

FURTHER NOTES ON ALBERTA LEPIDOPTERA.

BY F. H. WOLLEY DOD, MILLARVILLE, ALBERTA.

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During the course of studies at my own and various other collections, I have paid far more attention to variation in colour and maculation than to structural characters upon which "Genera" are based. I am strongly of opinion that by far too little importance is usually attached to these characters in articles published on Lepidoptera on this Continent. I have no wish to under-rate the value of many structural characters in showing the relationship and phylogeny of forms. But though, theoretically, a tabulated key of genera should enable a student to identify an unknown species with far greater ease than where no such key exists, it is a deplorable fact that I have noticed some far worse mixtures of species, and often of very distinct genera, in collections owned or supervised by systematists, than in many of those of collectors who make no pretense of studying generic characters at all. It may be asked, "How can I prove it?" I can at present only offer the dried specimens themselves as evidence, it is true, and in the knowledge of many very variable species there can be no such thing as certainty, except by careful breeding from known parents. But in the case of little varying forms, there is such a thing as knowing a species by sight, and suggested errors have in very many instances been borne out by non-related, or at least admittedly disassociated points of structure.

This state of affairs is, it seems, due to several causes. Nowadays, unless a student classifies by structure and dissects, and publishes articles on these lines, his work is not considered of much value. It is too elementary! Systematic work unquestionably is of high value, but close attention to such limits the time necessary for familiarization with the species separated by its aid. Then again, most of these systematic workers direct their attentions to so many different families or orders that their knowledge becomes too general. And another reason, perhaps coincident with and resulting from both the foregoing, may be that, once their system is laid down, their work is too hasty.

Frequently in looking over other collections I have been struck by the small amount of material exposed for study, even where much more was really available. It is obvious that lack of both time and space has often been the reason for that, but it, nevertheless, suggests that variation is not studied as it might be. One notable exception was in the American