

ing a feature of great interest to the upper slopes of the mountains.

In reply to a question, Mr. Bailey said the cony of the Bible was a *Hyrax*. Dr. Gill said the cony of old England was the rabbit and that the biblical scholars, mistakenly supposing the animal referred to was a rabbit, used the term cony in translating. The genus is now called *Procavia* instead of *Hyrax*. Both of the scientific names are also misapplications, the hyrax of the ancient Greeks being a shrew mouse and the biblical cony or daman being in no wise related to a *Cavia*. However, *Procavia* it must remain; the genus is the type of a very distinct family—*Procaviidae*—as well as of a peculiar suborder.

M. C. MARSH,  
*Recording Secretary*

THE ELISHA MITCHELL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

THE 169th meeting was held in the main lecture room of Chemistry Hall, Tuesday January 15, 7:30 P.M., with the following program:

PROFESSOR H. V. WILSON: 'The Regenerative Power of Sponges.'

PROFESSOR J. W. GORE: (1) 'Direct Current Transmission of Power,' (2) 'The Electrical Aging of Flour.'

A. S. WHEELER,  
*Recording Secretary*

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

THE GEOGRAPHIC BOARD OF CANADA

THE Geographic Board of Canada, organized in 1898 with aim, constitution and publications very like those of the older United States Board on Geographic Names, has just published its sixth report. As I have an interest in all matters pertaining to the geography of New Brunswick, I wish to make some comments upon the decisions of the board affecting that province.

The first duty for which the board was organized is to decide upon 'all questions concerning geographic names in the Dominion,' and its decisions up to the present are in the report before us. The great majority of these,

so far as the province of New Brunswick is concerned, are admirable; but some of them, in my opinion, are quite indefensible. Thus, an important old English settlement in the province is called *Point de Bute*, sometimes printed *Pointe de Bute*. The board, called upon to decide between Point and Pointe, rejects the whole name and decides upon *Pont à Buot*, on the ground, as it has explained, that this is the original historic form of the name. Aside from the fact that this origin is only supposed and is not proved, the French form has not once been used since the English replaced the French in 1755; yet these English-speaking people are expected by the board to abandon their usage of a century and a half and adopt a form which is not only to them wholly new, but also very difficult to pronounce. Again, there is a small river and settlement which appear upon maps and in local newspapers, etc., variously as *Canouse*, *Canoos* and *Canoose*, the last being the commonest form and expressing exactly its local pronunciation. The board, called upon to choose between these forms, rejects them all, and decides upon an entirely new form, *Kanus*, explaining, in answer to inquiries, that this conforms to the Royal Geographical Society's rules for native names. Aside from the question as to the wisdom of changing century-old and locally-familiar words to newly-invented and strange ones to make them fit with a set of rules designed for a very different purpose, there is in this case the practical trouble that the board's form implies an erroneous pronunciation; for certainly most strangers, reading the form *Kanus*, would throw the accent on the first syllable and sound the a long, the exact reverse of local usage in both cases. Again, the board, very properly eliding the final possessive s in all cases of divided usage, extends this principle to cases where there is no local diversity. Thus an important bay and settlement are called *Maces Bay*, and a river and settlement are called *Cains River*, and those forms are locally invariable. Yet the board selects them for change and decides upon *Mace Bay* and *Cain River*, forms not only strange to New Brunswick ears, but, as they

sound to me, less euphonious and distinctive than the forms in use. Again, there are two important names, *Nepisiguit* and *Shippegan*, which the board decides must be spelled *Nipisiguit* and *Shippigan*, despite the fact that in both cases the former are in best accord with the history of the words, with the best maps, with the common local usage, and, as it seems to me, with a greater symmetry of construction of words. In fact in this case, while the board's forms can be found upon some maps, I can not find a single reason, even in theory, for their adoption in preference to the others. I can not take space to cite further examples, but these are the extreme cases of a number of similar sort.

The first thought of any geographer on reading these observations will be that the board has made these decisions in ignorance of local usage and will reconsider them when the facts are placed before it. Unfortunately, this supposition would not be correct. In the first place, the board has a New Brunswick representative to whom it can turn for local information; but I have in my possession evidence which shows that some at least of these decisions have not the approval of the New Brunswick representative. In the second place, when these decisions were announced by the board four years ago, they were fully discussed and the facts stated at length in a local newspaper, of which copies were sent the board, and to which indeed the board published a reply, though, in my opinion, an insufficient one. Further, within a year past, the facts were fully restated in a new communication sent through a prominent member of the board who agreed to, and doubtless did, lay it before the board. Since the new report affirms all the old decisions without change, we can only conclude that they represent the deliberate judgment of the board, and embody the methods which they propose to apply to Canadian geographical nomenclature. How different this position is from that of the United States board will be evident to every person concerned with geography. The United States board places convenience above all, adopts the best local usage, attempts no reforms upon theoretical grounds, and is steadily reducing

confusion in the nomenclature of its territory. The Canadian board disregards local usage and convenience, attempts to reform nomenclature to accord with abstract principles, and is steadily increasing the confusion it was organized to lessen. It will be interesting to observe the comparative worth of the two methods in the geographical development of the future.

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#### ELIMINATION VS. THE FIRST-SPECIES RULE

Now that both sides of this controversy have presented their arguments, it appears desirable to briefly state the case and give a recital of the principal facts brought out by this discussion.

Briefly speaking, the point at issue is this: In every case where a new genus was founded on two species, neither of which was designated as the type, the advocates of the first-species rule claim that the first species cited or described under such genus is the *de facto* type, and can not become the type of any subsequently established genus. In opposition to this view the advocates of the elimination rule hold that in a case of this kind the action of a later author in selecting the first species as the type of a new genus is regular, and that the remaining species thereby becomes the type of the original genus. In case that the original genus contained three or more species and the later author selected any two of them to form a new genus, only one of them (the one that is the type of the new genus) is eliminated, and the remaining species may be designated the type of the original genus, or it may be subsequently selected as the type of a second new genus.

The advocates of the first-species rule claim for their method that it is the easier of the two and that it always leads to the same results, whereas the elimination method, by requiring a greater knowledge of the literature, is liable to lead to different results in the hands of different persons, according to whether they had consulted a greater or lesser number of publications on the subject.

The principles involved and facts estab-