

The author has, in a number of cases, without any apparent reason given the older freezing-point diagrams of Gautier, and Roland-Gosselin along with the more correctly established diagrams of later workers. This arrangement occupies space at the expense of clearness. The placing of the diagram on the page might also have been done to better advantage. As an example, on page 110 the copper-nickel diagram is given under the paragraph heading silver-zinc, and the diagram for this pair of metals is given on the following page under copper-tin.

In the explanation of those diagrams in which a concealed maximum exists, the changes in concentration are not clearly followed and in at least one case inaccurately given.

The chapter on iron-carbon alloys is clear, concise and well illustrated with excellent reproductions of photomicrographs.

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SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS AND ARTICLES

The contents of *Terrestrial Magnetism and Atmospheric Electricity* for September are: "Pocket Compass Sun-Dial of 1451" (frontispiece); "The Earliest Values of the Magnetic Declination," by L. A. Bauer; "On the Distribution of Magnetism over the Earth's Surface," by P. T. Passalskij, translated by Paul Wernicke; "Report on the Atmospheric Electricity Observations made on the Magnetic Survey Yacht, *Galilee*, 1907-8," by P. H. Dike; Letters to Editor; Notes; Abstracts and Reviews; List of Recent Publications.

THE RULE OF PRIORITY IN ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE¹

DISAPPROVAL was expressed of the extreme application of the rule of priority, which in the author's opinion had brought about much mischief under pretence of aiming at ultimate uniformity. The author protested against the abuse to which this otherwise excellent rule

had been put by some recent workers, encouraged as they were by the decision of several committees who had undertaken to revise the Stricklandian Code, elaborated under the auspices of the British Association in 1842. The worst feature of this abuse is not so much the bestowal of unknown names on well-known creatures as the transfer of names from one to another, as we have seen in the case of *Astacus*, *Torpedo*, *Holothuria*, *Simia*, *Cynocephalus*, and many others which must be present to the mind of every systematist.

The names that were used uniformly by Cuvier, Johannes Müller, Owen, Agassiz, Darwin, Huxley, Gegenbaur, would no longer convey any meaning, very often they would be misunderstood; in fact the very object for which Latin or Latinized names were introduced would be defeated. It is all very well to talk of uniformity in the future, but surely we must have some consideration for the past. Names with which all general zoologists anatomists and physiologists are familiar should be respected, should be excepted from the rule in virtue of what may be termed the privilege prescription.

If biologists would agree to make that one exception to the law of priority in nomenclature things would adjust themselves well enough, and we might hope to see realized some day what we all desire, fixity in names, that we may readily understand the meaning of all writers, not only over the whole civilized world, at the present day and in the future, but back into the last century, which has marked so great an advance in zoological science. Such a result would be attained by protecting time-honored names of well-known animals from the attacks of the revisers of nomenclature. For this purpose future committees that may be convened to discuss these topics might confer a real and lasting benefit on zoology by determining group by group, which names are entitled to respect, not, of course, on the ground of their earliest date or their correct application in the past, but as having been universally used in a definite sense.

This suggestion is not a new one. As far back as 1896, in a discussion which took place at the Zoological Society of London, Sir Ray

¹ Abstract of a paper by G. A. Boulenger, F.R.S., presented at the Dublin meeting of the British Association.