HEMIPTERA-HOMOPTERA.

Subfam. ÆTHALIONINÆ.

The position of this subfamily, which is here regarded as containing the genus Æthalion only, has given rise to much difference of opinion among authors, and has been very differently located*. Germar (Mag. der Ent. iv. p. 94) places Æthalion between Eupelis and Cicada; Amyot and Serville (Hist. Nat. Ins. Hémipt. p. 556) place it under the Cicadellina of Burmeister, among the group Eurymelines, and Walker (List of Homopt. Ins. iii. p. 646) follows the same arrangement; Stål (Kongl. Sv. Vet.-Ak. Handl. Band viii. 1, p. 49) includes it under his Centrotina, which, however, he regards as merely a subfamily of his Jassida; while Ashmead (Ent. Americana, v. p. 125) makes Æthalion and Eurymela the types of separate subfamilies (Æthalioninæ and Eurymelineæ) of the Bythoscopidae.

Æthalion has evidently strong affinities towards Tolania, but differs from it in too great a degree to admit of being classed in the same subfamily with the latter genus, an arrangement adopted by Goding (Trans. Am. Ent. Soc. xix. p. 258), and, if it must be definitely located, it is, perhaps, most correctly placed near or among the Centrotinae. At the same time it differs from the rest of the Membrecidae, and if included under that family it becomes almost impossible to give a definition that will comprise all its members, for it neither has a pronotal process nor a perpendicularly declivous metopidium; nor does it altogether agree with the Jassidae, and still less with the Bythoscopidae, under both of which it has been located. In fact, Æthalion is plainly a transitional genus and as such must be regarded; as, however, its affinities seem, if anything, to lean towards the Membrecidae, it is perhaps the best plan to provisionally include it under that family, though there appears to be no reason why it should not be placed under a separate family. In all zoological classification there seems too great a tendency on the one hand to force transitional genera under fixed families, and on the other to limit too closely the formation of new families and groups. In nearly all cases the family or group at its extreme end must be subject to exceptions, and must be more or less elastic. Stål is much blamed in certain quarters for too often using the words "plerumque," "sepissime," "rarissime," &c. to qualify his definitions; perhaps this is true to a certain extent, but it is difficult to see how he could have done otherwise in the case of the Homoptera, in the present state of our knowledge, and considering the very small available material that has hitherto been got together by collectors.

ÆTHALION.

Æthalia, Germar, Mag. der Ent. iv. p. 94 (1821).

* For this reason it was omitted from the key to the subfamilies of Membrecidae, anteò, p. 3.