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### IX.—Observations on Mr. M'Coy's description of the tail of *Diplopterus*

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usually longer, but sometimes a little shorter than the third: the mouth is yellow with a black tip: the nectaries are black, and nearly one-fourth of the length of the body: the legs are black; the fore-thighs from the base to the middle, the other thighs at the base, and the shanks excepting their tips, are yellow: the wing-ribs are yellow; the wing-brands are pale brown; the veins are brown.

1st var. The abdomen is dark yellowish green; there is a row of short black bands along its back and a row of black spots on each side: the mouth is black, but yellow towards the base: the legs are black; the thighs are pale yellow at the base; the shanks excepting their tips are dark yellow.

The front is slightly convex: the feelers are seated on short stalks; the first joint is longer and more slender than the base which supports it; the second is shorter and much narrower than the first; the third is a little more slender than the second; the fourth is much shorter than the third; the fifth is shorter than the fourth; the sixth is about half the length of the fifth; the seventh is nearly as long as the third: the nectaries are spindle-shaped: the tip of the abdomen is compressed, and rather more than half the length of the nectaries: the fore-legs are much shorter than the hind-legs, whose shanks are slightly curved: the length of the furcations of the third vein is variable.

*Variation in the wing-veins.* The lower branch of the first fork of the third vein is wanting.

[To be continued.]

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IX.—*Observations on Mr. M'Coy's description of the Tail of Diplopterus\**. By SIR PHILIP DE MALPAS GREY EGERTON, Bart.

*To the Editors of the Annals of Natural History.*

GENTLEMEN,

I VENTURED to trespass on your columns in September last, to direct attention to what I considered an unfairness on the part of Mr. M'Coy towards my absent friend Professor Agassiz. In his reply to my observations Mr. M'Coy distinctly acknowledges the priority of Agassiz's observations, and allows that the knowledge of them "added considerably to the certainty which he felt of the correctness of the view he had put forward." The courtesy usually observed between investigators in a common field would have required this avowal to have been made in the first instance. Though tardy it is nevertheless complete. I re-

\* Ann. and Mag. of Nat. Hist. Nov. 1848, p. 303.

gret to be again obliged to notice an omission no less unjust to Professor Agassiz. In the November Number of the 'Annals,' Mr. M'Coy, when treating of the tail of *Diplopterus*, says:—"M. Agassiz has described the species of this genus as having heterocercal tails," leaving it naturally to be inferred, that these fishes had the ordinary form of tail common to many of the older ganoids. He then proceeds to state, that so far from this being the case, "there is almost as great a development of fin-rays above as below the spinal prolongation." This form of tail, intermediate in appearance between the homocercal and heterocercal types, he proposes to style "diphycercal." The following passage from the 'Fossil Fishes of the Old Red Sandstone,' p. 54, shows how fairly! Agassiz's description has been stated by Mr. M'Coy in reference to this modification of the caudal fin:—"La caudale a une conformation des plus singulières. Il va sans dire qu'elle est hétérocerque, et que la masse principale des rayons est insérée sous le prolongement relevé de la colonne vertébrale; mais au bord supérieure il y a au lieu de fulcres de véritables rayons, en grande quantité, si bien que le prolongement de la colonne vertébrale se trouve garni de rayons en haut comme en bas." Fig. 1. of tab. 18 gives a very good representation of the peculiarity described in the text. Now although the more perfect specimens examined by Mr. M'Coy may have enabled him to trace this modification to a greater extent, yet, in all fairness, he ought to have alluded to the facts established by Agassiz in the passage quoted above. I prefer again to attribute this seeming unfairness to forgetfulness of Agassiz's writings, rather than to intentional disregard of them, an opinion which is strengthened by the occurrence in Mr. M'Coy's writings of the cancelled specific appellation *latus*, when speaking of *Coccoosteus decipiens*. The remarks on the gradations of structure between the two types of tail, appended in a note to Mr. M'Coy's paper, and stated to have been *also* noticed by Müller, were made by the Professor so long ago as 1844, so that his claim to priority and not only to simultaneity of discovery is unquestionable. In conclusion, I must beg to disclaim any the slightest intention of giving annoyance to Mr. M'Coy, or of underrating in any degree the value of his ichthyologic investigations. I am only anxious that justice should be done to those who through absence are unable to vindicate their own rights until it may be too late to do so with effect.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, your obedient servant,  
 PHILIP DE MALPAS GREY EGERTON.