

era in the Trans. Am. Ent. Soc., and other publications, exhibits a number still larger. How were so many originated? and, Have they any value? are questions that it may not be unprofitable to briefly consider. As to their origin, it may be asked: Are they descriptions of the same forms made by different writers in ignorance of what had previously been done? or, of forms that at the time were regarded as distinct, but afterwards, by connecting links, seen to be but variations within specific limits? or, from mistaken identification and other causes? The history of American Coleopterology shows all these to have been factors in varying quantities. Before the year 1824, no description of any species (so far as known) had been published on this side of the Atlantic; but, for more than one hundred years previously, large numbers had from time to time been taken over and described in every country of Europe, many of them several times by as many names. The works of these various describers were mostly unknown or inaccessible to American students of that period, so that when Mr. Thomas Say, the founder of this branch of Entomology here, undertook the description of our species at the year mentioned, it was often impossible for him to know what had been done abroad. Haldeman, Melsheimer and others thus continued the work till 1844, they and the Europeans making synonyms reciprocally, in ignorance of what each had done. About this time appeared a talented, scholarly, enthusiastic young man, who, on seeing so many of "our finest insects going to Europe for names," with Juvenal exclaimed, "*Siccum jecur ardeat ira*," and forthwith the immortal Leconte devoted his life (as he informs us) "to the classification and naming of American Coleoptera, even at the risk of creating much synonymy." How well he did his work needs not to be told to the Coleopterological world of either hemisphere. The synonymy made proves to be much below what might have been reasonably anticipated. Mr. S. Henshaw in his Index gives, to that time, the number of species named by Dr. Leconte as 4,734, to which is to be added 80 published posthumously—in all, 4,814. Of these only 864 were considered synonyms, and 188 as races or varieties. This kind of synonymy may be termed re-descriptive, and with proper care and a judicious restraint on haste, but little of it should be made with us hereafter.

A second source of synonymy arose from the descriptions of certain forms as distinct, that differed so much from the assumed type—perhaps in size, ornamentation, or even structure—as to seem different, but subse-