

## Introduction

a wholesale wine merchant, a lawyer, a chemist, an undertaker, a librarian, an army officer, a navy officer, and any number of physicians and teachers who take the greatest delight in the study and collection of insects. Heaven will bless the old-fashioned country doctor for his self-sacrificing life and the good he has done to humanity. That will everywhere be granted, but he deserves an additional star in his immortal crown for the fact that he was the original naturalist in this country. Very many of our early workers were country doctors, and it has been through their influence that many naturalists have been made.

The principal aim of this book is to encourage the study of a rather neglected aspect of nature. The groups of insects which it considers are of very great extent. The wealth of material is so great that it has been only with the greatest difficulty that the book has been held within reasonable bounds. We have other books on insects, many of them much better from several points of view than this can hope to be, yet there has been a distinct object in writing this one, and if I had not thought that it was needed I should never have written it. One of the main desires in my mind in planning the method of treatment has been to encourage the study of life histories of insects. Where possible a typical life history has been given in each family treated. Some of these are moderately complete as to main facts, while others leave gaps in the life-round of the species. Such gaps can in many instances be easily filled by careful study. In a number of important and interesting groups, however, no typical life history can be given for the simple reason that no one has ever devoted sufficient care and time to the subject. The army of nature workers now springing up should not devote their whole time to the well-trodden paths of long known and clearly ascertained truths when they might just as easily, if they knew just where to look and what to do, study some unknown life-round and learn exact facts which would be contributions to knowledge. Professor L. C. Miall, of England, who has written several most interesting books on insects, has been a leader in this kind of work, but in this country very few perfectly complete life histories have been worked out. Most of these have been done by economic entomologists, and hence nearly all that we know are of insects of economic importance. Very many others, however, of which we are more or less ignorant, offer