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WHAT IS A GENUS?*

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This question is one that it is extremely difficult to answer satisfactorily.

The great naturalist, Agassiz, in his Essay on Classification, wrote : "Genera are most closely allied groups of animals differing * * * simply in the ultimate structural peculiarities of some of their parts."

The Century Dictionary defines genus as "a classificatory group ranking next above the species, containing a group of species (sometimes a single species) possessing certain structural characters different from those of any others." It goes on, however, to say : "The value assigned to a genus is wholly arbitrary—that is, it is entirely a matter of opinion or current usage what characters shall be considered generic and thus constitute a genus; and genera are constantly modified and shifted by specialists, the tendency being mostly to restriction of genera, with the constant multiplication of their numbers, and the coinage of new generic names. A genus has no natural, much less necessary, definition, its meaning being at best a matter of expert opinion; and the same is true of the species, family, order, class, etc."

It will doubtless be readily granted, however much we may differ as to generic values, that at least all the individuals of the same species should belong to the same genus, but this, unfortunately, is not always the case, as some species vary sufficiently in structure to run into two or more genera, as these are frequently defined.

Having had the good or bad fortune to find about the middle of August, 1898, a mature larva closely resembling that of *E. Oregonensis*, though differing in colour, from which I bred on 1st of April, 1899, a moth so closely resembling *E. Egle*[†] that probably 99 men out of a 100

*Read before the Montreal Branch, 13th May, 1902.

†The question whether the generic name *Euchaetes*, proposed by Harris, or *Euchaetias*, proposed by me, should be used for the genus of which this moth is the type, I am willing to leave to the principal authorities on such matters to decide, but wish to say what I perhaps did not make sufficiently clear in my note on page 52 (correcting my error in regard to the name I proposed for a genus in the Coleoptera), that in giving Mr. Henshaw's views upon the subject, as conveyed to me by letter, I did not mean it to be inferred that I accepted or concurred in them.