

years I have been occupied with the study of Diptera, and have been obliged to spend many hours in identifying (how often fruitlessly!) the published descriptions. What renders the identification of a very great number of the existing descriptions so very difficult, is the inexactness of the system used. For however natural the axiom may appear, that a new species is only to be located in the genus to which it really belongs, it is so little respected by most dipterological writers, that a long list could be made out of the instances in which they have sinned against it; indeed the number of cases, in which a new species has been placed in a wrong family, is not small. It is not even always sufficient to place it in the right genus, for as soon as this genus is at all numerous in species, or the species are difficult to distinguish, the peculiar group of the genus to which the new species belongs should be pointed out, and if among the species already well known there are any very similar to those described, they ought of necessity to be specially mentioned. Consequently only those entomologists will publish new Diptera with success, who are completely acquainted with the system of this order of insects, whereas he who has a defective knowledge of it, far from advancing science, lays impediments in its way. The first task, then, for those who intend to come forth with satisfactory papers on the field of Dipterology, will of course be to acquire a most complete and sure knowledge of the system.

As an introduction to the following essays of a more monographic character, will be found a short sketch of the terminology of Diptera, as well as one of the dipterological system. The latter afforded me an opportunity of giving an outline of the North American dipterological fauna, as far as known to me at present. An elaborate classification, equally detailed in all its parts, would require not only a larger amount of materials than I have at my disposal, but also, in order to be intelligible, a considerable number of plates. I am compelled, therefore, to give up such an undertaking for the present, I hope, however, to be able to execute it at some future time. Although I trust that my short sketch will prove of some help to the student, by furnishing him occasionally a useful hint, or guiding him right in general, it will be readily understood that in the prosecution of the study he will require more detailed information. I will, therefore, briefly indicate the works in which he may find it: Meigen's *Zweiflügelige Insecten* (7 vols.