which lengthens its genitive, lengthens its own genitive. It does so in every instance; e.g. we have *καλλιθριξ* with genitive *καλλιθριχος*, *μικροπτερυξ* with genitive *μικροπτερυγος*. Hence, in the Lepidoptera, we rightly call the family, of which *Micropteryx* is the type, the *Micropterygidae*.

Osteolepis, though not occurring in Greek writers, is not "of questionable form," but as good a word as *φιλόπολις* and *φιλόπατρις*; and just as the latter actually forms a genitive *φιλοπατρίδος*, so also *οστεόλεπις* would form *οστεολέπιδος*, and the family name would be *Osteolepididae*. Finally, it is to be remembered that the family name is not formed from a "possible" generic name, but from an existing one; so that *Osteolepus* is out of the question, and indeed is only "possible" because there happens to be a word *λέπος* from which it can be derived.

I must apologize for troubling you at this length, but my fellow-workers in science are not unfrequently so hazy on the subject of classical nomenclature that there is a need for the setting forth of sound doctrine.

E. MEYRICK.

The College, Marlborough, January 25.

As to the facts of word-formation in Greek, Mr. Meyrick is, as was indeed to be expected, quite right, and might have put the case even more strongly. The short forms, like *πολύστομος*, are much rarer than those in which the full stem is found, like *πολυσώματος*. They are, indeed, unless I mistake, found only with the neuter stems in *-ατ-*, as in *δερμα(τ-)*, *στομα(τ-)*, *σωμα(τ-)*, *αίμα(τ-)*, *σπέρμα(τ-)*, and appear to be a speciality of that class of nouns, where they occur beside, but not to the exclusion of, the full normal forms. There is no ground for thinking that a derivative form in *-λεπος* could be formed from the noun *λεπίς*, *λεπίδ-*, or a derivative in *-ornos* from *ὄρνις*, *ορνιθ-*. **Osteolepus* and its alleged pl. **Osteolepi*, may certainly be pronounced impossible on Greek analogies; and could not even be grounded on the by-form of the noun, *λέπος*, stem *λεπε(σ)-*, since the adjective from that *-ος*, *-ες* stem, would necessarily end in *-λεπης*, *-λεπες*. As, therefore, *Osteolepid-* is the stem of the noun, the name of the family, on Greek analogies, is necessarily *Osteolepididae*.

But I do not myself think that it is *always* necessary to conform to Greek analogies; I think that the convenience of English needs is also to be considered. In *Osteolepis*, *Osteolepididae*, I think English needs are fairly answered; but it is not always so; some formations of the kind are hardly pronounceable, or when pronounced, through shifting of accent, presence of mute letters, pronunciation of *c*, *s*, as *s*, and the like, do not in the least suggest their meaning.

Indeed, I think it very desirable that the Linnean and other learned Societies should establish a Committee of Nomenclature, who should consider every new name proposed, and pass or reject it, after taking into consideration not merely etymological correctness of formation, but what I think far more important, capability of being pronounced, distinctness from other existing names, and fitness for yielding derivatives, if needed. I entirely disagree with the notion that every discoverer of a genus has a right to confer a name upon it which he himself has never considered how to pronounce. I have had occasion repeatedly to ask inventors of such names, how they pronounced them, and have more than once been told that they had never thought of that, only of getting the Greek form right, and that I, forsooth, must settle the pronunciation! Such men were, of course, utterly unfit to confer names, however eminent as scientists. Every name that does not lend itself to a distinct and easy pronunciation, or which, when pronounced, is undistinguishable from some other word spelt quite differently (e.g. words in *cano-*, *ceno-*, *sceno-*, *seno-*, &c.), ought to be rejected. Better invent new words off at the ground, having *no etymology*, than put together Greek roots in combinations unsuitable for modern mouths and modern ears. Why must modern knowledge be confined within the swaddling-bands of a nomenclature 2000 years younger?

J. A. H. MURRAY.

Oxford, January 28.

Compounds of Selenium.

IN your issue of the 23rd ult. (p. 284) you insert a paragraph describing experiments by M. Chabrie on compounds of selenium. While fully acknowledging the value of his work on the phenyl derivatives of selenium, I think it right to state that much of M. Chabrie's investigation has been anticipated by Mr. F. P.

