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was again described by Serville in the 'Histoire Naturelle des Orthoptères,' p. 443, who instituted a new genus for its reception—*Thliboscelus*. There appears to be no doubt that the two authors had the same insect in view: this is partly shown by the expression of Fabricius, "Thorax segmentis tribus," which accords with the description of Serville, who says, "Disque du prothorax ayant deux sillons transverses assez distincts." If this character can be relied on, it would show that they had not our species before them; for the *Chlorocœlus Tanana* has only one transverse furrow to the prothorax. This, however, is the only positive point of difference I can detect in the lengthy characters given by Serville. Fabricius gives "America" as the locality for his insect; Serville states that his specimen came from Brazil. The *Thliboscelus camellifolia* of the British Museum is a North American insect. The generic characters of *Thliboscelus* given by Serville suit well our insect in every point, except that they do not include the great convexity of the elytra. He mentions their great breadth and obtuseness, and the bent direction of the longitudinal nervure (as well as that of the corresponding nervures of the wings); but these points do not enable me to decide, in the absence of express allusion to the striking character of their great convexity. It was necessary to give our insect a name in order to record the interesting facts relating to its structure and habits*, and therefore there was no remedy but to give it a new one.

XXXVI.—Notes on the British Museum Catalogue of Homoptera.

By C. STÅL, Ph.D., Stockholm.

I HAVE lately been occupied in making some synonymical notes upon the species described by Mr. Walker in the British Museum Catalogue of Homopterous Insects. I am proposing to publish them. As a preface to these notes I offer this paper, in which I desire to make some remarks upon the scientific value of these and other works which are published as descriptive catalogues of Homoptera.

The numerous papers of Mr. Walker upon nearly all orders of insects have already received their verdict from the most eminent Continental entomologists who have made different orders their special study. Concerning the papers upon Homoptera, an order of insects unhappily having very few students, and still fewer who have to study added knowledge, there have only hitherto been pub-

* These are described in a narrative of my travels which is now nearly ready for publication.

lished some synonymical notes by Dr. Signoret upon the Tettigonides and Cercopides described by Mr. Walker in the Museum Catalogues. It becomes my duty to furnish to entomologists of all countries some examples of the many errors into which this author has fallen: my conscientious regard for English entomologists, and respect for their scientific knowledge, induces me to publish my remarks in an English journal.

The first remark that I have to make is respecting the nomenclature of the author. It is ever disagreeable to meet with names badly constructed and in no way appropriate; however, I should not have stopped at this matter, if the descriptive and scientific parts of the papers had had any value at all. Why hundreds of times use such terms as *basimacula*, *dorsimacula*, *quadrinaculata*, *rufi-fascia*, *albivitta*, *dorsisigna*, *flavisigna*, *biplaga*, *bifascia*, *unifascia*, *multifascia*, *lativitta*, *brevivitta*, *multistriga*, &c., when the usual and correct term is *basi-maculata*, *dorso-maculata*, *quadrinaculata*, *rufo-fasciata*, *albovittata*, *biplagiata*, *multistrigata*, &c.; or such names as *basistella*, *speilinea*, *speicarina*, *albiplana*, *biconica*, *basiflamma*, *annulivena*, *bifacies*, *basispes*, *flosfoliæ*, &c., composed of words each having a signification, but which when compounded into one word have no signification that can be understood? When Linné named and described a *Cicada septemdecim*, he had good reason for so doing, and every one who knows the history and habits of that species will acknowledge the name to be good and appropriate; but when Mr. Walker calls a species *Dundubia duarum* (!!!), and another *Dundubia decem* (!), every one will be only perplexed, and ask why the species were not called *secunda* and *decima*, names which, if not at all characteristic, can at least be understood, and which will not be considered *completely absurd*.

Now, first, because the terminology is often very obscure and to be condemned, and secondly, because the author shows an entire want of knowledge of the first principles of the system, it is very often almost impossible to understand, and quite impossible to make any use at all of his papers. It is the first and most essential duty of a descriptive author to make himself acquainted with the scientific terminology; and if unhappily this rule is not followed out in all cases, still such occasional occurrences are pardonable, and generally of minor value, and are not to be compared with those to be met with in the works of Mr. Walker. It will be sufficient for me to give as illustrations terms that are strictly mathematical, and so well known and understood in common life, that it would appear ridiculous in any one not to comprehend their signification; but even such are

frequently confounded by Mr. Walker in the most careless manner. Apparently as if he were unacquainted with the distinction between a solid body and a plane figure, terms belonging to one are frequently employed as if they were terms belonging to the other: thus he uses the term *macula conica* for what ought to be, I presume from the insect, *macula triangularis*, *margo convexus* (or *concavus*) for *margo rotundatus* (or *sinuatus*), *caput hemisphæricum* for *semicirculare*, &c.; very frequently the transverse nervures of the wings are spoken of as upright, *nervi erecti*, and other nonsense.

But we can only understand that the entomological papers of Mr. Walker are of no scientific value whatever when we examine the collections used by him. It will be found almost impossible to determine from his descriptions alone such species as are not distinctly marked by certain patterns of coloration, or by other similarly striking characters, and that even in the case where these species are placed (at hazard) in the genera, or at least in the group, or even family to which they truly belong. Species that are well defined may be readily recognized by a description, if they are placed among the group to which they in truth belong; but if the species is placed in another group, as a *Chrysomela* amongst *Halticas*, or a *Vanessa* among *Noctuas*, it is impossible, even if the descriptions are *truly good*, to identify it under that position. Any one who will take the trouble to investigate the synonymical notes which I propose to publish will see that the same, frequently entirely well-known and quite constant species is sometimes described *four, five, six*, and even *eleven times* over! not only under different specific names, but frequently even as belonging to *two* or *three* different genera! and if those species which would not to other entomologists probably present even the slightest variety are to be found placed by him in the same genus, they are often separated from each other by species that have no affinity to them, and which often belong to other very distinct genera. Sometimes species are described from specimens in very bad condition, mutilated, or so much injured by having been kept in spirits, that they are not suitable for any collection; and these cannot be determined in most cases even from the type-specimens, much less with the help of the descriptions. Some of the types described are not in the collection of the Museum.

