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Pulex imperator Westwood.

Prof. Taschenberg's note in the last No. (7) of the „Nachrichten“ induces me to publish a copy of the original notices concerning this imperial flea.

At the meeting of the Entomological Society of London in May 4. 1857 it is in record — Proc. Ent. Soc. Lond., new series, Vol. IV, p. 70 — that „Mr. Westwood exhibited a gigantic species of flea, for which he proposed the specific name of *imperator*. The specimen, which is about twenty times the size of the common *Pulex irritans*, was found dead in a bed at Gateshead.“

At the meeting of March 7. 1859 it was stated — op. cit. Vol. V, p. 60 — that he exhibited an insect which he had received some time previously from Dr. Backhouse, of Gateshead, as a gigantic flea, and which he had exhibited to the Society on the 4. of May 1857 (without however, having previously had an opportunity of carefully examining it), and for which he then suggested the name of *Pulex imperator*. He had however, recently examined the insect more minutely, and had ascertained that it was the very young larva of a *Blatta*, much distorted by being crushed flat in rather an oblique position, and with most of the limbs broken off. A small portion of the base of the multi-annular antennae was visible in such a situation as to seem like a part of the mouth, but on microscopically examining it, as well as the portions of the legs still remaining, it became evident that the insect was not a flea, and on dissecting the mouth its true character was at once detected.“

I was present on the occasion when the correction was made, and can vouch for its having been done in all seriousness and accompanied by explanatory drawings. Westwood himself never affected publicly, to treat it as a



McLachlan, Robert. 1894. "Pulex Imperator Westwood." *Entomologische Nachrichten* 20, 161–162.

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