

COMMON NAMES FOR MOTHS — ANOTHER VIEW.

By E. C. G. PINHEY.

Mr. Townsend's suggestions for common names for moths are admirable in many ways. If we lived here in a geographically confined space like Britain, or like Mauritius to come nearer our Region, I would say by all means use popular names for all our larger *Lepidoptera*, our so-called "Macrolepidoptera". In our unconfined tropical zone, however, we have many thousands of moths which fall into the above category and having myself attempted to use common names for all the four hundred and sixty odd species of butterflies in Southern Rhodesia I have modified my views about extending such titles further.

The lack of popularity with moths in Africa is not just due to the scientific names. In Europe, for instance, while British amateurs have strings of common names for moths, collectors on the Continent are not blessed to this extent with such encouragement. Yet there is no dearth of continental collections of moths. Again, there are many beetle collectors in Britain and although many of these (beetles) are of striking appearance only a few have popular names — more so in the case of groups than species. Who, for example, would be so rash as to try and popularize the genus *Apion* with common names? Attempts have been made in England to tack such names on to insects of other families without marked success. Even the amateur Lepidopterist in Britain must learn specific names if he is to mingle with older collectors or join societies.

Now, it would appear that the main cause of the lack of interest in African moths is the shortage of comprehensive, popular, well-illustrated literature. What are the reasons for this state affairs? Firstly the overwhelming number of species of moths (or other insects) in almost any African territory. Secondly the shortage of collectors and entomologists with spare time and sufficiently versed in the subject to write books on them. Thirdly the cost of publication of well-illustrated works. *

If the general opinion is in favour of popular names then they must, for practical reasons, be confined to the two most popular families of moths, *Saturniidae* and *Sphingidae*, both containing highly attractive insects and neither being overwhelming in number of species. To attempt names for other families, such as the thousands of *Agrotidae* (*Noctuidae*!) would be like plunging into a morass, complicated enough as it is to the advanced student and beyond the pale for the beginner.

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