INTRODUCTION.

This volume is devoted to two families of the Phytophagous Coleoptera, the Hispidæ and Cassididæ. The Hispidæ, with the exception of a short appendix, have been wholly dealt with by the late J. S. Baly, the Cassididæ by myself. Baly has already contributed some general remarks upon the Hispidæ, so that, as regards this family, it is necessary to add only some particulars as to the number of genera and species represented within our limits. Altogether, for the two families, 453 species are enumerated, the numbers being almost evenly apportioned—Hispidæ 226, Cassididæ 227. In the Hispidæ 169 new species and two new genera, and in the Cassididæ 55 new species and two new genera, have been described. The total number of species of Hispidæ for the whole world is given as 496 in the Munich Catalogue (1874), and for the Cassididæ 1795. This disproportion in the numbers of the two families, as compared with those for Central America, is, however, partly due to the fact that the Cassididæ have been exhaustively monographed by Boheman (1850–62), while no monograph of the Hispidæ has yet appeared. Nevertheless, Central America contains but a limited number of Cassididæ, as compared with Tropical South America: for example, Mesomphalia with 227 species (1874) has nineteen only within our limits; and many other South-American genera are represented by a very small number of species, as Desmonota, Tauroma, Dolichotoma, Calaspidea, and Omoplata, or are altogether absent, as Calliaspis, Spilophora, Canistra, and Pæcilaspis. Mexico and Guatemala, however, possess a number of peculiar species of Cassididæ, especially in the genera Chelymorpha, Physonota, Coptocycia, and Otenochira, very few of which reach our northern frontier. Panama or Costa Rica appears to be the northern limit of such genera as Delocrinia, Desmonota, Calaspidea, and Omaspides. America north of Mexico (Henshaw’s Catalogue, 1885) has thirty-five species of Hispidæ and twenty species of Cassididæ (three of which are doubtful)—North America, for some, at present, inexplicable reason, possessing exceedingly few Cassididæ. Cassida, the only European genus of the family, and with upwards of 200 species in the Old World, is represented by very few species in North or Central America, it there being replaced by Coptocycia.