

CORRESPONDENCE.

The Spelling of Names.

EDITORS OF 'THE AUK':—

Dear Sirs:— For some years past I have had official or friendly relations, or both, with three distinguished men who bear the same name. By one—the President of Harvard University—it is written Eliot; by another—a zoölogist, explorer and author of world-wide reputation—Elliot; by the third—an eminent authority and writer on North American birds and mammals, for whom, by the way, it stands as a given name only—Elliott. In writing to one or another of these gentlemen, as I have sometimes had occasion to do, I have often found it necessary to verify my impression as to the precise number of “l”s and “t”s to which he laid claim. This, of course, has given some trouble, but in my simple ignorance of philology it had not occurred to me that the name in question could be “properly” spelled in only one way, and I had even supposed that some family or historical interest or value might attach to and in a way justify its slightly varying forms. These illusions, however, have been utterly dispelled by Mr. Elliot’s recent onslaughts on our unfortunate Canon XL. I have read his argument with a mixture of satisfaction and shame—satisfaction at the beneficent possibilities of correctness and uniformity of spelling which his article suggests, and shame that I, as a member of the Committee could have been so misguided as to vote for a principle which sanctions writing the name of one bird *Anthus pensylvanicus* and of another *Dendroica pensylvanica*,—and this despite the fact that in my early youth I actually enjoyed the privileges of that public school education to which Mr. Elliot so feelingly alludes.

Fortunately it is not too late to retrieve my error, and I gladly take this opportunity to pledge the use of what influence I may possess with the Committee towards the elimination of Canon XL in accordance with Mr. Elliot’s views, provided that gentleman will agree to secure and establish a uniform and hence “correct” spelling of the name he bears. That this will be easy enough in the case of our mutual friend Dr. Elliott Coues the latter’s outspoken and cordial support of Mr. Elliot in late numbers of ‘The Osprey’ leaves no reason to doubt, but with the President of Harvard University there may possibly be some difficulty!

Very truly yours,

WILLIAM BREWSTER.

Cambridge, Mass.