

Finally, objection must be taken to the proposal to substitute the generic name *Acropora* for the well-known and widely distributed coral that is usually called *Madrepora*, a proposal originally due to Verrill, but one which cannot be accepted. The name *Madrepora* has been used for this genus since the time of Lamarck (1801), and has become definitely established by use in all the principal memoirs on the subject and in the museums of the world. To change it now can lead to no useful purpose, and can but produce a perfectly unnecessary confusion; and the confusion will be all the worse confounded if, as is proposed, the generic name be transferred to the equally well-known imperforate coral *Oculina*.

It may be true that if we are entirely to conform to the so-called rules of nomenclature the change is justified, but these rules were drawn up, not for the confusion of science, but for its convenience and for the sake of simplicity; and when it is found, as in this case, that they are likely to produce just the opposite effect from that for which they were intended they must either be amended or broken. This is by no means an isolated case, for it has been proposed on the same plea that we should use the name *Polypus* for the common octopus, *Astacus* for the lobster, *Potamobius* for the fresh-water crayfish, and that many other changes of a similar kind should be introduced. It has been found in practice, not only inconvenient, but practically impossible, to make these changes, and the customary names are still used. So it will be with the name *Madrepora*. We may argue and plead as we like for the change, but custom is too strong for us, and the proposal will not be accepted. The time has come when the committee of the International Congress of Zoology should reconsider seriously the question of the maintenance of the names of well-known or widely distributed genera, and endeavour thereby to prevent the confusion with which the strict adherence to Linnean nomenclature threatens us.

S. J. HICKSON.

COMMEMORATIVE DINNER TO SIR WILLIAM RAMSAY, K.C.B., F.R.S.

IN commemoration of the twenty-first anniversary of Sir William Ramsay's election to the chair of chemistry in University College, London, the professors of the college entertained him to dinner on March 18. The Provost, Dr. T. Gregory Foster, was in the chair, and covers were laid for eighty persons. The guests included Lord Rayleigh, Lord Reay, Sir Norman Lockyer, Sir Alexander Kennedy, the Master of the Temple, the Masters of the Worshipful Companies of Drapers, Mercers, and Carpenters, the president of the Society of Chemical Industry, the Clerk of the Fishmongers' Company, Prof. H. B. Dixon, Prof. A. Smithells, Prof. J. M. Thomson, Prof. Meldola, Mr. T. Harrison Townsend, Mr. Henry Higgs, Mr. M. Carteghe, Dr. E. M. Borrigo, Dr. F. Clowes, and Colonel Walseley Cox.

After the toast to the King had been drunk with due honour, the chairman explained that the dinner was, in the first place, the means of expressing the personal affection and admiration of his colleagues for Sir William Ramsay. Leaving it to others to tell what Sir William's contributions to science had been, the chairman referred to the services he had rendered to the college and to London by establishing a great school of chemistry, and also to his perseverance and tact in questions relating to the re-organisation of the University of London. He had never been weary of expressing the great principles of the true relation of examinations to teaching in the University, and of emphasising the view so strongly held by him that in all university examinations the candidates' teachers should of necessity have a share.

Lord Rayleigh then proposed the health of Sir William Ramsay. He told how, twenty-one years ago, when he was secretary of the Royal Society, papers from Ramsay passed in rapid succession through his hands. Many of the older members, perhaps because they were old, hardly approved of his new methods; but, fortunately, these papers were accepted. Proceeding, he reminded the company of the work which Sir William had done in investigating the gases of the atmosphere, of the never failing energy which led him to new discoveries.

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Prof. Dixon seconded the toast, and in doing so attempted to take the view of a later generation in looking back on Sir William Ramsay's work. Having briefly summarised that work as a contribution to the developments of chemistry, he concluded by comparing his activity to that of radium itself.

The toast having been enthusiastically drunk, Sir William Ramsay replied. After thanking his colleagues for their invariable kindness and helpfulness, and his assistants and students for their loyalty and devotion to their work, he emphasised the debt that he owed to them in whatever he had accomplished, and went on to explain how he had received the first suggestion which led to the discovery of argon, and how generously Lord Rayleigh had allowed him to follow out that suggestion. He dwelt, further, on the questions raised by the chairman in connection with university organisation, and expressed the hope that the University of London would even more fully than it had at present develop the principles to which reference had been made.

At a later stage in the evening, in reply to an inquiry from one of the guests as to when a new laboratory would be built for Sir William, the chairman stated that, though they have the ground and the plans, they have not yet obtained the money for buildings.

Prof. Ker then proposed the health of the other guests, and Lord Reay replied. In view of his close connection with the college as president and chairman, his lordship said that he could hardly consider himself a guest within the college walls, but he thanked the professors for having done him the honour to invite him to commemorate with them Sir William Ramsay's twenty-first anniversary. He proceeded to tell of the great work which Sir William had done in advising Mr. Tata about the organisation of the new institute that he had founded in India, and how Sir William's influence was likely to be extended through the fact that one of his pupils, Dr. Morris Travers, was holding the position of head of that institution. Referring to the need of new laboratories for the chemical department, and the inconvenient accommodation now provided for Sir William Ramsay, Lord Reay hoped that just as at Essen the little cottage had been preserved from which the great Krupp gun factory was developed, so that when the new laboratories were built, which his lordship hoped would be soon, the room in which Sir William Ramsay's discoveries had been made should be also preserved.

Expressions of regret for absence were received from the Chancellor of the University (Lord Rosebery), from the Principal (Sir Arthur Rücker), from Profs. Tilden, Crum Brown, and many others.

NEW SLIDE-RULES.

MESSRS. J. J. GRIFFIN AND SONS, LTD., of Kingsway, London, have sent examples of two slide-rules which they are introducing at a very low price—the longer one, which is 25 cm. in length, at 2s., and the shorter, which is 12.5 cm. in length, at 1s. These rules with their slides are made of card, and the divisions are printed. In point of clearness and accuracy they are nearly equal to the best rules divided on celluloid, and they are vastly superior to the old-fashioned box-wood rules of thirty or forty years ago. In each case the upper lines of the slide and of the rule go from 1 to 10 twice over or from 1 to 100, being what are called "A" and "B" lines, while the lower lines of the slide and of the rule are on twice the scale, being "D" lines. Each is provided with a cursor with chisel pointers both to right and left. The back of the slide and all the remaining spaces on the rule are left plain. The accuracy of the surfaces of juxtaposition is specially noteworthy, and is greatly in excess of what is generally associated with card structures. Each is provided with a paper imitation-leather case. With rules such as these, the real utility of the slide-rule may, it is hoped, be brought home to thousands to whom the expense of the now nearly universal celluloid rule is prohibitive; it may even be hoped that some daring mathematical master in a public school may see fit to inculcate the wholesome practice of making calculations not vastly more accurate than any possible knowledge of the data can be, and use rules such as these both to