

SCIENCE

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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1899.

THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF INSECTS AS A CLASS.*

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THE popular conception of insects in general is undoubtedly that they are injurious. Many writers, it is true, have pointed out the benefits derived from insects, but we think of their damage to crops and of their annoyance to man and animals, and this aspect of the subject is at once apt to preponderate in our minds. It is more than 80 years since Kirby and Spence contrasted the injuries caused by insects with the benefits derived from them, and it has not been comprehensively done since. In the meantime, whole groups of important injuries have been developed and whole classes of beneficial work have been discovered. Moreover, the tendency of modern thought has not taken this direction. The biologic, taxonomic and phylogenetic, and other aspects of large groups of forms of life have been considered to the exclusion of the economic aspect, and even where this side has attracted attention investigators have confined themselves to specific problems and have not generalized. It may be interesting, therefore, once more to contrast the injurious insects with the beneficial ones in an effort to gain a clearer idea of the status of the group in its relations with man.

In a broad way, we may consider the subject under the following heads :

MSS. intended for publication and books, etc., intended for review should be sent to the responsible editor, Professor J. McKeen Cattell, Garrison-on-Hudson N. Y.

* Address of the retiring President of the Biological Society of Washington, delivered January 18, 1899.