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A MOST REGRETABLE TANGLE OF NAMES

BY T. BARBOUR.

For the benefit of the zoologists of the future it is only just to attempt to settle the standing of certain names proposed in leaflets, privately printed, which may cause great confusion in future zoological nomenclature. In these leaflets, which appeared within a few days of each other, the same names are used for the same creatures independently described by two authors. Thus is the case badly complicated. For the sake of fixing the status of these names I have assumed that the dates printed upon each of the so-called "Herpetological Notices" is correct. Since most herpetologists have not seen these papers a description of each is in order.

1. Herpetological Notices | No. 1—June 15, 1912 | Pro-
drome of a Description of a New Genus of Ranidae from | the
LooChoo Islands | by | Surgeon J. C. Thompson, U. S. N. |
San Francisco | Published by the Author | 1912.

The title page is page 1. Upon page 2 and 3 is given a short diagnosis of *Babina*, a new genus of Ranidae, having the

“metacarpal of pollux developed into a sharp and powerful spur.” *Rana holsti* Blgr. is the type species, the only other included being *Rana subaspera* Barbour. This is the total contents.

2. Herpetological Notices | No. 2—June 28, 1912 | Pro-
drome of Description of New Species of Reptilia and Batrachia
| from the Far East | by | Surgeon J. C. Thompson, U. S. N. |
San Francisco | Published by the Author | 1912.

Again the title page is page 1, while upon pages 2, 3 and 4 the following forms are named. *Hyla hallowelli* from Amamioshima and Kikaigashima in the LooChoo Islands, the type being No. 23808, collection of the California Academy of Sciences. A note follows showing that *Tachydromus formosanus* Blgr. is a valid species. Then under the heading *Lygosoma indica* (Gray) we read that Formosan specimens may be separated by certain definite characters from those upon the mainland, and the remark is added, “Should this variation be set apart from *L. indica* it is to be known as *Lygosoma formosensis*. The type will be No. 18627 California Academy of Sciences.”

Then follow diagnoses of *Lygosoma incognita*, new species, type Cal. Ac. Sci. No. 18700; *Lygosoma okinawensis*, new species, type Cal. Ac. Sci. No. 21537; *Lygosoma stimpsonii*, new species, type Cal. Ac. Sci. No. 21645.

The final paragraph gives the reader a clue to the possible reason why these leaflets have appeared. We read after a few lines showing that the specimens of *Eumeces marginatus* (Hallowell) from Amamioshima and Kikaigashima are constantly different from those upon Okinawashima and the islands nearby, the following:—“For those who feel the necessity of giving to such a geographical variation a new name, or of promoting it to subspecific rank, the name *Eumeces oshi-*

mensis is proposed. The type would then be No. 21729, California Academy of Sciences." * * * Evidently Doctor Thompson did not believe that this name should be bestowed, and the impression follows that he has some other reason for giving it. This impression later becomes a conviction.

3. Herpetological Notices | No. 3—July 31, 1912 | On Reptiles New to the Island Arcs | of Asia | by | Surgeon J. C. Thompson, U. S. N. | San Francisco | Published by the Author | 1912. In this case the subject matter begins upon page 1 and continues to page 5.

Doctor Thompson first, after having showed that, in *Mabuia longicaudata* (Hallowell), "Formosan specimens differ slightly from the mainland ones in several respects," proceeds to inform us that "Only upon the ground of the desire to multiply names could one resort to the use of *M. rhuistrati* (Fischer) to designate the Formosan form."

Writing of *Lygosoma laterale* Say, Thompson quotes Boulenger and Stejneger to the effect that Chinese and American individuals of this species are indistinguishable. "Yet," he adds, "one can safely prophesy that ere long the specimens taken in Formosa and the Loo Choo Islands will appear disguised under a subspecific alias." He then proceeds to name *Lygosoma laterale* var *formosensis*, the type being 25026 Cal. Ac. Sci., and *Lygosoma laterale* var *ishigakiensis*, the type being 21677 Cal. Ac. Sci.

