

## SUBDIVISION OF GENERA.

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I was pleased to see Mr. Cockerell's article on this subject in the September number of the CANADIAN ENTOMOLOGIST, and hope we may hear from others on the question. It seems to me that a genus should, as far as possible, represent a natural division of a group of plants or animals so distinct from other groups that the species forming the genus are easily referred to it. In botany we recognize at a glance such natural genera as *Carex*, *Rosa*, *Quercus*, etc. The fact that the first of these is a large genus is, it seems to me, no good reason why any subdivisions of it should be called genera, for each plant in any one of the divisions is as much a *Carex* as any other one. If the genus is too large to suit the convenience of the practical worker in some part of his work, I have no objection to a subdivision of the genus into groups; in fact every botanist knows that the species do readily divide into such groups. Perhaps it is best to give names to these group divisions instead of numbers or letters as is sometimes done. The main objection I can see to this is that some one, in labeling the specimens in his cabinet and in making his exchanges, will use these names as generic, leading to more or less confusion.

But what is the custom among systematists in different groups of natural history? To answer this question I turn to a few works that come to my hand, and find the following:—

In Botany I find that Wood divides *Carex* into two groups without names; the genus *Aster* into four groups with names. Mann's Catalogue makes no division of the genera; published 1868. Gray in his "Manual," 1856, subdivides fifty-four genera, using names for the subdivisions, five of these being in the Mosses and Liverworts. In his "School and Field Book" he does substantially the same thing. In his "Synoptical Flora of North America," 1886, he pursues the same plan, the names in most, if not all cases, such as had been used for such subdivisions by some other writer in calling them genera.

In Ornithology I find that Coues in "Key to North American Birds," 1872, makes no divisions of the genera. Baird, Brewer and Ridgway, in "History of N. A. Land Birds," 1874, divide eleven genera by using subgenera names, and divide one genus by sections that are numbered. Mr. Ridgway does the same thing in "Birds of Illinois," 1885.