

Recent Literature.

THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE LINNÆAN SOCIETY.*—For some time past it has been rumored that the Linnæan Society of New York contemplated publishing "Transactions," and more recently these reports have received substantial confirmation by the appearance, in advance, of extras of papers by Dr. Merriam and Mr. Bicknell; closely following these comes the volume of which they form a part. It is large octavo of one hundred and sixty-eight pages, illustrated with a frontispiece—a portrait of Linnæus from an old engraving in the possession of Mr. L. S. Foster, by whom it is contributed.

From the introductory announcement we transcribe the following explanation of the origin and future aims of the Linnæan Society:

"The Linnæan Society of New York was founded March 7, 1878, by the following-named gentlemen:—H. B. Bailey, John Burroughs, Ernest Ingersoll, Franklin Benner, Harold Herrick, Newbold T. Lawrence, William C. Osborn, Eugene P. Bicknell, Dr. Frederick H. Hoadley, C. Hart Merriam."

"Abstracts of the proceedings of the Society, and papers read before it, have appeared in different scientific serials, but much valuable matter has been withheld from lack of a direct medium of publication. The necessity for such an organ has now become manifest, and the present volume is designed to be the first of a series in which papers coming before the Society may be permanently preserved."

The Officers for 1882-83 are: Eugene P. Bicknell, *President*; H. B. Bailey, *Vice-President*; L. S. Foster, *Recording Secretary*; Newbold T. Lawrence, *Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer*; Eugene P. Bicknell, Dr. C. Hart Merriam, and Newbold T. Lawrence, *Committee on Publication*.

The above array of names is a guaranty that anything published by the Linnæan Society will possess a high order of excellence. A glance through the pages of these "Transactions" is enough to show that this assumption is well founded. There are three papers: the first, by Dr. Merriam, on "The Vertebrates of the Adirondack Region, Northeastern New York"; the second, by Mr. William Dutcher, discussing the question, "Is not the Fish Crow (*Corvus ossifragus* Wilson) a winter as well as a summer resident at the northern limit of its range"; the third, by Mr. Bicknell, devoted to "A Review of the Summer Birds of a part of the Catskill Mountains, with prefatory remarks on the faunal and floral features of the region."

*Transactions of the Linnæan Society of New York. Volume I. Published by the Society, December, 1882. New York: Press of L. S. Foster, 35 Pine Street. MDCCC-LXXXII.

The present instalment of Dr. Merriam's paper does not extend to birds; hence it would hardly come within our legitimate field of criticism were it not that its introductory portion has a direct bearing on everything that is to follow. Chapter 1 is divided into seven sections, under which the location and boundaries, geological history, topography, climate, general features, botany, and faunal position of the region are fully and very ably treated.

"The Adirondacks proper, or the area to which the subject-matter of this paper is restricted, can be stated, with sufficient exactness, to lie between parallels $43^{\circ} 15'$ and $44^{\circ} 45'$ north latitude, hence measuring about an hundred and twenty miles (193,121 metres) in a north and south direction. The transverse diameter of the region is approximately of equal extent." "From a geological standpoint the Adirondacks are interesting as constituting one of the few islands that rose above the level of the mighty Continental sea previous to Paleozoic time." Their topography "is diversified, and in some respects peculiar. The mountains and short ranges of high hills have no regular trend, and conform to no definite axis. They are in no sense a chain of mountains, . . . but, on the contrary, consist of more or less irregular groups, isolated peaks, short ranges, and 'hog-backs,' scattered over the entire area—the highest to the eastward. . . . Nearly thirty peaks exceed four thousand feet (1,219.20 metres) in height, several are about five thousand (1,524 metres), and one, Mt. Marcy, attains an altitude of five thousand three hundred and forty-four feet (1,628.851 metres)."

The section relating to general features is especially full and interesting. The mountain tops, valleys, burnt tracts, beaver meadows, lake shores, and forest depths are treated in turn, and with a touch that shows the author's familiarity with the scenes of which he writes. The following seems to us one of the best of his descriptive passages:—

"Here is a sparkling trout stream, perhaps the outlet of a mountain lake; let us follow its winding course through yonder thicket of alders. Working our way through the tangled bushes we soon emerge into the open grassy bottom of one of the most beautiful and interesting of nature's many adornments—a Beaver meadow. Here, less than a century ago, might have been heard the splash and seen the hut of the sagacious Beaver. But, like the Moose that once roamed these mighty forests, they have, excepting a few isolated individuals, been exterminated or driven beyond our borders, till now these green meadows, with occasionally the buried ruin of an ancient dam, are about all that remain to remind us of the former existence here of one of the most curious, interesting, and typical of North American mammals.

