

A Bibliographical Description of Thomas Martyn's *The English Entomologist* (1792)

By Dr. RONALD STERNE WILKINSON*

Thomas Martyn, not to be confused with the well-known botanist (1735-1825) of the same name, was an illustrator and naturalist best known for his *The Universal Conchologist* (London, 1784 [-92]), but he was also responsible for an edition of Albin's and Clerck's works on arachnids, *Aranei, or a Natural History of Spiders* (London, 1793), and was the author of *The English Entomologist* (London, 1792), as well as one of the rarest and most bibliographically interesting of entomological works, *Psyche: Figures of Non descript Lepidopterous Insects* (London, 1797). Martyn's varied and sometimes eccentric pamphlets ranged in subject from the new phenomenon of ballooning to patriotism in the face of the French threat.¹

Despite its shortcomings, *The English Entomologist* was a pioneering work on the British Coleoptera. In it, Martyn attempted to portray a considerable number of species by means of coloured illustrations. Only the genera are actually described in his text, and these are referred to Linnaeus. Most of the species depicted on the plates are identified in a table following the text, showing that Martyn had also consulted the works of Fabricius, Scopoli, Olivier, Forster, De Geer and Schrank. Martyn was not able to assign names to some of the insects he illustrated; some of his identifications were surely incorrect; and a number of the figures are of little help to the reader. Because of these reasons Martyn has not received his due from coleopterists, but it must be remembered that relatively few authors before his ambitious work had dealt with British beetles. *The English Entomologist* seems an amateur effort indeed when compared to the grand surveys of the nineteenth century, but viewed from the proper direction, it was a brave attempt to reduce chaos into order.

The bibliography of Martyn's book has been confused for two reasons: its printing and its assembly. There was a dual printing of the text in English and French, each with a separate title, so that copies of three basic sorts are found, (1) English text with plates; (2) French text with plates; and (3) both texts, one after the other, with plates. I have examined or obtained bibliographical data about forty-two copies of *The English Entomologist*, and it is obvious that one could originally purchase the work in his choice of the three. Further confusion has resulted from the ways in which binders have assembled the components of each, and the order of an "ideal" copy of the third sort, including all components, has not been sufficiently established.

The acquisition by the Michigan State University Library (East Lansing) of a remarkably preserved copy provides the opportunity of describing what, from my survey, appears to be an "ideal" assemblage. The tan wove wrappers are not printed, and bear no present evidence of having had a label,

* The American Museum of Natural History, New York City, New York 10024.

although one may have become detached. The pages, untrimmed and thus in their original size, measure 35.4 by 28.2 cms. The copy includes, as originally stitched, the engraved title, preliminaries and text in English; all of the same in French; the [partial] table of contents of the plates; the coloured plates; and the uncoloured plates of medals. The pagination is [i-vi], 1-[34], [i-vi], 1-[42], [i-iv] pp., 42 numbered and 2 unnumbered plates, detailed as follows:

English: [i] engraved title; [ii] verso blank; [iii-v] dedication; [vi] blank; 1-8 Preface; 9-16 Introduction to Entomology; 17-33 Ordines Insectorum [followed by] Ordo I. Insecta Coleoptera; [34] blank. *French*: [i] engraved title; [ii] verso blank; [iii-vi] dedication; 1-7 Préface; [8] blank; 9-18 Introduction à l'entomologie; 19-41 Des différens ordres d'insectes [followed by] Ordre premier. Insectes coléoptères; [42] blank. General Table [of plates]; 42 numbered hand-coloured plates of insects; two unnumbered and uncoloured plates of medals titled "Aurea Numismatica".²

All the leaves are unsigned, but due to the condition in wrappers an accurate description of the gatherings can be made according to the following collation: engraved title, [A]², [B-E]⁴, [F]¹, engraved title, [G]², [H-L]⁴, [M]¹, [N]², plates. (The signature letters are, of course, hypothetical.)

It should be emphasised that although this is a reasonable order of all components of *The English Entomologist*, "English editions" or "French editions" bound individually should not be rejected as incomplete, as they were issued for sale in that manner. However, a complete "English" or "French" copy should have the appropriate components of title, preliminaries and text for the language, with the General Table, the 42 coloured plates, and the two plates of medals.

NOTES

¹ A brief sketch about Martyn is in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. His birth and death dates are unknown, but apparently he was still alive in 1816. Martyn's most extensive work, *The Universal Conchologist*, has produced a number of commentaries, but his entomological books have attracted lesser notice. A full account of the published states of *Psyche*, the unpublished plates, and the interesting sources of the work has yet to be written; a census of copies was conducted by F. J. Griffin and C. D. Sherborn (1931), *The Library Association Record*, 3 ser., 1: 192-194. A number of Martyn's curious pamphlets can be located, sometimes with difficulty, in the British Library.

² The plates of medals (awarded to Martyn for his work on shells) are wanting in many copies of *The English Entomologist*, apparently due to extraction for numismatic or decorative use; it may be that some copies did not originally contain these plates. Although the placement of the entomological plates is constant, after the printed matter, the numismatic plates are the most variable component in that respect, appearing at various positions.

³ The edition was printed on a variety of thick wove paper. In the copy described, the English text is on paper watermarked J. Whatman; the watermark of the French text is capital WL. The plates and titles are unwatermarked. The only evidence of a printer's identity is at the end of the English text (p. 33): the Shakspeare Press, by W. Bulmer & Co. The English text, the French text and the table are all in differing type, which with the varying watermarks would suggest a complex printing history. At least one of the original drawings has survived (Plate 27), in the British Museum (Natural History).



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