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REMARKS ON COLLEMBOLA.

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That ingenuous character, the Man in the Street, commonly holds the erroneous opinion that an entomologist is a person who knows all about insects. Consequently, on the rare occasions when he brings some Entomological Department a "bug" to be named, if his specimen happens to be anything a little less common than a cicada or a Luna moth, he sustains a distinct shock when he finds that even the professional entomologist cannot tell him offhand exactly what it is, and must refer it to a specialist for determination. Our friend's surprise is, of course, due to the fact that he does not realize the vast, overwhelming abundance and variety of insect life; and he is not aware that no investigator, however studious, can even in the course of a whole life-time become acquainted with more than a small proportion of the prodigious number of different creatures included in the class Hexapoda.

And, besides the sole weight of numbers forcing the student of insects to specialize if he wishes to make any real progress, other influences also work in the same direction. The moths and butterflies, for instance, attract such a host of collectors as much by their beauty as by their biological interest, that there are probably more students of Lepidoptera than of all the other orders put together. Beetles, too, make a fine showing in a cabinet, and Coleopterists are legion. Then again, we are forced to give earnest if unwilling attention to those pestilent and all too numerous insects that devour our crops, bite our bodies, inoculate us with disease, or otherwise interfere with our living. All this tends to focus entomological study on certain handsome or obnoxious orders and categories, while other less showy or more inoffensive insects are passed over.

One of these neglected orders is the Collembola, familiarly known as Springtails. These insects are so minute that, preserved in alcohol in tiny vials or mounted on microscope slides, they make no display in a collector's cabinet. And they are practically without economic importance. Some slight injuries to garden and greenhouse have been alleged against them, but their very worst depredations bear about the same relation to the virulent activities of say the locusts or the mosquitoes, as a small boy with a peashooter does to a German army corps invading Belgium. Consequently, they have been little studied.

Unassuming and harmless as they are, however, they have always attracted some attention. Owing to their wide distribution and, at times, extraordinary abundance, they drew some notice even from the earliest naturalists. I do not know that they are mentioned in the classic though unreliable pages of the Elder Pliny, but Linnaeus did not overlook them, and with his passion for classification, duly tabulated them in his great "Systema Naturæ" under the generic name of Podura.