

POPULAR AND ECONOMIC ENTOMOLOGY.

THE CENTENARY OF KIRBY AND SPENCE'S

"An Introduction to Entomology."

BY F. J. A. MORRIS, PETERBOROUGH, ONT.

To fill the space, which has been kindly put at my service, may I remind our brother entomologists that the current year is the centenary of the first (and still the greatest) popular work in English on Insects? In 1815 was published the first volume of "AN INTRODUCTION TO ENTOMOLOGY," by William Kirby and William Spence.

It is no exaggeration to claim this work as effecting a revolution in Great Britain in the study of Natural History. As a science, Entomology had already had its foundations well and truly laid in the 17th century: in Europe, by masters like Malpighi, Swammerdam, Leeuwenhoek and Redi; in England, by Ray and Willughby. The bright examples of Reaumur and Linnaeus, Fabricius, Latreille and the Hubers, sufficed in the 18th century to keep the torch aflame, and reconcile a little band of devotees to labour unrewarded by public recognition, and often the butt of ridicule and obloquy. But no attempt was made, in English at least, to popularise the science.

The Rev. William Kirby, father of modern British Entomology, was a native of East Anglia. He began his work in Natural History as a botanist, and his name appears among the chartered members of the newly founded Linnean Society in 1788. He was at this time in his 30th year, but having one day found, in his rambles after plants, a very beautiful insect, he diverted his attention to this new branch of Natural History.

The first in the long list of his contributions to the Linnean Society is dated 1793; in 1802 appeared his important monograph on British Bees; in 1811 he established the Insect Order of *Strepsiptera*, which still holds good; and in 1812 (as a note in his commonplace book goes to show) he had identified what in his day was considered a bee-louse, the triungulin or young larva of the Oil-beetle.

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