Setting off the Riu Kiuan race of *Achalinus spinalis* Peters, we learn that "The Loo Chooan examples differ from the typical Japanese in a decidedly increased number of caudal vertebrae, and in coloration. *These differences are not regarded as of specific value* (Italics mine). Nevertheless, due provision is made by suggesting the tentative name of *Achal-*

inus loochooensis for No. 22064 California Academy of Sciences" * * *

Showing similar characters separating the Formosan examples of *Callophis macclellandii* (Reinhardt) from those upon the mainland, he proceeds to add, after remarking upon the inconsequence of these characters, that "On the other hand, the criterion of a certain school of species-makers is so alien to this standard, that one is forced to suggest a provisional new name, and none would be more appropriate than *Callophis formosensis*," the type, 18864 Cal. Ac. Sci.

The leaflet closes with nominal additions to the fauna of a number of Oriental regions and islands.

So much for a reading of Doctor Thompson's contributions, which were printed by the Hicks-Judd Co., of San Francisco.

Imagine one's surprise upon receiving and reading the following pamphlet "Published San Francisco, July 29, 1912." This antedates by two days Thompson's third notice. The appearance of this brochure is very similar to those of Thompson, in arrangement and typography. The paper, however, is differently watermarked and no printer's name is to be found. The title is | Advance Diagnoses of New Reptiles | and Amphibians from the Loo Choo | Islands and Formosa | By John Van Denburgh. | A writer who has long been known most favorably to all herpetologists, the world over, as an accurate, painstaking and skillful scientist.

The contents of this paper include a diagnosis of *Babina* with *Rana holsti* as type; a description of *Hyla hallowelli* from Kikaigoshima the type No. 23806 Cal. Ac. Sci.; a diagnosis of *Japalura polygonata ishigakiensis*; *J. p. miyakensis*; *Eumeces barbouri*; *Eumeces marginatus amamiensis*; *E. m. kikaigensis*; *E. ishigakiensis*; *E. chinensis formosensis*; *Sphenomorphus*

indicus formosensis; *Sphenomorphus boulengeri*; *Leiolepisma laterale boettgeri*; *Lygosaurus pellopleurus browni*; *Takydromus stejnegeri* *Achalinus weneri*, and *Callophis swinhoei*.

Dr. Van Denburgh has published his formal paper "Concerning Certain Species of Reptiles and Amphibians from China, Japan, the Loo Choo Islands, and Formosa (Proc. Cal. Ac. Sci., Ser. 4, Vol. III, p. 187-258, Dec. 16, 1912), and there full data can be obtained regarding all of Dr. Van Denburgh's species. I noticed at once, however, that no reference was made to Thompson's descriptions though two of Thompson's papers antedated Van Denburgh's preliminary. This fact with the duplication of names which I observed led me to write a letter of inquiry to both Dr. Van Denburgh and Dr. Thompson, as I myself was engaged in working upon material from these areas at that time.*

The following is Dr. Thompson's answer:

U. S. S. ALBATROSS,
Sausalito, Calif.,

December 27, 1912.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of December 14th is written in a grossly insinuating tone. It is obnoxious to the limit.

The alternative presents of replying in terms that would border on being contraband in the mails, or of calling attention to the absurdity of your attempting to sit in judgment on matters which your distance from the scene of action and ignorance of the facts combine to prevent the forming of an intelligent opinion.

I have been instrumental in bringing to the California Academy since the Fire about 12,000 specimens of reptiles.

* It is extremely unfortunate that I am unable to publish my own letters in this connection, but I carelessly failed to retain copies.

And Dr. Van Den Burgh (*sic*), a paid employee of the Institution, has essayed the old, old trick of rushing into print with material belonging to another. In this case he used the suggested names, and copied so hastily from my notes that the paper contains over a dozen misspelled words. Thus we "strangely seem to have hit upon the same names for many species."

You refer to publishing leaflets privately as a "reprehensible practice." The most elementary knowledge of bibliography will disclose the fact that this has been done by all grades of workers, from the amateur to the most renowned.

You can make "quite sure of the accuracy of the dates of the three "Herpetological Notices" by inquiring the date of their receipt at the Library of the Zoological Society of London.*

I am publishing privately a "Review of the Recent Contributions to the Synonymy of Amphibia and Reptiles from the Far East," and when you deign to peruse a copy you will find the future workers in the field of Bibliography and Zoological Philology will have no trouble in locating the synonyms. You are being sent an advance sheet.

You really should not be so peeved just because Dr. Van Den Burgh attached your honorable name to a deformed skink, —or because you so completely missed the point in the thumb of *Rana subaspera* Barbour.

