

Conte

NORTH AMERICAN DIPTERA.

INTRODUCTION.

THE writer has, during the past five years, published in different periodicals various synoptic tables of the families and genera of North American Diptera. The intention was, at first, to reprint these with revisions, that they might be more accessible to those interested in this order of insects. In order to make, it is trusted, the tables of more service, those of other families have been added, either as compiled or reproduced from standard authorities, or prepared from the examination of specimens in the author's collection. It will be understood, however, that, in not a few families, the present condition of American dipterology does not admit of the preparation of synopses free from error; the writer's acquaintance, too, with not a few families, has been less complete than with others, and it is very true that only he who has made a critical study of abundant material is competent to compile such tables with much success. For this reason, the tables of genera in the Nematocerous and Muscid families have been omitted. It may be mentioned that very nearly all the genera defined in the present work have been examined by the writer, though not all with the same degree of critical study. The faunal limits embraced are those north of Mexico; and whenever extralimital forms are introduced they will be found preceded by a °.

The student will soon learn that the characters of many flies are not so simple and apparent as a mere synoptic table would indicate them to be. He will often be puzzled at the interpretation of characters, even after he has acquired a considerable experience. Furthermore, it is often necessary to study any author a considerable time before he becomes thoroughly familiar with his peculiarities of style and modes of expression; he must become, one may say, familiar with the personal equation of each writer before he can feel confidence in the results obtained from him. It is precisely those authors who reduce that personal equation to the minimum who are most successful as describers. One, for instance, may feel confident of a determination of a species described by Macquart,