

PRIORITY.

BY P. A. TAVERNER.

We live in hopes, in fact we have lived in hopes for these many years past, that, some day all the precedents will have been exhausted and we will have achieved that millenium when our nomenclature will be stable, when we can write a Latin name with some reasonable hope that the student who delves not in archeological terminology will be able to understand what species we are speaking about.

Theoretically, the supply of precedents cannot be inexhaustible; we therefore hail each, and every change with the comforting thought: "One name nearer the end."

There comes a time, however, when patience ceases to be a virtue. When we see old idols, the friends of our childhood, ruthlessly dashed to the ground—when old *Corvus americanus* is relegated to the dust heap of synonymy after years of fond association, when *Bubo* is threatened with like extinction,—then we wonder what this sacred thing Priority is. Whether nomenclature is really a "Means to an end" as Principle I say, or whether it exists for the glory of dead, long-forgotten ornithologists—often of questionable attainments—who, by a streak of luck, happened to tack the first name upon a bird of which he, perhaps, saw merely a fragment, and knew as little of its place in the living world as we do of mushrooms on Mars.

The scientific nomenclature exists avowedly for stability alone. Let him who doubts this peruse the lists of synonymy that adorn our manuals. It is amusing then to turn to the vernacular names which have no scientific standing, and are subject to every whim of the passing speaker and scribbler. It seems like a travesty upon our system of taxonomy that the vulgar names that are discarded by mature scientists as too evanescent for recognition have proved stable in so high a degree, while the stem of Latin and Greek derivatives chosen

for that same quality of stability have fluctuated like the tides without their regularity. They have been bandied about by the breath of every dusty book worm that has happened upon an author who happened to have put a name in the first chapter instead of the second of his miss-gotten book. Technicality after technicality has been made use of, often directly against the evident wishes of the original author, and to-day one hesitates to use a name for fear that before the paper passes through the printer's hands it will be antiquated in its phraseology.

In conclusion let us ask, Has not the law of Priority been reduced to a fetish? and is a name really applied to a species for convenience in handling or to the end that a man's name may go down to posterity attached in an abbreviated form to an already too long bi- or trinomial? In brief, is the scientist made for the name or the name for the scientist? Which wags, the tail or the dog?

THREE HITHERTO UNKNOWN PELICAN RECORDS FOR OHIO.

While in Port Clinton, Ohio, in July, 1903, I found out that a jeweler by the name of Dewit had shot a Pelican the preceding fall on Lake Erie. The specimen was taken along to New York City by a friend of his and mounted in that city.

About twenty years ago a Pelican was shot $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Tiffin on Sandusky River and stood mounted for years in a local cigar store. In November, 1901, another Pelican was shot by some local hunters in the Bloomville marshes in Seneca Co. I do not know what became of the specimen. They were all *Pelicanus erythrorhynchos*.

AN ADDITION TO THE BIRDS OF MIDDLE SOUTHERN OHIO.

The fact that Dr. Jones and Rev. Dawson found the Black Terns along the Ohio River in August, 1902, and also



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