

**ORNITHOLOGICAL
SYNONYMS,
VOL. 1**

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Ornithological synonyms, Vol. 1 by Mrs. Hugh Edwin Strickland & Sir W. Jardine

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ORNITHOLOGICAL SYNONYMS.

BY THE LATE

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VOL. I.

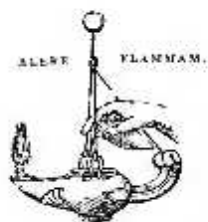
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ORNITHOLOGICAL SYNONYMY.

INTRODUCTION.

“ La détermination précise des espèces et de leurs caractères distinctifs fait la première base sur laquelle toutes les recherches de l'histoire naturelle doivent être fondées. Les observations les plus curieuses, les vues les plus nouvelles, perdent presque toute leur mérite quand elles sont dépourvues de cet appui; et malgré l'aridité de ce genre de travail, c'est par là que doivent commencer tous ceux qui se proposent d'arriver à des résultats solides.”—Cuvier.

“ Si la nomenclature est indispensable à connaître pour être en rapport avec tous les savans, la synonymie n'est guère moins nécessaire pour reconnaître avec certitude le nom qui doit être adopté de préférence à tout autre, et surtout pour lire les ouvrages des auteurs anciens, ou de ceux qui n'ont point suivi la nomenclature systématique.”—DECAEN.

“ The vast mass of synonyms which it has now become the laborious but indispensable task of the systematic naturalist to unravel, forms a most serious impediment to the progress of the science.”—STRICKLAND, MS.

It is well known to every one who has worked out any branch of natural science, and even to those who have only partially engaged in similar research, that no department requires so much patience and impartiality, and shows so little apparent result in comparison with the time and labour bestowed, yet is withal so necessary and essential to the clear understanding of the subject, as that of unravelling the *Synonymy* or the *various names* by which the same object has been over and over again designated. In Zoological and Botanical science, synonymy has of late increased to an enormous extent, and the space necessary to enumerate the names that have been applied to each species is equal to—sometimes more than,—what would be required for a detail of

their specific characters or descriptions. This increased with the progress of research and the number of describers, but it need not necessarily have done so. In early times there were few who gave their attention to natural science : and up to the æra of Linnaeus, when the binomial nomenclature had its origin, we have not to record much synonymy, but have merely to trace the local, or sometimes barbarous names by which animals or plants were noticed in the older voyages and travels, or by the few authors who attempted to describe them separately. As, however, the love for these pursuits increased, and the interest which their study imparted became more real, when taken in connexion with the arts and our commercial and manufacturing relations, new objects continually occurred which required names ; and if no old designation was discovered, a new one was applied. This would have been quite legitimate, had all means to find out whether the object referred to was ever previously named, been exhausted ; but this was not done, and synonymy consequently flourished.

The causes of this great increase are of a twofold nature ; the one almost beyond the control of the individual, the other depending on his own carelessness or pride. Many observers find some object exceedingly beautiful or curious ; they cannot make it out, and do not like the trouble of inquiring for and examining the works that relate to it, and a new name is at once applied, which saves all further trouble to *them*. Others, again, do examine and find out what they are in search of, but they at the same time discover something faulty in the previous name ; —it is badly compounded ; it is not applicable to the species ; it is too like some other name ; it is used in some other branch of science ; in short, they wish to apply a name of their own, the old one is discarded, and an addition made to our already long list. New names, given under circumstances such as these, are, we fear, the most numerous, and are certainly the most to be regretted : others arise from causes also to be regretted, but where individual blame cannot in the same way be attached. Many excellent observers labour abroad, and have a large knowledge of their subject ; but at a distance from all positive information, they append names to their specimens sent home, often with instructions that these are only provisionally given with

reference to their lists or catalogues, but which are neglected by their over-zealous editor, and the new names are launched out to swell the list still farther. Other equally exact observers labour and examine so far as their opportunities admit, but very few possess either the libraries or collections to illustrate even any one branch of Zoology or Botany: it is true that these hindrances are diminishing every day, and from the ease and small expense with which queries regarding any unknown or disputed species can be circulated, there is scarcely an excuse now for any one remaining in ignorance of anything that may come into his possession; and the alternative of either giving a new name, or leaving it blank to be filled up by some other observer, is therefore taken away.

