

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

The Editors do not hold themselves responsible for opinions expressed by their correspondents. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.

Generic and Specific Trivial Names of the Tertian and Quartan Malaria Parasites

THE "Official List of Generic Names in Zoology" was established by the International Congress of Zoology in order to promote stability in zoological nomenclature by placing on record the correct names of the principal genera in each of the classes and orders of the animal kingdom, together with their type species. Hitherto names have been placed on the "Official List" in *Opinions* rendered by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, but in 1943, the International Commission decided that it was desirable to make the "Official List" more readily available, and accordingly decided to publish it as soon as possible in convenient book form and with a full index. The preparation of the "Official List" for publication in this way, which was begun in the autumn of 1943, involved the checking of all the relevant bibliographical and other references to the generic names concerned and their type species. In the course of this work, errors were detected in a number of the *Opinions* containing decisions relating to the "Official List". These errors are being brought at once to the attention of the International Commission with the view of its rendering an *Opinion* as soon as possible containing such rectifications as may be necessary.

Among the errors detected were errors in the entries in *Opinion* 104 (published in 1928) relating to the author's name and date of publication of the generic name for the malignant tertian malaria parasite (*Laverania* Feletti and Grassi, 1889). Further, in the case both of this name and of that for the quartan parasite (*Plasmodium* Marchiafava and Celli, 1885) the type species was found to have been cited under a name which was not the correct name under the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature.

The names of these parasites, as recorded in *Opinion* 104, are the names now universally employed for these species in the enormous medical and technical literature relating to malaria, and it would clearly be as wrong as it would be impracticable to attempt to introduce changes in such names merely on grounds of zoological nomenclature. In the present case such changes would be particularly undesirable, since they would involve the transfer of the specific trivial name *malariae* from the quartan parasite (on which it was bestowed by Grassi and Feletti, 1890), by which name this species is universally known, to the malignant tertian parasite on which, in 1881, it had been independently bestowed by Laveran (and by which name this species is never called). Transfer of trivial names in this way causes great confusion, and the only solution in such a case is for the International Commission to use its plenary powers to suspend the rules in order to validate the names currently in use.

It was accordingly decided early in 1944 to invite the International Commission to deal with this question under its plenary powers, and, for this purpose, a thorough investigation into the highly complicated literature of these names was made, with the assistance of Sir Rickard Christophers and Brigadier J. Sinton, whose paper, "The Correct Name of the

Malignant Tertian Malaria Parasite", published in 1938 (*Brit. Med. J.*, ii, 1130; 1938), must form the starting point of any work on this subject. In the course of this investigation, names previously overlooked were brought to light and other unsuspected nomenclatorial difficulties were disclosed. A paper setting out in detail the present position under the International Code and containing recommendations to the Commission for placing the whole matter on a satisfactory footing has been prepared and will appear in the next part of the *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature*, the official organ of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature.

Quite recently, the officer in charge of malaria control in war areas, Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A., communicated to the International Commission an application prepared by Drs. Curtis W. Sabrosky and Robert L. Usinger, U.S. Public Health Service, directing attention to the errors in *Opinion* 104 and requesting the International Commission to use its plenary powers to suspend the rules for the purpose of validating existing nomenclatorial practice in regard to these parasites. This application has since been published in *Science* of September 1, 1944. It is extremely gratifying to the Executive Committee of the International Commission to find that malariologists in the United States, working independently, have reached substantially identical conclusions in regard to this matter, since this should greatly facilitate the early adoption by the International Commission of an *Opinion* setting this matter at rest once and for all.

In order to secure the widest support for the action proposed to be taken, the Executive Committee, on behalf of the International Commission, invites expressions of opinion from specialists concerned in any aspect of the malaria problem. Such communications, which should be addressed to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature at its Publications Office, at 41 Queen's Gate, London, S.W.7, will at once be published in the Commission's official organ, the *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature*, in order that the whole of the material relating to this case may be before the commissioners when reaching their decision.

FRANCIS[†]HEMMING.

Secretary,

International Commission on
Zoological Nomenclature.

A Nomenclature of Subgroups of the *Rh* Factor

SINCE Race added two further hypothetical allelomorphs tentatively called Rh_1 and Rh_2 to the six genes recognized by Wiener¹, which had been independently discovered by Taylor and Race (namely, Rh_1 , Rh_2 , Rh_0 , Rh' , Rh'' and rh), the terminology is somewhat confused. Recently Race² has described Prof. R. A. Fisher's ingenious system of three allelomorphic antigens named *Cc*, *Dd*, *Ee*, with Greek lettering for the antisera. They predict the existence of two as yet undiscovered antisera η and δ . The disadvantage of this scheme is the duplicate system of lettering.

The nomenclature now suggested is simple; it is based on the numbering of the antisera 1 to 4³, and could easily be extended. It is proposed that the reaction of cells should be expressed in terms of the