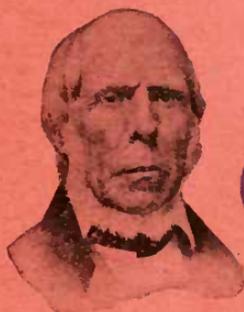


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## Thomas Lincoln Casey as a Coleopterist.

By MELVILLE H. HATCH,<sup>1</sup> University of Michigan,  
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Thomas Lincoln Casey was born on February 19, 1857, at West Point, New York, the son of Gen. Thomas Lincoln Casey and Emma Weir, and grandson of Major Gen. Silas Casey. Predestined in this fashion for the army, it is with no surprise that we find him receiving his commission as First Lieutenant twenty-two years later (1879), and eventually rising to the rank of Colonel (1909). The chronological table at the conclusion of this paper outlines the principal events of his career.

Casey took up the study of Coleoptera as a hobby. He inherited sufficient means, not only to render him financially independent, but to purchase specimens and literature in large quantities and to publish the results of his investigations privately, when such appeared desirable. His not overly onerous duties in the army allowed him the time for collecting and the study of his specimens. By 1884, the year of his first published work, he had undoubtedly assembled a collection of considerable proportions.

*A Revision of the Cucujidae of America North of Mexico* (84\*:69-112) published in the Transactions of the American Entomological Society for 1884, and submitted for publication on November 9 of the previous year, apparently constitutes Casey's first published work. He was closely associated with Leconte and Horn in the course of its preparation, and it represents the spirit of those authors at its best. Keys, moderately long descriptions (10 to 20 lines), figures of nearly all the species, are all similar to those found in Horn's papers. Thirteen new specimens are described out of a total of fifty-eight.

The same year however, Casey published privately three papers of an entirely other tenor: two *Contributions to the*

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<sup>1</sup>Contribution from the Zoölogical Laboratory of the University of Michigan.

\* Throughout the present paper reference is made to Casey's publications as listed by Leng (1920, p. 375-376) and supplemented by him in 1925 (p. 100) by the use of two numerals to indicate the year followed by a semicolon and an indication of the page or pages.

*Descriptive and Systematic Coleopterology of North America* (84: 1-60; 84: 61-198) and a *Revision of the Stenini of America North of Mexico* (84: 1-206). No less than 300 species, a large percentage from uniques, are described as new in these papers, 148 of these Stenini, out of a total of 171 species of that tribe. In the first place, Casey insisted on replacing the hand-lens of Leconte and the earlier entomologists with the modern biobjective binocular microscope. He was always much interested in securing accuracy of measurement and eliminating the personal equation as far as possible (98: 116-7). He points out, for instance, the tendency of Leconte constantly to exaggerate his dimensions. Furthermore, "It has been my aim," he wrote (84:61) "not only to describe the species, but to make a separate study of each." This resulted in descriptions averaging about three-fourths of a page or fifty lines long, and revealed a mass of unsuspected differences to which Casey gave specific value.

The reason for their private publication was undoubtedly, in part, because no current entomological journal would accept them. Indeed, with the exception of the years 1898-1900, when certain of his papers appeared in the *Journal of the New York Entomological Society*, those of Casey's major contributions that were not published privately, appeared in the publications of various academies of science (California, 1885-87; New York, 1888-1897; St. Louis, 1905-1906; and Washington, 1907-1909). This was undoubtedly largely because of the greater facilities for the publication of extended memoirs offered by the academies. One may suggest, however, that the radical nature of the work played some part.

The basis of Casey's specific discrimination was an increased attention to details of habitus and sculpture. The time had arrived when coleopterists looked with increasing suspicion upon differences founded upon color or color pattern. Differences in proportion and sculpture were regarded as more significant. Casey took up with this tendency and carried it toward its logical conclusion, until at the time of his death he had published 8621 pages describing almost as many Nearctic

species as all other coleopterists together. His collection is said to have numbered 15,000 species.

The pamphlets met with immediate opposition. John B. Smith (*Ent. Amer.* 1885, Vol. I—58-59) found it "impossible to say a word of praise." The "descriptions are aggravating, for their minuteness of detail . . . and . . . are individual, and not characteristic of species." The binocular microscope that he used showed him too much! Smith concluded with the surmise that he would live to regret the early effort, a prediction that was only very partially fulfilled (89:325). In the same year, Horn (1885:108-113) indicated a considerable number of the species as synonyms. But opposition of this character did not continue. There lacked men of the temperament to contest the new species one by one, as they were announced. There gathered, instead, a general mistrust of the whole work.

