

PREFACE.

AT the commencement of this Essay I must draw attention to the fact that, as yet, no serious biological work has been attempted with the North-American Noctuidæ. The internal structure is yet a mystery to us, or at best we can judge it from Mr. Burgess's admirable work on *Danaus*, or get some notion of it from the observations brought together in Dr. Packard's 'Guide to the Study of Insects.' Some work, not perhaps so extended, but in the line of Professor Huxley's exhaustive volume on the Crawfish, is needed on any of our common species of Noctuidæ. This Essay deals with the external structure, as to which I do not find much notice taken by the older English lepidopterists, except by Stephens, whose discriminations of genera I find very good and anticipatory of the characters afterwards used by Lederer. I find, also, in Hübner's 'Verzeichniss' (and here, I fear, I shall hardly convince Mr. W. H. Edwards) evidence that the author had made some examinations of characters, or else some very extraordinary guesses, as, for instance, in the association of the genera under the *Bombycidae*, where he was clearly ahead of his time. The genera, as established, are dependent on comparative characters or on details of absolute structure, these