

With the exception of certain verbal modifications, this law is identical with the sixth section of the British Association rules, where it is applied to genera only.

5. In any subsequent alterations of the limits of a group, its name should never be cancelled; but should be retained either in a restricted or an enlarged sense.

The necessity for such a limitation is obvious; otherwise a different name would (or, could) be given by every author who differed from preceding ones in his ideas of the precise limitation of any group in question. This indeed has already been done, and, if continued, will create lamentable confusion; but this limitation should itself be subject to one exception, which may be formulated thus:

6. But any assemblage so defined by an author as harshly to violate the groupings of nature (as known to naturalists of his time), should be cancelled.

Such a rule would prevent the injury which might accrue to science by too close an application of the preceding law. The parenthetical limitation seems, however, to be necessary.

II. Changes in the name of one group should not affect the names of other groups.

This follows as a corollary of the first canon, but it has been not infrequently violated, and it is easy to perceive the cause. The nomenclature of higher groups, notably of families and subfamilies, has, to a considerable degree, been founded upon generic names, with the addition of special collective endings to the root (see recommendation 1). Now, when a generic name which has formed the basis of a family designation has been found to be pre-occupied, it has been thought necessary by some to recast the nomenclature of the higher group. But why? After a name has been long applied to a group, it ceases to have any intrinsic meaning and is simply associated with the group itself, recalling it without reference to any particular member of the same. It certainly would be agreeable if we had a nomenclature in which each group should by the very association of ideas recall its members; but since that is utterly impossible, and we have to deal with a mass of synonyms already tangled and intricate, our problem is—how best to make our way out of the difficulty without a continual wrangling over names and entailing endless disputes upon future generations.