who is concerned with the hundreds of thousands of names rather than he who deals with the thousands that sees most clearly the hopelessness of gaining stability by methods where personal opinion is given full sway. Dr. Allen attributes the remarkable unanimity of opinion of those opposed to his views to inexperience or ignorance of the subject. If the worthy doctor himself was more experienced in the fields of entomology or botany, where the forms are countless as compared with animals or birds, he might be less positive in his position on this question. It may not be absurd to state that an ornithological genus based on an unnamed woodpecker with three toes can not be mistaken because but one such bird was known. But would it seem so plausible to state that a genus of insects based on an unnamed specimen of parasitic hymenoptera, or a minute fly, with a certain vein of the wing forked before the middle was unmistakable because but one such species was known while many thousands of such little creatures are flying undescribed about us?

It is true that this question is not definitely covered by the International Code, but certain statements do have a bearing on the subject. On page 11 of the code the generic and specific name is likened to the family and individual names of persons. Now who can conceive of a family of Smiths without a John or a Jane in it? Would it not seem silly to have a name Johnson before any one was born to bear it? Getting back to genera, what is a genus? "An aggregation of one or more species" would seem to be a good definition. If such a definition was accepted it would certainly invalidate the genus without species, so I presume Dr. Allen has another definition. Not knowing what it is, I can not discuss it. The code does not define the genus. However, it is now quite universally agreed that a genus should have a type designated. Article 30 of the code, paragraph 2, says: ". . . nor can a species be selected as type which was not originally included in the genus. . . ." This being true, how can we get a type for a genus where there were no species originally included? In the amendments to the code, published in SCIENCE for October 8, 1907, is the following: "The commission is unanimously of the opinion that a *name,* in the sense of the code, refers to the designation by which the actual objects are known." Now a genus without a species has no object; it is a name applied to a conception, not to an object and can therefore have no place in systematic nomenclature.[1]

No one, I think, claims infallibility for the international code; but it is certainly not to the best interest of nomenclatorial stability to knowingly violate its recommendations. An able board of chosen nomenclaturists has passed on and sanctioned these rules and formulated them into an accessible code, and it should be incumbent upon systematists to comply with them so far as possible. There are enough questions not covered by the code to furnish constant contention without bringing up problems that are capable of being disposed of under the rules already formulated. That which is best in one group may not be the best for another, but for the sake of uniformity and in the hope of future stability let us accept the dictum of the International Zoological Congress and follow the code.

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U. S. NATIONAL MUSEUM

A NOTE ON UROPHLYCTIS ALFALFÆ (V. LAGERH.) P. MAGN. IN CALIFORNIA

A CROWN gall of alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*) which occurs in Europe, but which, so far as known by the writer, has not before been noted in this country, has recently come to our attention in California.

The disease was first observed in Ecuador in 1892 by Lagerheim, who placed the parasitic fungus causing it in the genus *Cladochytrium.* In 1902 it was found in Alsace, Germany, by Magnus, who transferred the organism to the genus *Urophlyctis.* It has since been observed in other localities on the continent, where it has done considerable damage.

The galls are usually very numerous at the

[1] *Nomen nudum* does not seem inappropriate in this connection.

crown of the affected plant, and frequently occur an inch or two up on the stem. Though usually small, or in an irregular divided mass, they may be round and unbroken, and three or four inches in diameter. The interior of the gall is composed of small, irregular cavities in the hypertrophied tissue, the chambers being filled with masses of brown resting spores about forty micro-millimeters in diameter.

A more detailed account of the disease as it occurs in California will be published shortly.

Elizabeth H. Smith
Department of Plant Pathology,
University of California,
June 2, 1909

THE WEST INDIAN SEAL AT THE AQUARIUM

The New York Aquarium received on June 14, 1909, an adult male and three yearling specimens of the rare West Indian seal (*Monachus tropicalis*). One of the latter was in a weak condition and died the day after arrival. The others are apparently doing well. The specimens were procured from a dealer in live turtles at Progresso, Yucutan, who reported the species as a great rarity. They were presumably captured at either the Triangle or the Alacran islets in the Gulf of Campeachy, the only known resorts of the species at the present time, so far as I am aware.

They are probably the only specimens of this nearly extinct species now living in captivity. Its original range included the coasts of Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica and the Bahamas. For the last half century it has apparently been restricted to the islands of Yucatan. It was well known to the sailors of Columbus and was later the basis of a seal fishery.

In Science for April 13, 1906, I recorded the killing of a specimen at Key West, Florida, on February 26, 1906. The species had not been seen in Florida for about thirty years.

The New York Aquarium received two specimens in 1897, one of which lived in the aquarium until 1903. Both of these animals had the singular habit of filling their cheeks with water and blowing it suddenly and with considerable force into the faces of visitors leaning over the pool. It will be interesting to discover whether the specimens now in the building develop this trick, which for years excited the amusement, and sometimes the wrath, of visitors. Unlike the other Phocidæ kept on exhibition here, *Monachus* is noisy, the young often roaring harshly.

C. H. Townsend
New York Aquarium

SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

Scientific Papers. By Sir George Howard Darwin. Cambridge, at the University Press. Vol. I., pp. xiv + 459; Vol. II., pp. xvi + 514.

The task of the reviewer who undertakes the consideration of a republication of matter which has been for some years before the public in an accessible form, is not particularly easy. He may, of course, take refuge in statements more or less detailed of the contents of the volumes before him and say little more than the intelligent reader can glean by turning over the pages himself. Or he may write a few paragraphs on the history of the subjects treated, showing the author's relation thereto and his place in their development. More often he seizes a few points of a controversial character and in discussing them simply adds to the literature of the subject. No one of these methods appears to be satisfactory from the point of view of the reader. Brief reviews not intended for serious study, although they may be the result of such study, should, it seems, be written chiefly to save time and labor for the reader and perhaps to express the opinions of the reviewer, since in scientific journals at least the editorial "we" has ceased to be even a disguised fiction. Such reviews thus necessarily pass into the class of ephemeral productions which may have value at the time of publication, but which only add to the labor of future students if they contain matter belonging properly to the development of the subject.

If a writer accepts this view and takes to the criticism of matters beyond the mechanical detail of form and arrangement, an estimate of the writer and his work, however dangerous, is necessarily the main topic. After all, such criticism is merely a single opinion as to whether the attitude of the scholar towards his