(Signed) Yours, etc.,

J. C. THOMPSON,

Surgeon, U. S. Navy.

* My inquiry regarding dates was because I received all three "Notices" at one time. One would naturally suppose from the method of publication that they would each be distributed immediately they were printed. Obviously the time of their arrival in London has no connection with the exact date of their appearance in San Francisco.

This is Dr. Van Denburgh's answer, somewhat different in character from that of Dr. Thompson's.

Jan. 2, 1913.

Mr. Dear Mr. Barbour:—

Your letter of Dec. 14th has just reached me. It contains the first definite information I have received regarding the actual publication of papers by Dr. Thompson. I had reason to believe that he was probably about to publish, and it was for this reason that I rushed the diagnoses of new forms into print last July. The story is a rather long and unpleasant one. Dr. Thompson, as you perhaps know, is a naval surgeon. After his row with Alexander Agassiz, he came to me and said he had been very badly treated and had resolved to give up fishes and devote himself to a study of snakes, exclusively. He was then on his way to the Philippines, and asked me if I would help him with his work if he collected extensively all groups of reptiles and amphibians for the Academy. This was in the winter of 1905-1906. Later large collections were secured in China, Japan, the Loo Choo Islands and Formosa. I enclose a few extracts from letters from him to me and a copy of a letter which I sent him, May 6th, 1912, which may help you to understand the situation and the extreme difficulty of dealing with this erratic individual. Previous to January, 1911, I had spent much time working up these collections and had in MSS. all the descriptions I have recently published. Thompson then expressed himself as much pleased with this work, but when I let him take the MSS. he went through it and made a list of all my new species and subspecies, by name. He then proposed that I should give him joint authorship in all papers I should ever write (with two exceptions noted in letter) whether or not he had anything to do with their preparation. This I, of course, declined to do,

and he thereupon broke relations with me and stated that he desired to work up his collection himself. This I was quite willing he should do, and I at once stopped working with them, although I had every right to finish as I had begun. I was not, however, willing to throw away the work I had already done, and upon Dr. Thompson's return to this country I wrote him the letter, a copy of which I enclose. He presented no reason for my not publishing other than that he wished to do so himself, so on May 18, 1912, I presented the MSS. to the Academy, for publication. Thompson then threatened the officers of the Academy with injunctions and suits for damages, etc. The whole matter was delayed for months while the Academy made an investigation, found that I was right, and ordered my MSS. printed. In the meantime Dr. T. was busy with the specimens and probably had access to my MSS. When it became evident that he was getting ready to put my species into print I had diagnoses of them printed privately. Your letter, as I have said, is the first I have heard of his "Herpetological Notices." I, therefore, cannot tell when they were printed or whether the given dates are actually the dates of publication. This I suppose will have to be determined by the dates when they were received by libraries and museums. As far as I can learn no copies have been distributed here to individuals, or the Academy or either University. I should be very glad to know more about these publications—their alleged dates, species described, type specimen numbers, name of printer if given, etc. If you would be good enough to lend me your copies I should be very glad to examine and return them to you. Or, would you perhaps obtain from Dr. Thompson a duplicate set for me. A letter sent to the California Academy of Sciences would reach him there. Owing to strained relations I am unable to obtain them directly. I will then try to

trace the matter and let you know what I learn. My original paper has just been published by the Academy. I send you a copy under separate cover.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) J. VAN DENBURGH.

It seems hardly worth while to comment upon these writings. I have never had the privilege of meeting Dr. Van Denburgh nor have I ever, so far as I am aware, seen Dr. Thompson. I think I may truthfully say that I received the four publications with my mind absolutely free from personal bias. I have undertaken to put these notes on record at the request of several scientific friends as an aid to the naturalists of the future, who will surely be sadly confused by this curious literature. I take no sides and make no attempt to pass judgment on the reasons for the identity of the names in Dr. Thompson's and Dr. Van Denburgh's brochures. One attitude of mind will, however, be condemned by all and will be considered at least of doubtful ethics, and that is the proposal and publication of scientific names with the assertion attached that the describer himself did not believe in their validity and only named them because, as Thompson says, "one can safely prophesy that ere long the specimens. * * * will appear under a subspecific alias" and that "due provision is made" in naming the separated Riu Kiuian *Achalinus spinalis*; when we read with the same breath that "These differences are not regarded as of specific value." Further remark is unnecessary.

