference before, but it fortifies my position. It

\*I have referred to this statement in detail farther on.