

## A CLASSIFICATION OF THE NORTH AMERICAN SPIDERS.

BY NATHAN BANKS, WASHINGTON, D. C.

The author has frequently been asked why he did not make a key for the families of spiders. He has answered that a correct key was impossible. But as such questions are getting more numerous, and connected with a desire to know something about spiders, the author has decided to put together what he could as a contribution to the classification of our spiders, principally for the use of those who are unable to obtain the costly works necessary for study.

I shall consider the family the highest group separated by definite characters; not but what certain families possess transition forms, but that the groups higher than the families are not defined by definite characters, but by tendencies. Two groups above the families I shall recognize, the higher the division, the lower the section; the section embracing certain families, the division one or more sections. To these I shall not attempt to make a key, but only designate their general characters and the families which they embrace. In the key for the families I shall be arbitrary; but in the system which follows I shall try to indicate the natural affinities.

The classification of spiders is difficult because of the few characters that can be used. This is not often understood by those who study insects. Let the entomologist cut off from his insect the wings, the antennæ, one pair of palpi, unite the abdominal segments, obliterate all sutures, and how many characters will he have left! Yet even then he will have far more than the student of spiders can find in his subject.

A few words in explanation of the characters used in the key. The body of a spider is very definitely divided into two parts—the anterior, the cephalothorax; the posterior, the abdomen. Upon the anterior part of the cephalothorax are the eyes; the region they occupy is called the eye region. The eyes are arranged in transverse rows; abbreviations referring to them are frequently used, as S. E. side eyes; A. E. anterior eyes; P. E. posterior eyes; M. E. middle eyes; from these are made compounds, A. S. E. anterior side eyes, etc. Dark coloured eyes are diurnal, light coloured eyes are nocturnal. The region between the anterior row of eyes and the anterior or clypeal margin of the cephalothorax is called the clypeus or fillet. A groove on the meson toward the posterior part of the cephalothorax is called the median groove. There are more or less distinct furrows extending from the groove to the sides,