

NEEDLESS ALTERATION OF ZOOLOGICAL NAMES.

SIR.—The want of a proper set of recognized canons to regulate the selection and retention of generic and specific names is becoming more and more urgent. We are constantly being told to abandon some well-known name because an older one has been found, or because it was previously given to some other organism; but such reasons are not sufficient by themselves. The author of a British Museum Catalogue has lately attempted to introduce the name of *Meretrix* instead of *Cytherea*, and that of *Lampusia* in place of *Triton*, two well-known genera of Mollusca; but the needlessness of the change has been exposed by writers in the pages of "Nature," and the author in question must be regarded as a culpable "disturber of the public peace" of mind. Such unnecessary interference with names engenders a feeling of opposition against any change of name, even when the change is desirable and well-founded. Cannot the Linnæan and Zoological Societies take common action with the International Geological Congress in establishing an International Committee on nomenclature, to which all new names and all proposed alterations of names might be submitted? The following letter appeared in "Nature" for November, and might be reproduced in every Biological and Geological Magazine.

EXETER, November 21.

A. J. JUKES-BROWNE.

Meretrix, Lamarck, 1799, versus *Cytherea*, Lamarck, 1806.

In the notice of Mr. Newton's "List of Mollusca," in "Nature" of October 29 (vol. xlv. p. 610), I read as follows:—"Many old favourites have been thus relegated to obscurity, whilst fresh names, dug up from some forgotten corner, have, by the law of priority, taken their places. Thus, *Meretrix*, Lamarck, 1799, takes the place of his better-known *Cytherea* of 1806, the latter having been applied by Fabricius in 1805 to a dipterous insect."

The Dipterous *Cytherea obscura*, Fab., 1805, was described nine years later than *Mutio obscurus*, Latreille (1796), which is the same species. Meigen, in his principal work (1820), acknowledged the priority, and the insect has been called *Mutio* ever since. As the typical species is the same for both genera, there is no chance whatever for *Cytherea* to be resuscitated, and it may well remain as the name of the Mollusk. I most heartily agree with the opinion of the reviewer, that "it would be an immense gain if every name proposed to be altered had to pass through a regularly-constituted committee of investigation before it was accepted and allowed to pass current." In such a committee, besides priority, two other paramount scientific interests should be consulted, and they are—*continuity* and *authority*.

HEIDELBERG, November 1.

C. R. OSTEN SACKEN.

 OBITUARY.

WILLIAM KINSEY DOVER, F.G.S.

WE have to record the death of an old friend, and brother geologist, Mr. William Kinsey Dover, F.G.S., who died at Low Nest, near Keswick, on the 27th of March, 1891, in his seventy-fifth year. After completing his education, Mr. Kinsey was for some years engaged in mercantile pursuits, but he left London in 1855, and entered the Cumberland Militia, in which he served as Ensign (1855), Lieutenant (1861), and Captain in 1865. On his retirement from the Militia in 1868, he devoted himself to Natural

History pursuits, and more lately to palæontology, paying especial attention to the fossils of the Skiddaw Slates, which he collected with great diligence and care, accumulating in time a very fine series of these rare Ordovician treasures. Mr. Dover was elected a Fellow of the Geological Society in 1880, and a member of the Geologists' Association in 1881, taking part in the Lake-District long-excursion of the latter body in that year, as one of its directors. In 1890 Mr. Dover presented his fine collection of Skiddaw Slate Fossils to the Woodwardian Museum, Cambridge, where it forms a most valuable contribution to our knowledge of the Geology and Fauna of the Lake-District rocks.

SIR ANDREW CROMBIE RAMSAY, KNT.,

LL.D., F.R.S., F.G.S.

BORN 1814. DIED DECEMBER 9TH, 1891.

WE regret to record the death of Sir Andrew Ramsay, late Director-General of the Geological Survey, which occurred at his residence, Baumaris, Anglesey, Dec. 9th, 1891, in his 77th year.

He was educated at Glasgow, and was appointed to the Geological Survey of England and Wales in 1841, and became Local Director in 1845. He was nominated Professor of Geology at University College in 1848, Lecturer on Geology at the Royal School of Mines in 1851, and was President of the Geological Society in 1862 and 1863. He was elected a F.R.S. in 1849, and Knight of the Order of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus in 1862, and was elected an honorary LL.D. of Edinburgh in 1866. He received the Wollaston Gold Medal from the Geological Society in 1871. On the death of Sir Roderick I. Murchison, Bart., he was made Director-General of the Geological Survey of the United Kingdom, and of the Museum of Practical Geology in 1872. On his retirement from these offices in 1881, he received the honour of Knighthood. He presided over the meeting of the British Association at Swansea in August, 1880. He was an Associate of many foreign societies. Sir Andrew Ramsay is author of "The Geology of Arran," "Geology of North Wales," 1858, 2nd edition 1881; "Old Glaciers of North Wales and Switzerland," 1860; the "Physical Geology of Great Britain," 1878; and of very many memoirs, chiefly on theoretical geology.

His life and portrait appeared in the *GEOLOGICAL MAGAZINE* for 1882, Decade II. Vol. IX. pp. 289-293.

DR. FERDINAND VON ROEMER, Professor of Geology and Palæontology in the University of Breslau, whose Jubilee as Professor it was intended to celebrate on 10th May, 1892, died at Breslau, on the 14th December, 1891, in his seventy-fourth year. Dr. Roemer was elected a Foreign Member of the Geological Society in 1859, and was awarded the Murchison Medal in 1885. We shall give a notice of this distinguished Geologist in the February Number.—
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