for the celebration. Professor Curt P. Wimmer has been appointed to begin the work of historical research in which data will be gathered for the centennial ceremonies.

THE Daniel Guggenheim Fund for Research in Aeronautics has made a grant of $78,000 to the University of Michigan. This will be used to complete the construction of wind tunnels and for the establishment of a new professorship in aeronautics.

THE American Museum of Natural History will receive nearly $1,000,000 from the estate of the late Wood Fosdick, of New York, appraisal of whose estate has just been filed.

SIR JOSEPH VERCO has endowed the *Australian Journal of Experimental Biology and Medical Science* with a gift of £5,000. This sum will be held in trust by the University of Adelaide and the income devoted to sustaining the journal, which will become the property of the university.

THE American Petroleum Institute, on the recommendation of the National Research Council, has granted the Johns Hopkins University $4,000 for immediate use in a research to establish scientific methods for the identification of sulphur compounds in petroleum. The work will be carried on by Dr. Parry Borgstrom, a graduate of the University of California.

THE department of zoology of the University of New Hampshire proposes to make an ecological survey of the fresh waters of New Hampshire. Special attention will be given to water pollution and the effect which this has on animal life. This will run parallel to the study of the pollution of Great Bay and its effect on the distribution of food fishes.

A MOTION reaffirming the intention of the British Association of Chemists to press for the preparation of a register of chemists with a view to confining the conduct of essentially chemical operations to qualified men was carried unanimously at the annual general meeting of the association, held at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, on November 5. The council was further instructed to appoint a special committee to carry this resolution into effect.

UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATIONAL NOTES

GEORGE HERBERT JONES, director of the Inland Steel Company, has given the University of Chicago $415,000 for a new laboratory of chemical research.

ALUMNI of Cornell University have subscribed $200,000 to endow a chair in research work, the incumbent of which will be released from teaching duties in order to spend all his time in research.

A GIFT of $10,000 to found a research fellowship in pure science at Princeton University in memory of Charles Allen Munn has been announced. The donors were Augusta Munn Tilney and Orson D. Munn, niece and nephew of Charles Allen Munn, and T. Hart Anderson and John K. Brachvogel, all of New York.

THE trustees of Dartmouth College have voted to construct a new building which will house the natural science department and will provide the departments of biology, geology, botany and zoology with equipment and facilities that have not been available hitherto.

DR. EDWARD R. WEIDLEIN, director of the Mellon Institute of Industrial Research at the University of Pittsburgh, has announced the establishment of a department of analytical chemistry, which will be supervised by Dr. George D. Beal, formerly professor of analytical and food chemistry in the University of Illinois and now assistant director in charge of the institute's fellowships in the field of pharmaceutical chemistry. Dr. William W. Mills has been selected as analyst in the new department.

DR. BRANDUR J. BRANDSON has been appointed professor and head of the department of surgery at the University of Manitoba Faculty of Medicine, Winnipeg, to succeed Dr. Jasper Halpenny, who resigned on account of ill health; Dr. Daniel S. MacKay has become head of the department of gynecology following the retirement of Dr. Robert M. Simpson; Dr. Tudor J. Jones, Glasgow, has been appointed assistant professor of anatomy.

DR. ADOLPH G. G. DE SANCTIS has been appointed professor of pediatrics at the New York Post-Graduate Medical School and Hospital.

FORBES W. SHAPLEY, lecturer on electrical engineering at the Lauder Technical School, Dunfermline, has been appointed professor of mechanical and electrical engineering at the School of Mines, Dhanbad, India.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

SCIENTIFIC NAMES AND THEIR CONVENIENCE

IN the *American Naturalist*, Vol. LX, for May, 1926, pp. 275 to 281, is an interesting article entitled "Science and Scientific Names," by Dr. E. P. Felt and Dr. S. C. Bishop. While recognizing the value of this paper and its evident fairness and accuracy, I must entirely dissent from its conclusions as to the possible improvement in the naming of animals and plants.

