

was in being the physical basis for a Division of Science and Technology. Thus, with the tremendous advances in science during the past two decades the Smithsonian Deposit, with its unrivaled collections of the publications of learned societies, became more and more the center of scientific reference work in the Library of Congress.

In 1938, when the magnificent new annex to the Library was opened, the Smithsonian Division was moved to quarters in this building. The "Deposit" was shelved on Deck 12, in close proximity to the science collections, and its office occupied an alcove off the Thomas Jefferson

Room, which houses the main reference collections in science, technology, medicine, and agriculture. Mr. Brasch, who administered the collection for 20 years, during his last year had the title of consultant in the history of science. He retired on 30 June 1946.

The Smithsonian Institution begins its second century at a time in world history when science has assumed an unprecedented importance in the affairs of men. The collections which the Smithsonian has amassed and continues to enlarge will thus play an increasingly significant role in the life of this Nation and of the world.

This Centennial Issue of *Science*, planned in midwinter, had to be shortened materially in view of the paper shortage. For that reason several book reviews of Smithsonian publications, which should have been included here, must be deferred to later issues.

Letters to the Editor

Botanical Taxonomy

With reference to C. R. Ball's complaints (*Science*, 1946, 103, 713), it may be said that an important reform is possible which does not involve any alteration of the rules. This is to omit the name of the author of the combination, when a specific name is transferred to a different genus from that to which it was referred by the original author. This is the general practice in zoology, and I have never known any inconvenience to arise. I, for one, propose to follow this method when referring to plants.

However, the real reason for the neglect of taxonomy is that it is too difficult and takes too much time. In order to revise a genus of plants it will usually be necessary to consult or borrow from many herbaria and to read and interpret literature in many languages, most of which is obtainable in only a few libraries. When all this is done, it still remains very desirable to have a knowledge of the living plants, wild and in the botanic garden. Sound taxonomy is the mother of sound ecology. We ask of a plant how it came to be and what are the conditions which now control its growth. We are involved in endless complexities, but it is possible to see and understand enough to answer many of our questions.

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Lightning-like Phenomena on the Moon

The following observations were made some time ago and seem to me to be worthy of recording in *Science*.

During the evening of 17 June 1931, I was working in the yard near our house at Riverside, California, and happened to glance at the moon. It was an unusually fine, clearly outlined new moon, and as I stood looking at it, suddenly some flashes of light streaked across the dark surface but definitely within the limits of the moon's outline. Since this was a phenomenon which I had never seen before, I continued to watch it and saw similar flashes streak across the moon again in a moment or two. Without mentioning what I had seen, I called my wife's attention to the new moon. She admired it. When I asked her to watch it closely to see if she noticed anything strange, she said: "Oh, yes, I see lightning on the moon," adding that this appeared to be confined to the moon. We watched it for some 20 or 30 minutes, during which the phenomenon must have occurred at least six or seven times. The facts were recorded in my notebook as of approximately 7:40 P.M., 17 June 1931. At the time, I was inclined to attribute the phenomenon to some sort of sunlight reflection from mountain peaks on the moon or possibly some sort of electrical activity. I wrote the Mount Wilson Observatory regarding the phenomenon, and the reply very courteously discounted my observations. The observations were carefully made and carefully verified, and at the time I assumed that the phenomenon was probably something with which astronomers were familiar.

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