

ON ENTOMOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE.

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Part II.—On Generic Types.

“Ignorato genere proprio, nulla descriptio, quamvis accurate tradita certum demonstret; sed plerumque fallat.”—CÆSALP. apud Linn., Syst-Nat., xii, 1, 13.

In the first part of this essay I endeavored to show the confusion which resulted from the application of the law of priority to the names employed in the early development of our science by persons who had no idea corresponding to the law which has since been formulated. We will now attempt to discuss the second great fallacy in the exegesis of the writings of the founders of the science; the selection on principles, more or less arbitrary, but always opinionative, of generic types, when these *have not been explicitly* mentioned by the author.

With the more minute observation of differences in structure, and the consequent multiplication of genera, has arisen an idea that all classification, generic and otherwise, is simply a human contrivance for the purpose of expressing degrees of resemblance between the organic forms which we collect and recognize as distinct.

In short, that our best efforts to ascertain the relations of organic beings has resulted, not in a system, but in a dictionary.

This was not the idea of the fathers in science—nor is it the idea of many respectable students of the present day.

The language of Linnæus is clear upon this subject. ‘Genus et species nature opus;’ to him and to his followers there was no generic type. Each species comprised in the genus was equally typical, unless, as in rare cases, it was mentioned as aberrant, with a suspicion expressed in some instances that it would be subsequently separated as a distinct genus. When dissections were made, as in the fuller definitions in the foot notes in the works of Fabricius, it was not because the dissected species were selected peculiarly as the type of the genus (for in many instances the dissections are not part of the generic formula), but merely that the most common and available species was chosen for the purpose of giving more information than was conveyed by the condensed generic diagnosis.