It was my fortune in Gratz to hear Dr. Rhumbler read his paper advocating the use of prefixes to generic names, by which the systematic position of the genus should be indicated. I believed then as now that there are two serious objections to his own rather clumsy scheme or to any other of like nature. It will never be adopted, and if adopted would only add to the present confusion. For in my judgment the difficulties do not mainly arise from our system of naming, but from the gigantic problem set before us by nature herself. Agassiz used to say: "Try to interpret what really exists." The Linnaean system is as good for this purpose as any other could be, and our whole literature of geographical distribution and of evolution rests upon it. Its chief faults—the needless synonymy and clumsy names—are faults of the workers, not of the system. Our rules are slowly bringing back uniformity in spite of generations of carelessness and of bad taste.

I can not believe that ignorance of the class or family, to be restored by prefixes or other permanent attachments to the word, could possibly help. No one writing in any group fails to know whether the genera he deals with are birds, insects or snakes. That is the least of our troubles. It might have been better if we had allowed duplication in different classes. It is now too late to change, because hundreds of new names have been legally adopted since the animals were separated, in this regard, from plants. It is not necessary to follow the unpleasant precedents of *Edvardotrouessartia, Asmithwoodardia* and the like. When Nichols broke out in *Microstomatichthyoborus* in 1917, I expressed the pious hope that "no one will ever attempt to break this record as to length of generic name." Such well-known records of bad taste as Ameghino's may stand as "awful examples," and the usually senseless "pseudo" may die out in time.

"A name is a name without necessary meaning" and we do not depend on it to fix our ideas of relations. If one does not know the genera of a group, he need not write about it, and a thousand names beginning with *Icro* would be no easier to remember than would a thousand names mustered under the family of *Coccinellidae*.

Our experience shows that it may never be possible in the future to eliminate any of the "nearly 2,000 prefixes of *Para* and *Pseud.*" Priority stands above assumed convenience, for it is a matter to be definitely fixed, whereas convenience, good taste and good sense vary with each individual. This the now rejected substitute names of Cuvier and other really great authors clearly show.

The proposition to indicate species by numerals is wholly untenable. It is hard to remember specific names in general, the commonest, as *gracilis, lineatus, minimus* and the like, especially so.

But to most of us the remembrance of meaningless numerals is a thousand times more difficult. To ascertain the identity of Number 43, with that of Number 86, to know which author got in his Number 46 first, and as to whether the hastily described Number 39 of Coccinella really belonged to that genus are matters which no international commission could or would ever try to handle.

When the species are all in and the definitions all agreed upon, we may have an international world catalogue with a number attached to each species. But as we barely know half of those which really exist, and as half of those we know are "geminates" and so may be reduced to the rank of subspecies, we are not yet ready for a numerical catalogue without agreement as to general validity.

The trouble is therefore not with our system of nomenclature but with nature itself, so prolific with forms of life in comparison with the number of us seriously interested in trying to find out what really exists. Nor is it possible, or in any way desirable, to drop our recognition of the "140,000 more or less current generic names" to return to the meaningless pigeon holes into which species were carelessly dropped by the early authors who had never dreamed that evolution and taxonomy would ultimately be one and the same.

DAVID STARR JORDAN
STANFORD UNIVERSITY

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE RELATING TO J. J. SYLVESTER

THE recent semi-centennial celebration of the Johns Hopkins University naturally tends to increase temporary interest in the biography of J. J. Sylvester, who occupies a very prominent position in her early history as well as in the history of American mathematics. Hence it may be opportune to note here that in such popular works of reference as the "Dictionary of National Biography" (1898), the "New International Encyclopedia" (1923), the "Encyclopedia Americana" (1920) and D. E. Smith's "History of Mathematics," volume 1 (1923), one finds, under the name of Sylvester, statements equivalent to saying that he was called to the Johns Hopkins University in 1877. On the contrary, the appendix to the first president's report of the Johns Hopkins University states that he was appointed as professor of mathematics on March 5, 1876, and this report states also that he was present at the beginning of the first academic year in October, 1876.

Slight errors as to date are usually of little conse-