

Dr. O. M. Reuter on the genus *Valleriola*.

By W. L. Distant (South Norwood, Surrey, England).

In a recent issue of this *Zeitung* (ante p. 211), Dr. Reuter has published an article, or rather a personal attack, in which he has allowed himself, to use expressions not generally considered courteous in scientific discussion¹). I do not complain of this as it is quite immaterial, but he has so obscured the question between us, that it is necessary, however I dislike controversy, to make some reply in common fairness to myself. The matter in dispute is unfortunately of the most trivial detail, and scarcely likely to further the cause of entomology.

In 1904 I proposed the genus *Valleriola* for a species of *Saldidae*, belonging to the subfam. *Saldinae* by possessing only two ocelli, as distinguished from the subfam. *Leptopinae* known by the possession of three ocelli, and I figured the typical species. I received a letter from Dr. Reuter saying that he considered it a synonym of *Leptopus assuanensis* Costa, which he had redescribed as *L. niloticus* in 1881, and Bergroth had again redescribed as *L. strigipes* in 1891. I replied (the press copy of the letter is now before me) that I thought I had followed him in separating the *Saldinae* from the *Leptopinae* by the possession of only two ocelli, and in that case the two species could not be the same but must belong to different genera, and asking him to let me see a cotype of his *L. niloticus* so that I could make any necessary correction in the appendix of my volumes on the Indian Rhynchota. I received no reply, but subsequently »sein Freund Bergroth« (Wien. Entomol. Zeit. XXV. p. 8. 1906) among some other miscellaneous assertions, strongly declared *Valleriola* to be congeneric with *Leptopus*. There the matter might have rested so far as I was concerned for unfortunately I have not the time of reply to all the strictures of that accomplished homeromastix. But Reuter in a remarkable polemic (Die Klassifikation der Capsiden) in which I was reproved for not following his method with the *Capsidae* added a footnote, to show my utter unreliability on these questions, stating that I had described this Leptopid as a Saldid. I therefore felt called upon to explain (Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist. [7], XVIII, p. 293, 1906) that if any mistake had been made with the position of the species, it was Reuter and Bergroth who had placed it in the wrong subfamily, for I had

¹) As »Unsinn«, a want in »normal und logisch Denken«; »Absurdität« etc.

proved, by independent testimony, that *Valleriola* only possessed two ocelli while *Leptopus* is known by three. Colour was lent to this explanation by the strange omission of both Reuter and Bergroth from making any reference to the ocelli in their descriptions.

Dr. Reuter now admits that *Valleriola* only possesses two ocelli, but shifts his ground and accuses me of having made an artificial distinction between these subfamilies by the number of the ocelli. That distinction is not my own; I am under the impression that Reuter has used it himself but cannot remember the reference, though he can easily contradict me if I am inaccurate in my surmise. But I can give stronger evidence of these characters having been used by other entomologists. Edward Saunders is well known to Reuter; he dedicated the fifth part of his »Hem. Gymn. Europae« to him, and Saunders in his »Hem. Het. of the Brit. Islds« (a work which Reuter doubtless possesses) writes (p. 172) under the Fam. *Saldidae* »ocelli placed between the eyes, two in number in the *Saldina*, three in the *Leptopina*«. This was published in 1892; it is therefore strange that I should be considered, and that by an authority on the *Rhynchota*, as the author of the distinction in 1904. Other writers have of-course followed the same discriminative process. It is therefore evident, apart from all attempts to obscure the point, that if we admit this classification, as was done to the time I wrote, that I was right in placing *Valleriola* in the *Saldinae*, and that Reuter and Bergroth were in error.

Dr. Reuter states that he has examined all the species which in his view belong to *Leptopus* and finds the number of the ocelli a very variable quantity. This is a not unexpected fact and points to the repurement of generic revision, but in common fairness he must remember that he did not know this when he made his charge, that he and Bergroth had totally overlooked the ocelli in their descriptions, and that therefore his personal strictures recoil upon himself and prove his own error.

I do not reply to other strictures. He writes that I have divided divisions of *Capsidae* on a single character which he has refuted in his »Die Klassifikation der Capsiden«. I have defined a detailed examination of this polemic tilt I again deal with the family, though Kirkaldy who says he has studied it, remarks, »it is a remarkable piece of work«, but »that many of the characters used are very subtile, and render the study of this difficult group even harder«.

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Autor(en)/Author(s): Distant William Lucas

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