

necessary delay, appeal to all scientific men and let each judge as to the justice of my claim—as being the first to correctly interpret and give value to the things seen in the bodies of the infected mosquitoes.

Yours truly,

(Signed) J. C. SMITH.

In conclusion, I will say that I am willing to rest my case on the facts related, without analysis or argument, and leave it to the judgment of my readers if I am not entitled to the recognition I claimed at the hands of Surgeon-General Wyman and the party. That in the text treating on the parasite the following acknowledgment be placed:

“That the commission (or working party) is indebted to Mr. J. C. Smith, of New Orleans, La., for his valuable services in working out the sexual life-history of the parasite in the body of the mosquito.”

J. C. SMITH.

NEW ORLEANS, LA.,
September 24, 1903.

SOME RECENT APPLICATIONS OF THE A. O. U. CODE.

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: It is desirable that there should be public discussion of disputed cases in nomenclature, for in no other way can the weak points in codes, or in their application, be so well brought out. For this reason SCIENCE appears to be the proper place for the following criticism.

Dr. Stejneger (*Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus.*, 1903, p. 152) sets aside the specific portion of *Coronella sayi* Holbr. (Ed. 2, Vol. III., 1842), for sixty years used for Say's King-snake, now *Ophibolus getulus sayi*, for the reason that Holbrook was under the misapprehension that his species was identical with *Coluber sayi* Schlegel (1837), which is now *Pityophis sayi*, a pine snake, and included that name in his list of references. In consequence of which, a new specific name, *holbrookii* Stej. takes its place. The rule relied on for the change is Canon XXXIII. of the A. O. U. Code, which provides that ‘a specific * * * name is to be changed when it has been * * * used previously in combination with the same generic name.’ It is quite true that in this place Holbrook does cite Schlegel's name

among his references, and in that was clearly wrong. But as he puts his species in another genus, it does not appear that the application of this rule is so clear as to be compulsory. Curiously enough, however, a better ground exists upon which the vacating of Holbrook's name might be urged under the rule. Holbrook's first description of the species was under the name *Coluber sayi* Dekay, in the lately discovered fourth volume of his first edition (1840), now in the Academy's library. The only reference given here is ‘Dekay mss.’; Schlegel not being mentioned. For some unknown reason Holbrook tried to suppress this volume, and in his second edition he gave the same description and plate under the name *Coronella sayi* Schlegel.

It is of course true that by a strict construction, which is usually a narrow one, the rule quoted might be applied here, Holbrook having first used *sayi* in connection with the generic name used by Schlegel, but the fact remains that Holbrook was indisputably the first to describe publicly and name the species from original specimens, and that he subsequently placed it in a different genus where it is still retained by high authority among herpetologists, his only error being in assuming that Schlegel's species was the same as his. If, under the A. O. U. Code, there is no escape from applying the rule here, then it is one of the cases where the code conflicts with justice and common sense.

While I am on the subject I may mention also Cope's substitution (*Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus.*, 1888, p. 392) of *Natrix* Laurenti (1768) for the well-known *Tropidonotus* Kuhl (1826), on the ground that while *Natrix* was a heterogeneous collection of species, *Natrix vulgaris*, which is a *Tropidonotus*, was its type. Here we have a method of determining types which leads to the absurdity of placing a group of snakes with keeled and conspicuously rough scales in a genus whose author among its definitions expressly says ‘*Truncus glaber, nitidus.*’

ARTHUR ERWIN BROWN.

ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES,
PHILADELPHIA, August 5, 1903.