OPEN LETTERS.

On a new code of nomenclature.

[In a private letter to one of the editors Dr. Kuntze asks that the following extract from it be printed in the BOTANICAL GAZETTE. It was called forth by the editor's explanation that the Madison Congress did not consider itself an international body, and that American botanists were trying to arrange certain rules of nomenclature for their own guidance, which would very likely be given as recommendations to any International Congress considering the subject.—EDS.]

I am surprised to learn from your letter that the American botanists are working out a new code of nomenclature. That will produce a schism between botanists, because the first code, that of Paris, can never be set aside or upset as Americans have partly done already. It can only be amended and augmented, and will be so maintained by conservative botanists in the future. Nomenclature in botany is more a matter of science, ancient customs and justice, than of convenience or convention; but has been treated by recent American botanists (Greene, Britton, etc.) more absolutely or nationally (that is, with no real convention for international science) than (as to their new propositions) with experience, learning and justice. I have already pointed out in my *Revisio Gen. Pl.* 3: [1] that only a few of these propositions are acceptable with the condition for future not retroactive action. Afterwards, in the last meeting of the A. A. A. S., they made more propositions, which were mostly inconsistent, as I wrote you in my last letter. Now you assert in your letter that these inconsistencies of nomenclature are mere recommendations to an international congress, but as these recommendations have been meanwhile applied practically in American check lists, etc., such as the irrational application of the 1753 starting-point of nomenclature before a competent congress agreed to it, these inconsistencies and subversions of the Paris Code are no more recommendations but revolutions against the Paris Code.

The difference between English botanists, who often work against the Paris Code, and American botanists in this matter, seems to me only that the English do it without fixed principles, while the Americans do it partly with revolutionary or wrong principles. If the decisions of national or incompetent congresses are admitted we will never reach harmony in botanical nomenclature. I trust that no competent congress would agree to a new code, and the however obtained affirmation to an aberrant codification (see Genoa), or to a new code of an incompetent congress, would be a kind of humbug. A new code, moreover, would trouble the matter, and would deprive me of my rights as emendator of the Paris Code. I hope the American botanists will avoid a schism, and avoid mistakes similar to those of the Genoa Congress.—DR. OTTO KUNTZE, *Capetown, January 21st.*