

CHAPTER I

THE FABLE OF THE CICADA AND THE ANT

FAME is built up mainly of legend; in the animal world, as in the world of men, the story takes precedence of history. Insects in particular, whether they attract our attention in this way or in that, have their fair share in a folk-lore which pays but little regard to truth.

For instance, who does not know the Cicada, at least by name? Where, in the entomological world, can we find a renown that equals hers? Her reputation as an inveterate singer, who takes no thought for the future, has formed a subject for our earliest exercises in repetition. In verses that are very easily learnt, she is shown to us, when the bitter winds begin to blow, quite destitute and hurrying to her neighbour, the Ant, to announce her hunger. The would-be borrower meets with a poor