

I have been looking for fixity in zoological names, but that desirable condition seems further off than ever. It is all very well to indulge in these antiquarian researches, these games of taxonomic logomachy, if they be recognized as such, but the players fail to realize one thing: Names of animals and plants are but means for easy reference; nomenclature is not the end and object of all biological science.

The sanest word in all this discussion has, in my opinion, been said by Dr. Williston. This digging up of forgotten screeds means but the relegating of the great masters of the past to a secondary position; this framing of ex post facto laws offers a precedent for the future subject of that intolerable disease once known as the 'mihi itch' to set aside as lightly the laborious schemes of the sciolists of to-day.

Biologists may apparently be divided into two groups: One contains those who find great enjoyment in renaming things already well named and who regard names as the object of all science. The other group have something to tell us about animals and plants and they regard names merely as means of identification of the forms referred to. Certainly they have some rights which should be considered. Must they run through the gamut of *Triton*, *Triturus*, *Molge*, etc., every time the systematist changes his mind? Must I know the mental make-up—radical or conservative—of the biologist to know what he means when he refers to *Uca* or to *Acer saccharinum*? An article deals with *Esox*; does it treat of a pike or a needle fish?

The safest way for the morphologist or the ecologist is to stick to the well-accepted, time-honored names and to utterly ignore the vagaries of the nominalist. The question once was 'Who reads an American book?' If the present tendency continues it will soon be 'Who can read an American biological work?' It would be most desirable that at the coming Zoological Congress a morphologist or two should be added to the committee on nomenclature to act as a balance wheel.

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A CORRECTION

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: A statement on page 452 of SCIENCE of March 22 requires a rectification in the interest of the unprejudiced reader.

The sentence in question reads as follows:

These results show conclusively that magnesium sulphate in proper dilution is beneficial to the growth of seedlings, and that any inhibitory effects are due to the presence of excessive amounts, thus controverting Loew's theory that magnesium salts when alone in solution are always injurious to plant growth.

Permit me the following remarks regarding this remarkable sentence:

1. It is not a *theory* that magnesium salts act poisonously on plants; it is a *fact*.

2. Not only Loew, but also others have observed the same fact. Loew has merely furnished an explanation well in accord with certain observations.

3. The doses at which magnesium salts, applied alone, are poisonous for plants can *impossibly* be called *excessive*, since even at 0.02 per cent. a poisonous action of magnesium salts on algæ can be observed, while calcium nitrate is not in the least injurious for algæ at even 1 per cent.

4. It is a well-known fact that many compounds that act poisonously at a certain concentration can act in very high dilution as stimulants of growth.

5. It is erroneous to attribute this stimulating action to any nutritive quality of the poison.

The unprejudiced reader who desires some information as to the nutritive rôle of magnesium salts in plants and to the conditions under which this function can be performed, is kindly requested to consult Bulletin No. 45 of the Bureau of Plant Industry, 'The Physiological Rôle of Mineral Nutrients in Plants,' Washington, 1903.

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SPECIAL ARTICLES

THE BEHAVIOR OF THE SEEDLINGS OF CERTAIN VIOLET HYBRIDS

DURING the summer of 1906 I raised plants from the seeds of twenty-five different hybrids