Evans and myself as long ago as 1884; and that several of his assertions are incomplete and incorrect. The tetrachloride, SeCl_4 , as we then showed, exists in vapour as such between 180° and 200° ; with rise of temperature it dissociates, but even at 360° , dissociation is incomplete. In our paper (*Trans. Chem. Soc.*, 45, 62) the progress of the dissociation is followed.

We do not agree with M. Chabrie's suggestion that the products of dissociation are the other chloride, Se_2Cl_2 , and chlorine, for the very good reason that Se_2Cl_2 itself is an extremely unstable body. Instead of, as he asserts, having a constant boiling-point at 360° , it begins to boil at 145° ; and temperature rises to 173° , while a mixture of Se_2Cl_2 and SeCl_4 distils over, leaving a residue of selenium. The vapour-density of Se_2Cl_2 was found by us apparently normal; but this is caused in reality by the fact that it also dissociates completely on vaporization into selenium and chlorine without change of volume, according to the equation $\text{Se}_2\text{Cl}_2 = \text{Se}_2 + \text{Cl}_2$.

A revision of the experimental work of previous investigators is obviously to be desired; but it should be undertaken as a revision, else inaccurate conclusions may be drawn from incomplete work, as they have been in this case.

Perhaps I may be allowed to take this opportunity of inquiring by what reaction selenophenol, $\text{C}_6\text{H}_5\text{SeH}$, is produced from the red oil, $\text{Se}_2(\text{C}_6\text{H}_5)_3\text{C}_6\text{H}_4\text{Cl}$, out of which it is said to deposit on standing?

WILLIAM RAMSAY.

University College, Gower Street, February 3.

Royal Victoria Hall and Morley Memorial College.

I HAVE only just read the article on Polytechnics for London in your number for January 16 (p. 242). I hope it is not too late to offer a few words of comment on it. Nothing is said of that part of the Commissioners' scheme which applies to the Royal Victoria Hall and Morley Memorial College, probably because the amount intended for them is comparatively small—£6000 down for structural alterations, and £1000 a year to be divided between Hall and College. But it derives an importance beyond what is due to the amount of the grant, from the fact that it is no castle in the air, but a going concern, and had begun its useful life long before the Commissioners had planned their scheme. Moreover, many of your strictures do not apply to this particular part of it. You say there will be, under the new scheme, "no People's Palaces—only Young People's Institutes." You object to limitation of age, and to smoking being forbidden, and you conclude by urging most truly that "life should come first, then buildings," for life develops from within.

May I therefore, in as few words as possible, give an account of the history and present position of the Hall and College, with the object of showing that the truths you urge have been already laid to heart?

The Hall (formerly the "Old Vic." Theatre) was opened 9 years ago as a temperance music hall, to compete with the degrading attractions of ordinary music halls, about which there was less stir in those days than now. At first we had variety entertainments every night, but before long the experiment was tried of introducing something better on certain nights. There is no need to enter into the ups and downs through which experience was gained; suffice it to say that we still have "variety" pure and simple on Saturdays, when our gallery boys, as well as well as their elders, enjoy themselves to their hearts' content, to the number of 1800 or so; and a modification of this kind of entertainment takes place before a much smaller audience on Mondays and Wednesdays. But on Tuesdays (as your readers know from the occasional notes which appear in your paper) we have popular illustrated lectures from many of our leading scientific men, who continually express their gratification at the appreciative attention of the audience. On Thursdays we have ballad and operatic concerts, at which (interspersed among operatic selections) tableaux, representing scenes from operas, are given. And on Fridays there are temperance entertainments.

All this will be left unchanged by the new scheme; and is not this something very like a "Palace of Delight"? Smoking is and will be freely carried on (except in certain parts of the house on concert nights), and anyone, without distinction of age, can come in by payments ranging from twopenny on Thursdays and Saturdays, and from a penny other nights.

But this is not all. A little more than four years ago, classes were started in the unused dressing-rooms at the back of the stage, in response to a demand for more systematic instruction from some of those who had attended the lectures. The first