

VARIOUS sub-departments of geology at Cornell University have been consolidated under one head and the committee of professors which has hitherto administered the affairs of the department has been dissolved. Professor Heinrich Ries has been appointed head of the department.

MONEY is being collected to endow a professorship of railroading in the Graduate School of Business and Administration of Harvard University, to be named in honor of Mr. James J. Hill.

DEGREES will be conferred at commencement upon 101 University of Illinois matriculants of the years 1868-92, who completed 36 term credits and did not receive degrees. The belated degrees will be conferred as of the classes to which they belonged. These were not granted at the usual time because the students did not follow courses exactly prescribed.

CHARLES SCHUCHERT, professor of paleontology, has been elected acting dean of the graduate school of Yale University for next year in the absence abroad of Dean Oertel.

DR. FREDERICK A. SANDERS, professor of physics of Syracuse University, has been appointed head of the physics department of Vassar College.

DR. C. C. ADAMS, of the zoology department of the University of Illinois, has accepted the position of assistant professor of forest zoology in the New York State College of Forestry at Syracuse University.

HERBERT FISHER MOORE, assistant professor of theoretical and applied mechanics in the engineering experiment station of the University of Illinois, has been promoted to be professor of engineering materials.

MR. E. R. BURDON has been appointed university lecturer in forestry at the University of Cambridge.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

MODESTY OVERWORKED

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: I am very loath to be drawn into the controversy on nomen-

clature, but in a recent number of SCIENCE (April 24) Professor Verrill has seen fit to hold me up to obloquy for having wantonly violated two rules, one of which is of his own selection. I do not intend to discuss the advisability of this rule further than to enquire who is to be the arbiter of what is "obviously obscene"? Professor Verrill evidently regards *Urticina felina* as an appellation falling under this category, while others, equally modest, might reject *Metridium*, which he accepts with equanimity. Even granting that certain Linnean names in their original form might bring a blush to the cheek of some *casta Minerva*, are they therefore, in their modern associations, to be rejected on that ground alone? Surely such a principle, consistently applied, would deprive the world of many of its greatest possessions in science, literature and art! *Honi soit qui mal y pense!*

Nor do I intend to notice the personalities contained in Professor Verrill's letter, but, when he disputes the correctness of my conclusions as to the validity of the names *Metridium senile* and *Urticina felina* he is entering upon a criticism to which one may reply. His contention that *Priapus senilis* and *P. felinus* are unidentifiable from Linnæus's descriptions I have fully recognized, but I also showed that Linnæus himself, in the twelfth edition of the "Systema," furnished the basis for their correct identification, by giving as references for them the recognizable figures in Baster's "Opuscula subseciva," a work that Professor Verrill carefully refrains from mentioning. It is quite unnecessary to repeat here the facts and arguments in support of this view, as they are fully set forth in my paper, whose main object, so far as these two species were concerned, was to show that the confusion that has arisen in the synonymy of their Linnean names was quite unnecessary and that these names are valid according to the ordinary rules of priority. Professor Verrill thinks otherwise and prefers the specific terms *dianthus* and *crassicornis*; but why does he reject Pennant's *pentapetala*, which apparently antedates *dianthus*? Surely it, too, can

not be regarded as "obviously obscene" or rather let us say, immodest. My position, in brief, is that we have in Linnæus's reference to Baster's figure very clear evidence of what he intended the term *felinus* to imply, and, this being so, the application of his term *senilis* also becomes clear. I prefer Linnæus's identifications of his own species to any speculations as to other possibilities.

I am quite prepared to assume responsibility for having advocated the revival of the Linnean specific names for the two species in question, but Professor Verrill asserts that I also advocate the adoption of *Priapus equinus* for the form that he prefers to term *Actinia mesembryanthemum* (properly *mesembrianthemum*). I do not recall ever having advocated the use of the original Linnean name for this species, and, indeed, in the paper which has become the object for Professor Verrill's fulminations, it is only once mentioned and then as *Actinia (Priapus) equina*. I gave the name that form expressly to indicate that while recognizing the priority of *Priapus* according to the International Rules, I hoped that the long-established name of *Actinia* would not be dropped from our nomenclature. Apparently my mode of expressing this idea has been somewhat too subtle. It would, indeed, be unfortunate if *Actinia*, with all its associations, should be obliterated and it would also be unfortunate if the familiar *A. equina* should disappear. For Professor Verrill's statement that "the leading European authorities, familiar with the actinians of the same region, have never been able to agree as to his (*i. e.*, Linnæus's) species" is quite erroneous so far as this species is concerned, and equally untrue is the statement that "most writers, before McMurrich, have wisely rejected the names," mainly on the ground of their immodesty. I have taken the trouble to look up the references to the species now under consideration during the twenty-five years that preceded the publication of my paper and find that in *thirty-eight* it is quoted as *A. equina* and only in *four* as *A. mesembryanthemum*, although in several the latter name is given as

a synonym for *equina*. Apparently there are quite a number of zoologists unburdened by such an exquisite sense of modesty as would compel them to reject this Linnean name, and the most convincing reason for the non-use of *senilis* and *felinus* has not been that stated by Professor Verrill, but, as a review of the literature will clearly show, the confusion in their application which early arose and to which I have referred in my paper.

J. PLAYFAIR McMURRICH

THE FANNY EMDEN PRIZE OF THE PARIS ACADEMY

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: It may be of interest to you to record the fact that the Academy of Sciences of the French Institute has published a statement in regard to the award of the Fanny Emden prize for the year 1913. This prize is of the value of 3,000 francs and is the result of a bequest made by Mlle. Juliette de Reinach of 50,000 francs, the interest of which is available every two years. The prize is to be awarded for the best work "in the field of hypnotism, suggestion or in general, of physiological action which may be exercised at a distance upon a living organism." The fund was made available in 1911. Thirteen candidates presented researches, but no prize was awarded. In 1913 the prize was divided, 2,000 francs to M. Emile Boirac and 1,000 francs to M. J. Ochorowicz.

The peculiar wording of the award lies in the fact that the Academy makes these awards as *encouragement* for meritorious work, but sets forth that neither of the essays submitted goes very far towards proving its thesis. Indeed, the report rather decidedly indicates that they contribute rather little towards the establishment of any conclusion. The report cites one or two experiments of M. Boirac which are certainly questionable, and require extraordinary confirmation before they can be regarded as evidential in the sense presented.

Nothing is indicated in the report to show that a research proving the absence of any such action "at a distance," or its extreme improbability, would not be considered; but the very wording of the original bequest seems