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THE DRAGON-FLIES AND DAMSEL-FLIES (ORDER ODONATA).

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In most parts of temperate North America the true Dragon-flies are among the most conspicuous members of the insect class in any community where water is at hand. Strong of flight, quick as a thought in their darting movements, wary in the highest degree, they are usually well-known to all by sight, yet not often captured by the amateur collector unless he takes the time to devote his special attention to them at some favourable place.

The Damsel-flies, on the other hand, are less wary and less active, and may often be caught in the hand or picked up in the fingers from their resting-place on grass-stems, etc. Their delicate wings and frail bodies are, however, easily broken, and they are not favourites with collectors, all the less so as they are quite difficult to classify even when in perfect condition.

Under the older system of classification, they were included in the order Neuroptera along with a number of other insects. By more recent workers they have been assigned an order to themselves—the Odonata. Some entomologists regard them as comprising but one family,—others as two families, but the tendency with the most modern workers who have devoted special attention to them is to group them into six and sometimes even seven families. It is therefore somewhat a matter of preference as to what system we shall adopt. For the purposes of this article we have divided them into six families, all of which are represented in Ontario, and all but one, quite commonly.

CLASSIFICATION INTO FAMILIES.

The characters used in classifying the Odonata into families are based wholly upon the wings and the eyes, and are characters which are easily recognized if one first learns a little of the structure of these insects.

*In this article as well as in any others which he may contribute under the head of "Popular or Practical Entomology," the writer lays no claim to originality in the matter presented, nor are references to literature commonly quoted. The object here is to present the subject in a manner easily understood by non-technical readers.