A number of species are described as belonging to the genus *Elidiptera* of Spinola, but of these not one truly belongs to that genus, nor even to the group to which that genus belongs; the species that Mr. Walker has fancifully brought together as constituting this genus of Spinola belong, in fact, to *seven* different genera,

and these again to *three* very distinct groups or subfamilies. In a short paper recently printed in the 'Journal of Entomology' (vol. i. No. 5), Mr. Walker has described two new genera; one of them, *Thessitus*, is said to be "allied to" the genus *Elidiptera*: this is certainly a mistake; the genus has not *any relation whatever* to *Elidiptera*—not even to *any of the genera which Mr. Walker has confounded with that genus* in the Museum Catalogue. One other genus of that paper, *Dechitus*, is said to be "allied to" *Cotrades*, and also to *Serida*, genera founded by Mr. Walker himself; but, again, this equally is utterly a misconception, these two genera belonging most apparently, by every character of the insects, to *different subfamilies, and neither of them to the same subfamily as Dechitus!* The nothing-saying, meaningless characters given by Mr. Walker of these two genera are such as will not enable any entomologist to determine them without the aid of the figures of Mr. Robinson: these at once show us that these two genera are nearly allied to, or, if you please, identical with, the genus *Eurybrachys*, one of the most striking forms amongst insects! Several of the species described by Mr. Walker under the generic name *Elidiptera* belong to *Flatoides* of Guérin: certainly in the Catalogue of Homopterous Insects in the Collection of the British Museum there will be found a great number of species placed in the genus *Flatoides*, but *not one truly belonging to that genus!*—the species must be placed *in other distinct genera, belonging to different groups of the family FULGORINA!*

In the British Museum Collection are three examples of an Australian *Aphrophora*, very striking in form and coloration: one of them is described with doubt as a new species of *Clastoptera*, a genus truly belonging to the family *Cercopina*, but placed by Mr. Walker amongst the *Jassina*; the second specimen he describes, also with doubt, as a new species, but places it in the genus *Aphrophora*; when for the third specimen he fabricates a third new species, he seems to be sure that it belongs to the well-known genus *Aphrophora*—at least there is no sign of doubt given after the generic name. It is wonderful to say, that these three examples are *the same identical species one with the other.*

A very great number of species are described as belonging to the genus *Ledra*, a very curious and distinct genus in habit and characters: on examining the species placed in that genus in the Museum Collection, it will at once be seen that the greater number of species placed there belong not only to other genera, but to genera belonging to some other, and, from the situation of the ocelli, very striking groups of the family *Jassina*. Of the species belonging truly

to the genus *Ledra*, most of them are described *twice* or *thrice* under different specific names.

The genus *Cœlidia* of Germar is perhaps the most striking of any in the family *Jassina*; and, in my opinion, an entomologist who at first sight cannot at once distinguish that genus is not qualified to write papers on Homoptera. Mr. Walker describes a number of species which, apparently by accident, he places in this genus *Cœlidia* (and they belong, in fact, to that genus); but a number of species belonging to the same genus he describes and places (why, it is difficult to imagine) in other genera, such as *Bythoscopus* and *Tettigonia*, where no one would think of looking for them: and again, when he describes a new genus, *Daridna*, not at all distinct from *Cœlidia*, which belongs to *Jassina*, why place that genus *Daridna* in the family *Fulgorina*, the most natural and the most striking of all natural groups of insects? (!)—and again, when he describes another new genus, *Gabrita*, which probably will not prove to be distinct from *Cœlidia* (as the latter genus contains the typical species of *Gabrita*, described for a second time and under another specific name), why does he place those two genera in two different groups of the family *Jassina*?

It is very painful to be compelled to make these strictures. I have confined myself to a few: were I to mention all that I have observed, it would require a volume to enumerate them. The above examples will prove that the Catalogues are so deficient in scientific value, that, I trust, they will be declared non-existing; and all serious entomologists will, with myself, regret that the Catalogues of Homoptera published by the British Museum, and the descriptions of the fine collections of these insects made by Mr. Wallace, have been the work of an entomologist not at all acquainted with that order of insects.

I am obliged to the British Museum and to the gentlemen of the insect department for the great courtesy and attention that I have received while studying this group. I desire to manifest my sense of the consideration which has been accorded to me; I cannot do so better than by offering myself as the person who earnestly asks them quietly and for ever to withdraw, for the sake of science, these volumes of their Catalogue from the light of day.

[The concluding sentence of the above critique will probably be thought unnecessarily severe; but as, in our absence from town, the article had been distributed in a separate form before we had seen it in print, we have, although with great hesitation, allowed it to

remain without alteration. We considered it right, however, to send Mr. Walker a copy, in order to afford him an opportunity of making his remarks on it (if he considered it desirable to do so), that they might be published at the same time as the above. Those who know that gentleman's amiability of character will not be surprised that he should shrink from anything involving the possibility of a controversy; but he will examine the alleged errors and "take an opportunity of publishing corrections of them."—ED.]