From these causes, and a few others incident to them, ornithological synonymy, both generic and specific, has reached a bewildering extent. The generic names at present employed, according to the list prepared for the British Museum by Mr. George Robert Gray during this year (1855), reaches to no less a number than 2403 (which, so far as we know the number of birds already discovered, would allow somewhat less than *three* species to each genus), and to these has to be added their synonymy, reaching from *one* to *ten* for each genus*. The extent of the specific synonymy cannot be ascertained or enumerated. Any work, then, undertaken with care and judgment, and with an adequate knowledge of the subject, that will unravel this synonymy, must be of the utmost importance not only to the student of ornithology, but to any one who is working without the means of access to a complete library or an extensive collection; and there cannot be any doubt that the large mass of materials which it is now our object to publish, will, when arranged and completed, assist materially in supplying this want.

Among the various branches of Natural Science pursued by *Hugh E. Strickland*, next to *Geology*, that of *Ornithology* occupied the greatest portion of his attention, and was actively prosecuted at an early period of his life. During his travels on the

* *A List of Genera and Subgenera of Birds, by George Robert Gray. London, 1855.* Since the publication of the above, we perceive in some recent works several additional genera have been contrived, so that the numbers quoted are already under the amount.

continent, and in Greece and Asia Minor, considerable collections were made; and on returning again to his home and commencing a more detailed and systematic study of Zoology in general, the same wants that had been so frequently impediments to others,—the loose state of *Zoological Nomenclature*, and the impossibility of referring to any arranged *Synonymy*,—soon arrested his attention, and with his accustomed energy he at once set himself to compile and arrange materials to supply these deficiencies. His plan for the reform of *Zoological Nomenclature* was first publicly brought forward under the auspices of the British Association in 1842 at its meeting in Manchester, and after some opposition at the time, and a little difficulty in falling at once under the rules proposed, it has become almost universally employed by zoologists as the guide and reference upon this subject. The second part of the undertaking, by far the most laborious and extensive, had been commenced some years previously, and the plans for filling up and gradually perfecting *Synonymy* were laid down. The synonymy of various branches of Zoology had been contemplated*; but the papers relating to Ornithology, which had been made a more particular study, were prepared and printed, and had been some time in progress of being filled up. These generally accompanied him on his visits among scientific friends, and no opportunity was omitted to increase and verify them by comparison with books and the examination of collections, as well as by an extensive correspondence with ornithologists both at home and abroad; and at the period of his decease the manuscript papers amounted to no less than thirty-two volumes, having references quoted from two hundred and forty-three separate works and papers which had been completely examined and exhausted. The work was gradually preparing for the press, and it was his intention, so soon as the printing of the last volume of the *Bibliography of Agassiz* was finished, to have entered upon the active prosecution of a long-promised and fondly cherished undertaking. The melancholy event which has deprived this work of the superintendence of the author himself need not be introduced now; it is well known to the scientific world; suffice it to say, that

* Among the MSS. in possession of Mrs. H. E. Strickland, there is a large mass of materials for a synonymy of the Class Reptilia, both recent and fossil.

the preparation of the materials has been a great source of satisfaction to those more immediately afflicted by the sudden dispensation of Providence. The responsibility of editing materials far too valuable to be laid aside and forgotten, is also cheerfully undertaken as a duty to a very dear friend and companion; and although every care has been taken to work out the author's views, as far as the recollection of frequent conversations on the subject and memoranda and notes interspersed throughout the manuscript suggested, it may be we have not entirely succeeded in bringing out his intentions. This must be our blame only. We have no doubt he would have used the words of Linnæus, and requested, "Quo plures errores apud nos detergere potes, eo gravior eris; tum possemus omnia corrigere vivi;" but the conclusion of the sentence must be borne in mind, "post Fata non licet emendare propria opuscula."

In preparing these Synonyms for the press, it has been our object, as already stated, to follow out as far as possible the plans of their author, and which has been more easily done from memoranda having been written down at various times as they occurred, intended evidently to serve as guides for himself in the future printing of the work. The genera have, therefore, been placed as they followed each other in the manuscript, and as his ornithological collection was arranged; and although they may not stand as he might have ultimately arranged them, we have thought it better to place them so than to make partial changes only. His views of an arrangement were averse to anything resembling a line, square, or circle: he conceived that it could only be mapped out by following the affinities to the ends of the branches or tributaries, as it were, which would form a very irregular distribution of the whole. He remarks in his memoranda, "The best way of constructing a really natural system of Birds seems to be, 1st, to discard all idea of symmetry either circular or linear; 2nd, To take one genus at a time (at random), and to place it between those two others whose affinity to it is the most palpable. If this were done throughout, an irregular branching tree would be constructed, and those genera which have only *one* affinity would form the ends of the branches, those with *two* affinities would come in the middle of the branches, and those with more than *two* would form the base of