

CORRESPONDENCE.

REVISION OF THE GENUS AGROTIS.

Dear Sir,—A few words are called for by Mr. Grote's "remarks" in the March number of the CAN. ENT. The parts critical, of course, require no reply, and are really unexpectedly cordial; nor do the parts explanatory. Mr. Grote asks why I write *herelis*, *badinodes* and *insula*, instead of *herilis*, *badinodis* and *insulsa*. In each instance it is occasioned by an original misreading and mistranscription of the name, which had become so fixed that, often as I had seen and written the names, still persisted and prevented my seeing the error. I am obliged to Mr. Grote for pointing out these cases. Mr. Grote says: "With regard to the classification of the group it is conducted upon the basis first suggested by myself, *i. e.*, the forms with unarmed fore-tibiæ are separated, and other divisions are based upon genitalia and sexual characters." He refers to the CAN. ENT., XV., p. 51, March, 1883. In 1857 Lederer had already used *all* the characters suggested by Mr. Grote, and the latter has made absolutely *no* original suggestions for dividing the genus. Nor has Mr. Grote, anywhere in the Noctuidæ, used or suggested *new* characters. He has written as though I had found the basis for such work as I have done, in his writings. I wish distinctly to state that this is *not* the case. Herrich-Schaeffer, von Heinemann, Lederer, and others, all used the same characters that Mr. Grote has used. I claimed no originality for these bases of subdivision, and no credit is due to Mr. Grote therefor. In the systematic study of the sexual characters in this genus and in the American Noctuidæ I do claim originality. Lederer did not get the clasper in any case, and used only the external form of the harpes. Mr. Grote does not give any evidence, anywhere in his writings, that he went even as far as Lederer in this direction. Mr. Grote knows the writings to which I have referred, as his earlier papers sufficiently prove. In reference to my citations of determinations made by him in collections, these are always to specimens bearing a label in Mr. Grote's own handwriting, and where a type is referred to, it means a specimen so labelled by Mr. Grote himself. I refer now to Mr. Grote's paper in the Proc. Am. Phil. Soc., June, 1883, p. 176, for the following:—"I conclude this paper by briefly referring to the fact that I have determined my species in many collections. I enumerate those of Mr. Thaxter, Mr. Neumœgen, Mr. Hy. Edwards, Mr. Tepper, and in the Albany collections. A large number of my types are in Mr.

Neumøgen's grand collection, and I have figured a good number of the species. There can thus be but few cases of doubt as to what I have described." All of these collections I have studied, and my references are to identifications made in them. I do not blame Mr. Grote for making errors, and had he not assumed so infallible a standard for himself in his criticism of others, would not have so often pointed them out. I am said also to have followed Mr. Grote's synonymy or "adopted" it. Altogether 59 species have synonyms. Of these 23 are originally stated by myself, Mr. Strecker gives one, Mr. Butler is responsible in whole or in part for six, two of them are mere citations of preoccupied names, and of the older species the synonymy is "adopted" by Mr. Grote from Walker in several instances. This is not scientific literature by any means, and I regret being responsible for it, but I cannot allow Mr. Grote's statement "that I have at least laid down the foundation for its proper study" to go unchallenged. Mr. Grote's work in the North American Noctuidæ has been a necessary one, and has been largely drudgery. No one can better appreciate than I the labor involved in identifying material, naming and describing it. That he made synonyms was simply natural and unavoidable, and is in no wise to his discredit. I expect to make them myself, and have done so already. Our noctuids are far from completely known, and in the Agrotæ alone will reach nearly 500 species. I know of more than 20 already that are different from any described in the monograph. Mr. Grote's earlier papers were, as a rule, careful and easy to work with, and so up to the period of Dr. Harvey's work. That Mr. Grote really described Dr. Harvey's species has been often told me; but it is interesting to have the statement from headquarters. Mr. Grote's work in the later period failed to equal the earlier papers, so far as value to the student is concerned, from the fact that he assumed in general that his readers knew the Noctuidæ just as well as he did himself. A brief indication, perfectly characteristic in Mr. Grote's view, was absolutely incomprehensible to one not so well grounded. Mr. Grote's work is essentially descriptive, rarely systematic, never monographic. His generalizations are often well put, interesting and valuable; but withal I have not found anywhere any "foundations" for monographic work that did not already exist in literature. Mr. Grote's correction of my reference to *insulsa* is just. I somehow overlooked the comparison to *repentis*. A specimen in Dr. Bethune's collection named by Walker, and agreeing with his description, is a species of *Hadena*, allied to *devastatrix* in maculation, but much darker and richer brown in colour, and is Mr. Grote's *H. ducta*. Walker's determinations are not reliable, and I do not say Mr. Grote is wrong.

JOHN B. SMITH.