

## THE GENERA IN THE NOCTUIDÆ.

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It must be conceded that there is a want of correspondence between authors as to the generic names employed in the *Noctuide*; perhaps a greater than in other families of Lepidoptera. The main cause appears to lie in the two systems of classification. The old system, under which the species were assorted into genera from their superficial characters, found its highest expression in the works of Guenée. The new system, commenced by Stephens and Lederer, deals with the ultimate structure of certain parts, and is yet working out its results in the direction which all systems must pursue, that of perfectly reflecting in our books the order which obtains in nature itself. To this end the new system must extend itself, and is extending itself, witness the work of Packard and Dyar, to a study of the insect in all its stages. Here a narrow insistence on any one character must defeat the general aim.

The want of correspondence above spoken of in the generic titles of the *Noctuide* is, then, greatly owing to the different systems which underlie the arrangement. Perhaps, in the one case, I ought to say the want of system. While, in the butterflies, there exists a more distinctly expressed correspondence between superficial characters, form, colour, pattern, size, and structural characters, this correspondence is greatly wanting in the moths, where series of very similar appearing species are found to be structurally very different. While, then, ancient and modern genera in the butterflies more nearly cover each other, and the generic types are more easily fixed upon as a whole, there is a wider divergence in the *Noctuide*. For instance, I will take the genus *Xylena*, Hübn., Tent. The type and sole species (therefore the type) of this genus is *X. lithoxylea*. This insect belongs to Stephens's later genus *Xylophasia*, a genus recognized variously as either distinct from or as a group of *Hadena*, or, again, as not being really separable by valid characters. The genus *Xylena*, Hübn., 1806, is then, a *Hadenoïd* genus, proposed for a *Hadenoïd* species. In 1816, Ochsenheimer, 4, 85, adopts the spelling and cites Hübner for the genus *Xylena*. But now comes the old system, and Ochsenheimer arranges 30 species under his genus *Xylena*, most of them strongly dissonant in structure. The modern system separates Ochsenheimer's species of *Xylena*, and breaks up his genus under some 12 different genera, and places these in different groups up and down in the family. The type of *Xylena* (*lithoxylea*) is also included by Ochsenheimer, and,