

the same authority which fixes the principles themselves, that is : the common consent, expressed in a more or less formal manner, of the majority of those engaged in systematic study relating to the improvement of classification.

Now, the 1st and 2nd canons have been already put in execution by the rule adopted by the British Association, and reaffirmed by the Association of American Naturalists and Geologists, as follows :

“ Rule III. The Committee are of opinion, after much deliberation, that the XIIth edition of the *Systema Naturæ* is that to which the limit of time should apply, viz., 1766.”

This rule was adopted after much discussion regarding the respective claims of the 10th and the 12th edition to be considered as the basis of the system, and I think for wise and sufficient reasons. However that may be, there is no room now for individual difference of action ; it is a law, and must be obeyed by all good citizens in the Republic of Science, until modified or abrogated by an authority equal to that which enacted it.

The third canon respecting the law of priority is also formulated in several rules of the British and American code, but in such manner as to render its application somewhat difficult. The following considerations seem to me of sufficient importance to require a definite decision, when the next opportunity occurs for formal action.

1. It is obvious, on an examination of the works of the earlier authors in Entomology, that they did not attach the same value to the fixity of nomenclature that circumstances have since rendered necessary. Linnæus changed apparently without cause several of the specific names from the 10th to the 12th edition. Previous to that time, he used the generic names in different senses, in different editions, without any explanations. Geoffroy described genera without reference to genera previously established by Linnæus. Fabricius did the same with regard to Geoffroy, and also in some instances changed his genera from 1775 to 1787, without reason, or even reference to the earlier name.

It is not until we come to Olivier that we find in Entomology the law of priority appearing ; and not then as a matter of principle, so much as a courtesy due to the earlier describer.

I would therefore respectfully submit, 1st, that a rigorous application of the law of priority to those authors who did not act in accordance with it, will lead to much confusion ; and it would probably be better, in all