

OPINION 123

P. F. GMELIN'S ONOMATOLOGIA HISTORIAE NATURALIS
COMPLETA SUPPRESSED

SUMMARY.—Because of room for difference of opinion in interpreting many of the names in Gmelin's (1758-77) *Onomatologia Historiae Naturalis Completa*, their adoption in nomenclature would produce greater confusion than uniformity. Accordingly under Suspension of the Rules (if need be) this entire work (vols. 1-7) is hereby excluded from use under the International Rules of Zoological Nomenclature.

PRESENTATION OF CASE.—In connection with a well-known generic name in *Insecta*, J. C. Budwell of the United States National Museum, Washington, D. C., has requested an opinion on the nomenclatorial status of P. F. Gmelin's *Onomatologia Historiae Naturalis Completa*.

DISCUSSION.—Through the courtesy of the Surgeon General's Library, United States Army, the Secretary has been able to examine a complete set of this very rare and in some respects very remarkable publication, which is variously attributed to Gmelin, and to Gmelin (volumes 1-4) and Christman (volumes 5-7).

The complete title as given in volume 1 reads:

Onomatologia Medica Completa seu Onomatologia Historiae Naturalis oder vollständiges Lexicon das alle Benennungen der Kunstwoerter der Naturgeschichte nach ihren ganzen Umfang erklart und den reichen Schatz der ganzen Natur durch deutliche und richtige Beschreibungen des nuetzlichen und sonderbaren von allen Thieren, Pflanzen und Mineralien, sowohl vor Aerzte als andere Liebhaber in sich fasst zu allgemeinem Gebrauch von einer Gesellschaft naturforschender Aerzte nach den richtigsten Urkunden zusammengetragen. Ulm Frankfurt und Leipzig auf Kosten der Gaumnischen Handlung. 1758.

With volume 2 the chief title is dropped and the subtitle of volume 1 is adopted to read as follows: *Onomatologia Historiae Naturalis Completa oder Vollständiges Lexicon [etc.]*.

The seven volumes represent a dictionary, lexicon, or encyclopedic arrangement of names (chiefly Latin) in alphabetic order. [*Onomatologia, i. e., Nomenclator.*] Under generic names the specific names are given alphabetically.

The last work of Linnaeus cited in the bibliography given in volume 1 is his *Systema Naturae*, 1748. Thus it is clear that the *Onomatologia* starts out on the pre-Linnean system of nomenclature without reference to the Linnean system of 1751; furthermore, in the earlier volumes the entries lack date and page references.

In a supplementary bibliography given in volume 3, the tenth edition of Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae* is cited, and to this the date "1760" instead of 1758 is given. Accordingly it is not strange that with this

number Linnean names (on a binary and binomial basis) with page references are cited.

In volume 4, 1773, according to the Introduction, p. 5, the twelfth edition of Linné's *Systema Naturae* is definitely adopted.

The introduction to volume 5, 1775, pp. 2-3, definitely states that Linnean method and terminology are adopted.

Accordingly the seven volumes represent two different plans of nomenclature—one, the pre-Linnean (polynomial) and the other the Linnean plan (binary and binomial). This point in itself might tend to make confusion for many in case this series of books is admitted under the International Rules, as it would add numerous new cases to a group of names which, though settled in principle by the Rules and Opinions, is still made a subject of controversial discussion.

A second point of confusion would arise from an element which the Secretary interprets as a cross-reference to the species, but which some authors, not without justification, might argue represents entries of new generic names. Under this latter interpretation confusion will result and the extent of this confusion cannot at present be foreseen. As examples, the following may be cited:

