

OUR SPECIFIC NOMENCLATURE.

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In the article published in the April number on the subject of nomenclature, it is stated that Mr. Scudder, in his Revision, has followed the same principles which govern all other departments of Zoology. It would be interesting to know what these universally adopted principles may be, for, judging from the recent publications on the subject, they must be yet unknown to a great number of those eminent in science. Mr. Wallace, than whom we have no higher entomological authority, in his address to the London Ent. Soc., recommends English naturalists to follow the British Association rules until others may be assented to, while these same rules find scant acceptance in Germany or France.

In regard to species having been described, not by naturalists but by amateurs, this may be conceded in Hubner's case, but the term will hardly apply to Linnæus and Fabricius and the other authors whose species are the cause of most dispute.

Mr. Kirby's Catalogue is said to combine the results of the labor of European students, but Dr. Staudinger's elaborate and conscientious Catalogue no less had the benefit of all these investigations, with the result of hopeless variance as far as both works cover the same ground, and that too when the principles of nomenclature adopted by either author are almost identical with each other and with those which Mr. Scudder apparently follows. In the group of insects best known and most studied, the British Diurnals, these two authors differ as to the specific names of one seventh of the entire number. This is the result of rigidly following the law of priority, which *should* at once and forever decide every possible case of synonymy. That does not seem encouraging, for both authors in nearly all cases make the references to the same obsolete and unrecognizable descriptions.

The rule of absolute priority, adopted as paramount law by a few investigators, has already brought about such a state of things as this, and alone is capable of continuing it.

Let the first law be stability of already accepted names, then the law of priority takes its proper subordinate place to decide between names in use. Rather than the term "law of convenience," used by the opponents of this rule, though it is suggestive and to some extent appropriate, I would propose the name "*Law of Stability*" as most applicable.