

A Short History of the Brown-Tail Moth (1782).  
William Curtis. London: The Curwen Press, 1969.  
[v], 18, [ii], 13 pp. \$9.30. Entomological Reprint  
Specialists, Los Angeles, California.

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## BOOK REVIEW

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BROWN-TAIL MOTH (1782). William Curtis. London: The Curwen Press, 1969. [v], 18, [ii], 13 pp. \$9.30. Entomological Reprint Specialists, Los Angeles, California.

This slim volume is easily one of the most attractive entomological reprints that has appeared to date. Most American entomologists are familiar with the story of the "brown-tail moth," *Nygmia phaeorrhoea* Donovan, the European species which was introduced into Massachusetts in the 1890s and became a serious pest in the northeastern United States and adjoining Canada until appropriate control measures were taken. The Brown-tail is a defoliator of forests, orchards and hedgerows, and as D. S. Fletcher explains in his entomological notes to this reprint, populations of the species periodically build up to epidemic levels and create havoc. Such an outbreak occurred near London in 1782, and caused widespread fear of a 'plague'. Curtis' pamphlet was written to quiet these fears and in it he described the life history of the moth, the nature of its depredations, and a suggested method of control: removing the webs in autumn or winter, and burning them.

Curtis' pioneer effort in economic entomology is one of the rarest of entomological books. Less than a half-dozen copies are presently located, and the Curwen reprint will be very welcome if for this reason alone. Yet this volume in the "Classica Entomologica" series must be praised for another feature. Esthetic quality has too often been the last consideration of publishers of scientific reprints, but Curwen has taken the greatest care to assure a physically attractive book. The introductory material is printed on a good wove paper, utilizing a very pleasing typeface and ample margins. In the facsimile portion, an off-white machine-made laid paper has been used for closer approximation to the original. Comparison with my own copy of the first edition shows that Curwen has realized superb reproduction of the colored plate, which for technical reasons must have been a difficult task.

There is an interesting introduction concerning Curtis by the well-known historian of botany W. T. Stearn. Curtis is best known for his *Flora Londinensis* (1775-98) and *Botanical Magazine* (1787- ), but his entomological publications included papers and three books. In addition to the present one, these were *Instructions for Collecting and Preserving Insects* (1771), and a volume that Stearn does not mention, an important English translation of Andrew John Bladh's *Fundamenta Entomologiae* (1772), from the Latin version printed in the seventh volume of Linnaeus' *Amoenitates Academicae*, with the addition of plates prepared for Curtis. The only fault that can be found with Stearn's introduction is that he gives too little space to Curtis' entomological publications, a subject which would have been more appropriate for this reprint than an explanation (however interesting) of his botanical contributions. For example, the Bladh translation was an excellent and somewhat popular English introduction to Linnean entomology, with a useful bibliography of entomological books, and the *Instructions* was the first separate handbook of entomological techniques in English, if we except the printed sheets of James Petiver and Benjamin Wilkes. These points could have been made, but the absence of a well-balanced discussion of Curtis' entomological work detracts only slightly from the overall quality of this very appealing book.

R. S. Wilkinson