

Museum of Natural History, where many and even little varying species are to be seen in long series, sometimes from one locality. Some may think that such is a waste of space, but there is this to be said in its favour, that whereas a long and picked series of one species, from one locality or many, may indicate to what extent it varies, a long series of another may indicate that that varies but little at all.

It has been admitted by many men of science that, at any rate, a very large number of so-called "genera" are purely conventional terms, for the mere convenience of the student. As an instance, let me go back twenty-one years and quote Prof. Smith's words in Bulletin No. 38,\* U. S. N. M., page 6: "I had at one time the strong conviction that genera were natural assemblages, capable of strict limitation, and definite in extent. The study of a very large material since that time has convinced me that my first impression was erroneous, that genera as such are mere artificial divisions of convenience, useful for the purpose of identification, and for the expression of relationship, and that they were useful for that purpose just in proportion as they expressed clear and definite association of characters. . . . The limits to which generic division may be carried will depend entirely upon the tact and individual propensities of an author, and in a large part also upon the tendency of the time at which he is writing. After a period of wild generic creation, there comes usually a reaction, in which lumping is carried to an extreme, and this is true as to species as well as genera." Yes, and through it all the species remain the same. Like Br'er Rabbit, they "lie low and keep on sayin' nuffin'!" Yet generic division is apt to be looked upon as the acme of science, to say nothing of the designation of certain forms as "new species," without the least idea of the extent of their variation, or the character or sum of characters which, through their sundry phases of variation, may present evidence that they are alien from their allies, or at any rate from forms from which they are assumed to differ biologically. Too much is taken for granted. Too much is stated as fact that is really pure speculation, without evidence being brought forward in support of the hypothesis. It seems to me that he is just as true a student of nature who is constantly testing those facts and bringing all available evidence to bear upon them, not from one point of view alone, but from all the various sources from which it may be drawn.

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\*Revision of *Agrotis*.