

## HOMONYMS FOR SUBSPECIES AND ABERRATIONS.

By G. H. E. HOPKINS.

Two years ago (*Entomologist*, 85 : 171) the Editor challenged me to draft an amendment to the International Rules of Zoological Nomenclature to provide for instances in which, within one species, both a subspecies and an aberration bear the same name. The actual example which brought the matter up was the case of *Eumenis semele* ssp. *thyone* Thompson and *Eumenis semele* ab. *thyone* (Schulz). The Editor was probably right in claiming that such instances are rare, but I think he underestimated the confusion they may cause, and I disagree most heartily with his apparent suggestion that the ignorance of Rules of Nomenclature which he rightly attributes to the average collector of Lepidoptera is any reason why those whose ignorance is rather less abysmal should not try to make things as simple as possible for the less learned. Some of the latter would at least like to feel that they were using the correct name, and to them there is something inherently silly and extremely confusing in the idea that two different forms of *the same species* should bear identical names. I think myself competent to voice the feelings of Mr. Jones and Mr. Robinson because I myself am at times one of them—on duty I am (so the Editor tells me) “a serious student of systematics”, but on holiday I am a not very serious butterfly-collector, with a light-hearted interest in subspecies and aberrations and a mild preference for calling them by the correct names.

Not very long after my note was published the editorship of *Entomologist* changed and I never took up the challenge, but the old Editor is now back in the chair and I hasten to do so. Before drafting the amendment we must remind ourselves why the nomenclature of species and subspecies was divorced from that of systematic units of lower rank: it was so that those systematists who do not deal with units lower than the subspecies (i.e. the great majority of systematists) might be freed from the necessity of taking into consideration the innumerable names for aberrations, and from the need to consult the voluminous and often obscure literature dealing with such forms, when they are considering the names of species and subspecies. My proposed addition to the Rules takes this point into consideration, and here it is:—

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the above Rule, the same trivial name cannot co-exist both as the name of a subspecies and as that of a variety, aberration or other taxon in the infra-sub-specific category within the same species. In all such instances a

name which was originally published as that of a taxon in the species or subspecies category shall be deemed to have been published before one originally published as that of a taxon in the infra-subspecific category, regardless of the actual dates of publication.

Since instances in which a subspecies and an aberration of the same species bear the same name are rare, instances in which the assumption as to date of publication which I have suggested might cause confusion would certainly be excessively rare; these instances should be referred to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature with a request that they should use their plenary powers to avert such confusion. An obvious instance in which this ought to have been done is that of *charlotta* Haworth, which, after having been used as the name of a rare aberration for many years, was discovered to be the correct specific name for an insect which we are forbidden to call *Argynnis aglaia*, which is utterly unrecognizable to most of us as *Mesoacidalia charlotta*, but which we may still (thanks be!) call the Dark Green Fritillary.

Too many students of nomenclature seem to forget that the whole object of the rules is that we should all use the same name for the same taxon (i.e. systematic unit) and that there should be no confusion as to what is meant by a given name. There is nothing sacred about priority, and that the name we use should be the oldest is not a prime object but merely a means by which we hope to achieve uniformity. When a familiar name is replaced by an unfamiliar one uniformity is the very reverse of what results, at least for a period which may be long, and if the Commission are asked to use their plenary powers in such a way as to avert the confusion which inevitably results from such changes they are (in the opinion of many of us) failing in the duty to carry out which they were appointed, and to facilitate which the plenary powers were conferred, if they do not take such action.

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BIRMINGHAM CITY MUSEUM ENTOMOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS.—I am glad to be able to report that the alterations and decorations at the City Museum necessitated by war damage, have at last reached a stage at which it has been possible to examine the entomological collections again. This has been done, every drawer and box has been treated, and all is well. The Richard South and Kenrick collections are here, and also Neville Chamberlain's, the last including the famous *Epicnaptera ilicifolia* given by Dr. Freer to Chamberlain as a wedding present. There are also various other collections of Lepidoptera, Coleoptera, Diptera, etc., about which information will gladly be supplied at any time by The Keeper, L. Bilton, Esq., or myself.—W. BOWATER; 41, Calthorpe Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham 15.

Hopkins  
Nomenclature



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