

that island, illustrating his paper with a series of lantern pictures.

The 332d meeting was held May 6. Lieut. W. E. Safford, U. S. N., read a paper on the ethnobotany of Guam. Lieut. Safford remained a long time in Guam in an official capacity, and while there made an extended study of the island and its inhabitants. The paper showed the carefulness of Lieut. Safford's observations and the enthusiasm with which he took up this study. Contrary to common belief, the natives are slightly mixed and speak a pure Malayan tongue. They are industrious, own and cultivate land, and make use of the feral and introduced plants to a remarkable degree.

Dr. John R. Swanton, of the Bureau of Ethnology, gave an account of the social organization of the Haida Indians. Dr. Swanton is familiar with the language of these Indians and has studied their customs for several years.

It is an interesting fact that the Haidas set apart, near their villages, parks and playgrounds for their children. The affairs of their towns are administered by the village chief, the house chief, and the clan chief. It is, apparently, the duty of the chief to earn as much property as he can in order to give it away for the purpose of rendering himself great and of confusing his enemies.

Dr. Swanton says that the chiefs and their families have a morality of their own; that is, they must live up to their station in life.

The system of relationship is quite complicated and is diagrammatically shown by Dr. Swanton.

The supernatural beings are eagles and ravens, the raven being the greater. They believe that a supernatural being resides under the Haida land and supports it.

In discussing this interesting paper Professor McGee pointed out, in connection with the table of relationship, that the law of marriage is more stringent in a low stage of civilization than it is in a high stage of civilization, contrary to the accepted beliefs of the social organizations of the Indians.

The 333d meeting was held May 20. A por-

tion of this closing meeting for the season was given to remarks on deceased members.

Dr. George M. Kober paid a tribute to Dr. W. W. Johnston, whose death was a severe loss to the people of Washington.

A eulogy on the late Thomas Wilson was read by Professor Otis T. Mason. Following this, an interesting paper on the origin of the United States decimal money was read by Dr. William H. Seaman.

WALTER HOUGH.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE.

ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE.

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: While believing that a more thorough study of the existing literature on zoological nomenclature would clear up most of Dr. Cook's uncertainties, while I would especially recommend him to read my report on the subject, of 1877, to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and admitting for myself less familiarity with the problems of purely botanical nomenclature—there are still some points in his letter in SCIENCE, No. 392, p. 30, which seem to call for notice. The necessity for types as a basis for modern genera I appreciate, I believe, fully. It is only when hasty methods of selection, upsetting work already done and promising no more definite stability than present methods, are proposed, that any hesitation is called for.

It seems to be most difficult to induce naturalists who have not made a special study of nomenclature, to get clearly fixed the idea that nomenclature is necessarily arbitrary, and that unless this principle is admitted to start with, stability is hopeless. Thus the acceptance of the tenth edition of the 'Systema Naturæ' as the starting point, though based on sound reasons, is nevertheless an arbitrary decision, and having been generally accepted should be adhered to. Dr. Cook thinks that because certain naturalists have violated the rules excluding vernacular names, therefore violation is justified and must be accepted; but laws are not enforced in that way. The laws are intended to and will, if followed, bring about stability, but it is preposterous

to suppose stability can be attained in any other way. Supplementary rules must be expected from time to time and are fully advisable, but not revolutionary changes in the already accepted rules. No one has ever claimed, as far as I know, that the possibilities of progress in the rules are exhausted or ever will be.

I confess myself entirely unable to understand Dr. Cook's characterization of De Candolle's annotated rules as 'quite lacking in logical arrangement and definite statement.'

These are the very characteristics which it seems to me they possess in an eminent degree, though naturally they do not go as far as required by the needs of science thirty-five years later. Moreover, I do not hesitate to say that 'evolutionary conceptions' of nature and systems of 'recording the results of biological study' have nothing whatever to do with the rules of nomenclature. I cannot help suspecting that the attempt to combine two or three irreconcilable categories in one system is at the bottom of Dr. Cook's difficulties. It may be practicable to devise a system which would exhibit evolutionary conceptions, and this might be very useful if it proved possible; but this system would not be that which we use for animals and plants according to Linnæus and his followers, and the two things are incapable of combination. The attempt to mix them would only result in intensified confusion.

WM. H. DALL.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION,

July 7, 1902.

RANGE OF THE FOX SNAKE.

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: Traditions often develop into truths for want of critical examination at an early stage in their career.

In his very complete catalogue of New York snakes, lately issued, Mr. E. C. Eckel refers to Dr. J. A. Allen as having 'described' a specimen of the fox snake (*Coluber vulpinus*) as captured in 1861 near Wenham, Mass., and in SCIENCE of June 27 Mr. Max Morse adopts the statement and suggests that Professor Cope, in fixing the range of this species, overlooked this record.

The references which evaded the minute inspection of my late friend, Professor Cope, were very few, and fewer still, after capture, escaped from that extraordinary memory. As a matter of fact he did have this record in mind in his Check List of 1875, where Massachusetts was given as the eastern limit of this species. The fact that this reported extralimital occurrence is now unverifiable is doubtless the real reason why it was passed over by Cope in his later work, as it was by myself in preparing, two years ago, a review of North American snakes.

In reality Dr. Allen did not 'describe' this specimen, nor had he apparently ever seen it; he merely in 1869 stated that a specimen had been entered on the catalogue of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, as having been received from Wenham, Mass., in 1861, and that Professor F. W. Putnam believed the identification to be correct. That Dr. Allen himself doubted this is shown by the language of his next sentence: 'If it is this species, etc.' Forty years ago herpetologists were less plentiful, and identification of species was less exact, than at present, and it is easily conceivable that one not fully familiar with the group might have mistaken an example of *Ophibolus doliatus triangulus* for the then little-known *Coluber vulpinus*. Indeed Baird and Girard, in the original description of the latter species, mention the similarity in general aspect of the two. That there was such an error in identification is much more likely than that a large and conspicuous species, not otherwise known east of Ohio, should have naturally occurred at a point so distant as the extreme northeastern county of Massachusetts.

A suggestive case is that of a living *Ophibolus rhombomaculatus* received by me in June of last year, with the history from a well-intentioned source, of its capture during the previous September, near Erie, Pa. Now this rather rare species has never, to my knowledge, been previously detected north of the District of Columbia, and the best explanation of its supposed occurrence at such a remote point seems to lie in an inference from the fact that the specimen had passed through the hands of a person from a southern State, who was