- Vol. 2, 1761, p. 267, "*Bombyx* . . . *Papilio Bombyx* . . . der Seidenwurm";
- Vol. 3, 1766, p. 469, *Crocodilus* (referred to Linn.) is cross-referenced to (s. [= sic]) *Lacerta crocodilus* Linn., tenth edition;
- p. 566, "*Cypraca Lynx*. s. *Lynx Cypraca*," cf. vol. 4, 1773, p. 918, "*Lynx Cypraca Lynx*." Thus *Lynx* might become the name of a mollusk, and *Lynx* Kerr, 1792, mammal, would then become a homonym;
- p. 585, *Dama* is quoted as if it might be a generic name, and refers to *Cervus dama* Linn., tenth edition, p. 67, no. 5;
- Vol. 6, 1775, p. 2, "*Paca*. s. *Cavia Paca*." This might be interpreted by some authors as a new generic name based on *Cavia paca*;
- p. 619, "*Polcat*. s. *Viverra Putorius*." Probably for the English polecat, but might easily be interpreted as a generic name;
- p. 815, "*Rattus* s. *Mus Rattus*";
- p. 815, "*Rattus moschatus*" quoted from 1725. Two interpretations might be made by different authors: (1) that the genus *Rattus*, type *Mus Rattus* is proposed and that this genus includes also *Rattus moschatus*; or (2) that *Rattus* is a specific cross-reference to *Mus Rattus* and that *Rattus moschatus* is simply a quotation from 1725.

A third type of confusion would result because of the entries of pre-Linnean names in connection with which it is sometimes difficult to conclude whether they are blind dictionary (or bibliographic) citations or whether they should be interpreted as adopted by the author. Examples:

- Vol. 2, p. 114, "*Bacillus*. s. *astacus petrificatus vulgo*," cf. "*Astacus petrificatus vulgo* . . . versteinerte Krebse," vol. 2, p. 21. *Bacillus* would stand in danger of being transferred from the insects to crustacea;

p. 214 ff., *Blatta* is used both for roaches and (as *Blatta bizantia* Rondeletti) for the operculum of an African mollusk.

Vol. 3, p. 503, *Cuniculus*, the rabbit, with species, quoted from Gesner.

Vol. 5, 1775, p. 52, *Mandril* refers to large man-like apes on the Gold Coast of Africa, bipeds, not quadrupeds. The word might be interpreted as a generic name by some authors or might be interpreted as a vernacular name. If interpreted as a generic name some authors would probably look upon this as the correct name for the chimpanzee.

Vol. 2, p. 278, "*Bos*, der Ochs";

p. 286, "*Bos pisces*" (referring to *Bos* Plin., a fish).

Sherborn (1902a) cites the *Onomatologia* in the bibliography to his *Index Animalium*, part I, but he rejects its names on the ground that they are not binominal "[n. b.]."

As a source of historical information on the early ideas and concepts in zoology this *Onomatologia* is undoubtedly a wonderful and valuable piece of work which will be found useful by any zoologist dealing with species published prior to 1777.

The publication in question is exceedingly rare and difficult to obtain. Its acceptance in nomenclature would place numerous systematists working on Linnean genera and species at a very distinct disadvantage and at this late date in the progress of nomenclature it would be difficult to justify the imposition of this inconvenience to specialists in the Linnean genera, especially since this might involve financial outlays which science can ill afford in the present state of world economics.

The one and only argument in favor of the acceptance of this work on a nomenclatorial basis, as far as the Secretary can see, is represented by the principle of the blind adherence to the Law of Priority no matter what the consequences may be.

Under the circumstances the Secretary recommends the adoption of the following as the Opinion of the Commission:

SUMMARY.—Because of room for difference of opinion in interpreting many of the names in Gmelin's (1758-77) *Onomatologia Historiae Naturalis Completa*, their adoption in nomenclature would produce greater confusion than uniformity. Accordingly under Suspension of the Rules (if need be) this entire work (vols. 1-7) is hereby excluded from use under the International Rules of Zoological Nomenclature.

Opinion prepared by Stiles.

Opinion concurred in by twelve (12) Commissioners: Apstein, Bather, Chapman, Dabbene, Handlirsch, Horvath, Jordan (K.), Silvestri, Stejneger, Stiles, Stone, Warren.

Opinion dissented from by no Commissioner.

Not voting, six (6) Commissioners: Bolivar, Hartert, Ishikawa, Jordan (D. S.), Kolbe, Neveu-Lemaire.