

A NEW SUBGENERIC NAME FOR THE WATER
HARES (*hydrolagus* GRAY.)

MR. FREDERICK W. TRUE has called my attention to the fact that the name *Hydrolagus* used subgenerically by me in a recent paper on American Hares* is preoccupied in Ichthyology, the case standing as follows:

Hydrolagus GILL, Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci., Phila. for 1862, p. 331.

Hydrolagus GRAY, Ann. and Mag. Nat. Hist., 3d ser., XX., 1867, p. 221.

There being no synonym of Gray's pre-occupied *Hydrolagus* to replace it, the name *Limnolagus*, new subgenus, is therefore proposed for the group of Water Hares, of which *Lepus* [*Limnolagus*] *aquaticus* Bachman will be the type.

This section of *Lepus* was originally characterized by Baird (Mammals of North America, 1857, page 575), as follows: "F. Skull and incisors very large and massive; muzzle about as wide as high. Post-orbital process completely fused with the skull for its entire length, leaving neither foramen, notch nor suture, *L. aquaticus* [and *L.* *palustris*." The above diagnosis, supplemented by additional characters given by Baird in his Key to the North American species of *Lepus* at the top of page 577, has since been repeated, with some modifications, by Gray (who raised Baird's section 'F.' to generic rank), Allen and myself.

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CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY.

WOMAN IN CHINA.

PROF. GUSTAVE SCHLEGEL, of Leyden, contributed to the 10th International Congress of Orientalists a charming study (in French) on the position of woman in China,

* Preliminary description of a new subgenus and six new species and subspecies of Hares from the Mexican border of the United States. Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., Vol. XVIII., No. 1081, pp. 551-565, 1896.

in times past and present. Truly, as he points out, she enjoys there in many respects an influence greater than with us. The Emperor of China to-day, in theory at least, does nothing but carry out the orders of his mother! The conjugal position of the wife is, as a rule, dignified and important; and when she is unhappy it is nearly always a case of two much mother-in-law.

In the past Chinese women have occupied prominent rank in literature and the fine arts. They have been poets and writers of history, and indirectly have directed government. Even in the most ancient monuments of Chinese literature we do not discover any expressions which indicate that women were kept in a servile condition

DEATH MASKS IN EUROPE AND AMERICA.

Two interesting contributions to the study of death masks have recently appeared. One is by Mr. F. S. Dellenbaugh, in the *American Anthropologist* for February, on the faces of the dead so accurately reproduced on vases from Arkansas. These, he argues, were, in fact, not hand work, but obtained from moulds actually taken from the visage of the corpse. In no other way, he believes, can we explain their striking accuracy.

In *Folk-Lore* for December, 1896, the Hon. J. Abercromby treats of funeral masks in Europe. The custom still prevails in various localities to cover the face of the dead with such a mask during the funeral ceremonies, though sometimes the mask is placed not on the face, but besides the corpse. His explanations of the custom in some of its details are not convincing, and probably we have not yet caught the exact spirit of remote ages on this point.

ONTARIO ARCHÆOLOGICAL REPORT.

THE annual report (1896-7) of the Ontario Archæological Museum contains some matters of unusual interest. The first is a careful description of the Otonabee serpent

mound, by the Curator, Mr. David Boyle. A photographic illustration and a plan are added. There is no doubt of its artificial origin and religious character, and it even resembles the Ohio serpent mound in the presence of the 'egg' in front of the serpent's head. Efforts will be made to preserve it. A number of other mounds and some graves are described, and a variety of noteworthy specimens acquired by the Museum are mentioned and illustrated. At the close of the report (which covers 117 pages) is a useful bibliography of the archæology of Ontario, prepared by Mr. A. F. Hunter.

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NOTES ON INORGANIC CHEMISTRY.

THE last number of the Proceedings of the Chemical Society contains the abstract of a paper by W. N. Hartley and H. Ramage on the wide dissemination of some of the rarer elements. A large number of ores and minerals were examined by means of spectrographic analysis. Most notable is the wide distribution of gallium, which was found in 68 out of 168 specimens, occurring in most magnetites, bauxites and blendes, and nearly half the clay ironstones and manganese ores. Rubidium appears to be even more widely distributed, occurring in most iron ores. Indium was found in thirty minerals, including all the carbonates of iron and tin ores and most blendes. Thallium, while less widespread, was frequently found. Iron and sodium were found in every specimen and potassium in all but two, one a blende and the other a tin ore. Calcium, copper and silver were found in all but a few cases. Such a wide dissemination of gallium and indium is unexpected, and the same might be said of silver. Among metals not looked for by the authors, titanium is known to be found almost universally, and possibly the same is true of gold.

AN interesting class of substances has been discovered by Professor Wm. L. Dudley, of Vanderbilt, formed by the action of fused sodium dioxid on metals. The one most carefully studied is a hydrated oxid of nickel, of the formula $\text{Ni}_3\text{O}_4 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$. It is formed by heating nickel with sodium dioxid in a nickel crucible to a cherry red. The surface of the fusion soon becomes covered with scaly crystals, which, after cooling and washing, possess the composition given. They are lustrous, almost black, apparently hexagonal plates, soft and somewhat resembling graphite. They begin to lose water at 140° , and thus present the curious but not unique phenomenon of a substance containing water, formed at a high temperature and losing its water at a much lower temperature. Other metals appear to form similar compounds, but their study is not easy, since fused sodium dioxid attacks crucibles of porcelain, iron, silver, gold or platinum.

BEFORE the Edinburgh University Chemical Society on January 25th a paper was read by Dr. Dobbin on 'Who introduced the use of the balance into chemistry?' After quoting from text-books many statements which attribute to Lavoisier the discovery of the law of conservation of energy, and the first employment of the balance in investigating theoretical questions in chemistry, the author showed that every step of Black's classic investigation on 'Magnesia Alba' was made good by appeal to direct quantitative experiments. Boyle also made frequent use of the quantitative method of experiment. The earliest attempt to determine the accuracy of a view by appeal to quantitative experiment was, according to Dr. Dobbin, that of Van Helmont in his well-known experiment upon the supposed formation from water only, of 164 pounds weight of the substance of a willow tree, the weight of the earth in which this willow grew having varied by only about two