

ENTOMOLOGY.

Entomology.
Definition. ENTOMOLOGY, from *ἔντομα*, an insect, and *λόγος*, a discourse; the science which treats of insects, a class of animals, which were formerly arranged, along with CRUSTACEA and ARACHNIDES, under the general denomination of insects (INSECTA,) which, as we have already shown under the article CRUSTACEOLOGY, are now universally allowed to be distinct. The word *ἔντομα* is derived from *ἐν*, into, and *τέμνω*, to cut; and *insectum* has a similar root, from *in*, into, and *seco*, to cut, and because insects are divided into numerous segments, or from their being generally almost divided into two parts, which are merely attached to each other by a slender thread. The former term was made use of by Aristotle, who lived about 500 years before the Christian era, and seems to have been known much earlier than his time. It is defined by him to signify an animal which, by incisions, is severed into two or more parts. The latter word, *insectum*, is adopted by Pliny, and was in use among the Latins long before his time, and we find it applied in the same sense as the *ἔντομα* of Aristotle.

Importance of the science. As the animals of this class constitute the most considerable portion of animated beings, it becomes one of the most interesting and important sciences which can engage the mind of the philosopher. The extreme difficulty of discriminating the characters and particular affinities of these beings, arising from their number and variety of form, in addition to their minuteness, more strongly claims his consideration. He who neglects the study of insects, or thinks it beneath his notice, cannot deserve our respect, as a general observer of nature, nor be considered a scientific naturalist. The view of such a man will be partial, and his inquiries circumscribed; he regards only an inconsiderable portion of animated nature; and he confines his remarks to such as, from their size and distinctness of character, present the least obstacle to investigation. In the study of entomology, the man of science will find abundant scope for the exercise of his zeal. The amazing number of species; their curious forms, so infinitely varied, and yet so nearly and gradually approximating through an endless series of transitions from one species to another; the diversity of structure observable in those parts which afford generic characters, added to the wonderful changes in form which they undergo, with their surprising economy,—are circumstances which contribute to render them objects of most curious speculation to the philosopher. And although the study of every class of animals is most indisputably attended with peculiar advantages, yet we shall venture to affirm, that it is from a knowledge of the characters, metamorphoses, and various modes of life, these little animals are destined to pursue, that he will obtain a more intimate acquaintance with the great laws of nature, and veneration for the Great Creator of all, than can be derived from the contemplation of any other class in nature. Many other attractions accompany the study of this department of science. The beauty of insects in general, renders them engaging to many who have neither time nor inclination for studying their more complicated structure; and the gaiety of their colours, often combined with the most graceful forms, displays a beauty, splendour, and vivacity, greater than that bestowed by the hand of Nature on any of her other works. One

defect in appearance must indeed be conceded; and this may be regarded, in point of beauty, a material defect; they are not always so considerable in magnitude as to become, even with these embellishments, so strikingly attractive. Were they equal in size to the smallest birds, their elegance would render them more inviting in the eyes of mankind in general; but, even amongst the minor species, when examined with a microscope, we find their beauty and elegance far superior to that of any other class in nature. "After a minute and attentive examination," says Swammerdam, "of the nature and structure of the smaller as well as the larger animals, I cannot but allow an equal, if not superior, degree of dignity to the former. If, whilst we dissect with care the larger animals, we are filled with wonder at the elegant disposition of parts, to what a height is our astonishment raised, when we discover these parts arranged in the least in the same regular manner!"

Insects may be divided into two kinds; those which are immediately or remotely beneficial or injurious to mankind. Many insects certainly seem not to affect us in any manner; others, and by far the greater number, most assuredly fall under one or the other denomination, and surely on this account demand our most serious attention; but, lest our allusion to the utility of some insects should seem hypothetical to the superficial observer, whilst the noxious effects of others are too obvious to admit of doubt, we shall be more explicit in this observation. The depredations of insects upon vegetable bodies, are often detrimental; but it must be remembered, that in these ravages they often repay the injury they commit. The locust, the most destructive of all insects, whose numbers spread desolation through the vegetable world, are not (except on some occasions when their multiplication exceeds all bounds) unproductive of advantage. Although they deprive mankind of a certain portion of their vegetable food, yet, in return, their bodies afford nutriment of a wholesome and palatable kind, and in much greater abundance. The various species of locusts are the common food on which the inhabitants of many parts of the world subsist at particular seasons. The honey of bees, in many warm climates, constitutes another primary article of food. The caterpillars of several moths furnish materials for the silken raiment so universally worn by all ranks in the eastern parts of the world; and hence, in these countries, the silky produce of these industrious little animals is of as much use as the fleecy coat of the sheep is to us. As an object of traffic, silk is one of the utmost importance in China and Tartary; and, in those parts, paper is manufactured from the refuse of the same material. The extensive use of wax in all ages, is well known; but it is less generally understood that all wax is not produced by the bee alone; the wax-insect of China is a very distinct animal: (See CICADEA, *Index*; and Donovan's *Insects of China*.) Some insects are used with success in medicine; and many others (the cochineal, for instance,) are rendered useful in the arts; and greater numbers might perhaps also be employed for the same purposes. These few, out of a vast many more instances, are sufficient to prove the absurdity of an opinion very prevalent, "that insects are too insignificant to deserve the attention of

Entomology.

Uses of entomology.