

NEEDLESS ALTERATION OF ZOOLOGICAL NAMES.

SIR.—The want of a proper set of recognized canons to regulate the selection and retention of generic and specific names is becoming more and more urgent. We are constantly being told to abandon some well-known name because an older one has been found, or because it was previously given to some other organism; but such reasons are not sufficient by themselves. The author of a British Museum Catalogue has lately attempted to introduce the name of *Meretrix* instead of *Cytherea*, and that of *Lampusia* in place of *Triton*, two well-known genera of Mollusca; but the needlessness of the change has been exposed by writers in the pages of "Nature," and the author in question must be regarded as a culpable "disturber of the public peace" of mind. Such unnecessary interference with names engenders a feeling of opposition against any change of name, even when the change is desirable and well-founded. Cannot the Linnæan and Zoological Societies take common action with the International Geological Congress in establishing an International Committee on nomenclature, to which all new names and all proposed alterations of names might be submitted? The following letter appeared in "Nature" for November, and might be reproduced in every Biological and Geological Magazine.

EXETER, November 21.

A. J. JUKES-BROWNE.

Meretrix, Lamarck, 1799, versus *Cytherea*, Lamarck, 1806.

In the notice of Mr. Newton's "List of Mollusca," in "Nature" of October 29 (vol. xlv. p. 610), I read as follows:—"Many old favourites have been thus relegated to obscurity, whilst fresh names, dug up from some forgotten corner, have, by the law of priority, taken their places. Thus, *Meretrix*, Lamarck, 1799, takes the place of his better-known *Cytherea* of 1806, the latter having been applied by Fabricius in 1805 to a dipterous insect."

The Dipteron *Cytherea obscura*, Fab., 1805, was described nine years later than *Mutio obscurus*, Latreille (1796), which is the same species. Meigen, in his principal work (1820), acknowledged the priority, and the insect has been called *Mutio* ever since. As the typical species is the same for both genera, there is no chance whatever for *Cytherea* to be resuscitated, and it may well remain as the name of the Mollusk. I most heartily agree with the opinion of the reviewer, that "it would be an immense gain if every name proposed to be altered had to pass through a regularly-constituted committee of investigation before it was accepted and allowed to pass current." In such a committee, besides priority, two other paramount scientific interests should be consulted, and they are—*continuity* and *authority*.

HEIDELBERG, November 1.

C. R. OSTEN SACKEN.

 OBITUARY.

WILLIAM KINSEY DOVER, F.G.S.

WE have to record the death of an old friend, and brother geologist, Mr. William Kinsey Dover, F.G.S., who died at Low Nest, near Keswick, on the 27th of March, 1891, in his seventy-fifth year. After completing his education, Mr. Kinsey was for some years engaged in mercantile pursuits, but he left London in 1855, and entered the Cumberland Militia, in which he served as Ensign (1855), Lieutenant (1861), and Captain in 1865. On his retirement from the Militia in 1868, he devoted himself to Natural