One of Casey's leading characteristics was that he did not regret. Granting his premises about the nature of specific differences, there was nothing to regret,—for all attest to the extreme accuracy and honesty of his work. Very rarely, he admitted that he described a synonym as in the case of *Harpalus viridiaeneus* Beauv. and its variants (89:325). But oftener, his restudy of old material led him to reject his previous determination and describe the specimen as new or break up the series of his original species into several.

In 1888 (88:18) Casey published a criticism of some of the tables in Leconte and Horn's *Classification of the Coleoptera of North America*. The cudgels were immediately taken up by John Hamilton (1888, p. 78), who suggested that Casey try constructing some tables of his own. The succeeding years constituted Casey's answer. But analysis, rather than synthesis, was always his dominant interest. His tables are usually to species, less frequently to genera and tribes, only very rarely to the primary family divisions and never to groups above the family. In the light of the relationship of Casey's work to Leconte and Horn's *Classification of the Coleoptera of North America* such a procedure is understood. Despite his criticism of this work, Casey accepted it as his point of departure, and

apparently never went so far as to regard the erection of an entirely new edifice a necessity. Casey ranged over the entire coleopterous series to such an extent that his failure to work with the aquatic families, Elateridae and Chrysomelidae is as noteworthy as his great amount of attention to Carabidae, Staphylinidae, Tenebrionidae, Cerambycidae and Curculionidae. Among the families he monographed for North America north of Mexico are Scydmaenidae, Anthicidae, Dermestidae, Byrrhidae, Cucujidae, Cryptophagidae, Phalacridae, Coccinellidae, Alleculidae and Cisidae, and the subfamilies Rutelinae, Dynastinae and Cetoniinae among the Scarabaeidae. Hamilton would have triumphed, indeed, could he have lived to see Casey admit his inability to construct a dichotomous table to the thirteen tribes of Brazilian Barinae (22:3). Casey gave but scant interest and equal praise to such work as Batchley's *Coleoptera of Indiana* (11:199).

Casey's first work, despite its radical character, conformed to traditional channels in so far as he availed himself of the collections of institutions (as the National Museum, and the Leconte collection at the Museum of Comparative Zoology) and other scientists (Leconte, Horn, Schwarz). As late as 1890 he acknowledges such aid (90:307), and numerous of his earlier types were in these collections. In succeeding years, however, he ceased from this custom, and came to confine himself entirely to his own collection, which was amassed largely by purchase. Among the more important of these purchases seem to have been, the cabinet of Dr. G. M. Levette of Indianapolis, purchased in 1890 (90:501), and an extensive collection of Brazilian Barinae purchased from Herbert H. Smith about 1893. Among the American collectors from whom he obtained specimens by purchase or otherwise may be mentioned Wickham, Fall, Manee, Knaus, Blatchley, and Frost.

He came to play a lone hand. He never consulted the other American collections, and often regrets his inability to study a particular species because his collectors had been unable to find it, when types may have been in existence in Philadelphia or Boston. In place of the types, he interpreted the published descriptions with the greatest strictness, and the least failure

of the specimen at hand to correspond at all points with the written description justified its recognition as a new species. For instance, he once remarked (05:21) that his failure to secure H. H. Smith's collection of Brazilian Staphylinidae was one of the greatest disappointments of his scientific career. Their presence in the Carnegie Museum rendered them utterly unavailable for his purposes! He displayed little willingness to coöperate in the production of such a work as Blatchley's *Coleoptera of Indiana* (1910, p. 5), though his help is acknowledged in connection with Blatchley and Leng's *Rhynchophora* (1916, p. 6).

The limitations involved in Casey's procedure in assembling his collection, together with the exhaustiveness of the study to which he subjected his specimens, resulted in a difficulty of a special nature that accompanies the use of his monographic revisions. Even the most extensive use of collections, from all parts of the country, so splendidly exemplified by certain of the work of Schaeffer, Leng, Fall and others, resulted in the most unfortunate geographic gaps. Casey's procedure, involving only such material as he could purchase, and ignoring the accumulated collections, left much more serious gaps. The extreme significance that he attached to the most minute variation rendered it probable that his taxonomic units were often of limited geographic range. The result was that a disproportionately small portion of the total variational range of the group—in the light of his criteria—was represented, and the chance rendered almost a certainty that specimens from numerous of the localities unrepresented in Casey's collection were as worthy of description as new as those that Casey himself recognized. Casey himself, undoubtedly felt this, and attributed it to the undeveloped condition of his science. But it is a point that must be remembered in the use of his keys.

Another departure made by Casey in much of his monographic work, especially his later studies, was the practice of including mention of as many exotic genera and tribes as his material permitted. In this way he tended to break away from the provincialism that is still one of the outstanding traits of American coleopterology.

(To be continued)