

**THE STUDENT'S LIST OF
BRITISH COLEOPTERA, WITH
SYNOPTIC TABLES OF THE
FAMILLIES AND GENERA**

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The Student's List of British Coleoptera, with Synoptic Tables of the Families and Genera by
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FRANCIS P. PASCOE

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LIST
OF
BRITISH COLEOPTERA.

"That which we foolishly call vastness is, rightly considered, not more wonderful, nor more impressive, than that which we insolently call littleness."--RUSKIN.

"Would you know the eternal,
Study what is around you."

GOETHE

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PREFACE.

LISTS are necessarily compilations; and in this one I have almost entirely depended on the authority of previous compilers. For British species I have taken Dr. Sharp's 'Catalogue' (1871) as the most recent; and for synonyms I have gone principally to Gemminger and de Harold's 'Catalogus' (1868-74) and Stein and Weise's 'Catalogi' (1877). These, I think, contain the conclusions generally arrived at by Schaum, Erichson, Kraatz, and others, although there are often discrepancies in their determinations. Nor is this to be wondered at. Lacordaire maintained that to decide names from the older descriptions was impossible. Except in a few cases where the names seem to have survived without interruption, I have confined myself to such changes as do not go behind the last fifty years, or thereabouts, when the modern idea of genera began to be entertained.

Putting aside "the terrible mischief resulting from the constant alterations of names on the grounds of priority," the question remains, Is it desirable to change names which have been in use for the last fifty, or even hundred, years, and about which we have no doubt, for those supposed to be used in the dark ages of systematic entomology, which, in many (perhaps in most) cases

are uncertain? * Those authors had no scruple in altering their own names any more than those of their predecessors, and even taking their names and applying them to genera (or what they called genera) of their own. There can be no injustice therefore in disregarding claims, if such they be, given by a law which had then no existence.

Although the law of priority was mooted at an earlier date, the principle does not appear to have been acted on until after 1842; and in the Dresden Congress of 1858 it was expressly provided that the rule should not be absolute. For myself I decline to be bound by any absolute rule. When the name is barbarous, or absurd, or the very opposite of the character it ought to express, I take any better name, whatever its claims to priority may be. The law (good in some respects) has led to a scamping of descriptions, *pour prendre date* as our neighbours tersely say, and to an introduction of names, generic and specific, that would never have been proposed but for the supposed necessity of their being adopted.

Among some of the last-century writers whose names (mostly specific) it is now sought to revive, are Poda (1761), Goese (1777), Schrank (1781), Piller (1783), Zschach (1788), Brahm (1790), Hoppe (1795), and Orentzer (1799). Geoffroy (1762), who was thought to be in advance of his age, took the characters of his genera almost invariably from the antennæ. Linnæus, in one of his earliest works (*Elenchus Animalium*), so managed

* The uncertainty lies in this, that their descriptions are "unrecognizable," and made without a knowledge of allied species; the insect they had in view can only be guessed at; and the guessing admits of no prospect of agreement. In their descriptions of genera the most important parts of structure remained unnoticed.

Necydalis as to include *Clerus*, *Rhagium*, *Panagæus*, and *Attelabus*. In short the writers of those days seem to have framed their descriptions so as to embrace as many species as they could in one genus*; and the few species they knew were described with a brevity that might equally well suit half a dozen others.

The confusion, great as it already is, is only beginning if the law of priority is to be carried back to the last century. Just now *Tritoma*, so named by Geoffroy from the "three pieces composing the tarsi," is proposed to supersede *Mycetophagus*, and *Anthribus* to supersede *Brachytarsus*. By and by we shall have *Blatta* for *Blaps*†, *Attelabus* for *Tenebrio*, *Rhinomacer* for *Rhynchites*, *Bruchus* for *Ptinus*, *Mylabris* for *Bruchus*, *Cistela* for *Byrrhus*, *Byrrhus* for *Anobium*, and so on for others. So long as this resurrectionary mania lasts, it is useless to look for any permanence in nomenclature as far as European species are concerned.

The additions made to the beetle-fauna of the British Islands during the last ten or dozen years have not been many, and their

* Marsham, who, however, published his 'Entomologia Britannica' in 1802, has 68 species in *Dermestes* as it was then understood. Geoffroy described two new species of the same genus? the one in five, the other in six Latin words, accompanied by a French translation. But these are extreme cases.

† Since some modern authors draw the line behind which priority has no rights at the 10th edition of the 'Systema Naturæ' (1758), and others think the proper line is the 12th (1767), they may object to *Blatta* displacing *Blaps*; but, as has been well observed, the 1st edition (1735) "is the only consistent starting-point," since genera were then, for the first time, recognized. Trivial names did not make their appearance until 1751; this date may form another starting-point.