"The dam has long since disappeared, and as it gave way the pond again became a narrow stream, spreading its way through the broad muddy bottom, now verdant with marsh grasses that spring from a thick bed of elastic *Sphagnum*. Upon this moist level now stand scattered clumps of feathery tamaracks; and here and there over the uniform light green of the meadow rise, in marked contrast, the odd-looking Blue

Gentians and the bright scarlet Cardinal Flowers. These are favorite haunts of the Canada Jay and, in the autumn, of immense flocks of Robins that come to feed upon the handsome berries of the mountain ash trees that always skirt the open places, easing the stiff edge of the bordering forest."

The section devoted to botany is occupied chiefly by nominal lists of the common forest trees, undershrubs, and smaller flowering plants of the Adirondacks. For the shrubs and smaller plants the scientific names alone are given, and these, printed as "solid matter," fill the greater part of two pages with italics, — a most unfortunate arrangement from a typographical point of view.

In the seventh section Mr. Merriam considers the faunal position of the Adirondacks and concludes that the region pertains to the Canadian Fauna. In support of this conclusion he cites the presence of such "eminently northern" mammals as the Lynx, Fisher Marten, Hudsonian Flying Squirrel, Jumping Mouse, Long-eared Wood Mouse, Porcupine, and Northern Hare; and among birds, the breeding of the "Hermit Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Red-bellied Nuthatch, Winter Wren; Tennessee, Yellow-rumped, Blackburnian, Black and Yellow, Mourning, and Canada Flycatching Warblers; White-winged and Red Crossbills, White-throated Sparrow, Junco, Rusty Blackbird, Raven, Canada Jay, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Black-backed and Banded-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers, Spruce Grouse, Goshawk, and Golden-eyed Duck." From these lists, however, we should strike out the Jumping Mouse, Long-eared Wood Mouse, Northern Hare, Hermit Thrush, and Olive-sided Flycatcher, all of which occur too numerous in the Alleghanian Fauna to be regarded as typical Canadian forms.

There is a list, also, "of 'Subarctic' species of Lepidoptera collected in the immediate vicinity of Beaver Lake," and a provisional list of plants which the author regards as "fairly characteristic of a Canadian Flora."

Chapter II occupies eighty pages and carries the subject through Carnivora in Mammalia. As a contribution to our knowledge of the habits, food, times and manner of breeding, etc., of many of the northern mammals this paper is an important one, for the life-history of each species is given in the fullest manner, and usually from data supplied by the author's experience or that of equally careful observers among his acquaintances and friends.

Original matter of this kind has an interest and value immeasurably above that of the most able compilation, and it is doubly attractive when, as in the present case, it is presented in simple, concise, and hence forcible English. Not that our author's style is above criticism; on the contrary his sentences are sometimes loosely constructed, and he too frequently makes use of expressions which, to say the least, are undignified and in bad taste. He shows a tendency, also, to over-positiveness, especially in the discussion of questions about which there may still be room for a fair difference of opinion. These faults, however, are neither serious nor irremediable, and they are not likely to weigh heavily against

the clearness, piquancy and genuine sentiment that pervade his writing. On the whole the present chapter promises to be the most interesting and important contribution of its kind that we have had since Audubon and Bachman.

Mr. Bicknell's "Review" is based on observations made "during brief explorations of the more southern Catskills in three successive years: from June 6-15, 1880; 12-18, 1881; 24-27, 1882." On the latter occasion the writer was accompanied by Dr. A. K. Fisher of Sing Sing, N. Y. "Mr. R. F. Pearsall, of Brooklyn, also visited the same section of the region from May 30 to June 13, 1882. . . . and has kindly permitted me the use of his notes."

Twenty-five of the total fifty-six pages are devoted to prefatory remarks on the faunal and floral features and affinities of the Catskills. This introductory chapter is arranged on the same general plan as that of Dr. Merriam's paper and the subject is not less fully discussed. Mr. Bicknell evidently has a penchant for the analysis and comparison of faunæ, and his remarks in the present connection are decidedly interesting. He finds that the Catskill Mountain Region at large includes three distinct Faunæ,—the Carolinian, Alleghanian and Canadian. The Alleghanian prevails, and over the greater part of the less elevated country is nearly or quite pure, but in the lowlands along the Hudson it is perceptibly modified by the presence of certain Carolinian forms which extend up from the lower part of the valley of that river. In the higher valleys, and along the slopes of some of the mountains, the Alleghanian Fauna meets and mingles with the Canadian. The resulting association of species is decidedly curious: thus Mr. Bicknell has found such birds as the Winter Wren, the Slate-colored Snowbird, and the Black-throated Blue, Black-and-Yellow, Mourning, and Canadian Flycatching Warblers, actually occupying the same ground with Wood Thrushes, Chewinks, Field Sparrows, and even Large-billed Water Thrushes. The fauna of the higher summits and slopes is purely Canadian, although several of the most characteristic, non-migratory Canadian birds are wanting. Their absence, the author thinks, is due to the isolated position and limited extent of the region.

The list proper includes eighty-nine species and varieties. It is very fully annotated, a page or more being often devoted to a single species. A novel typographical feature is the presence of an apostrophe between varietal and generic scientific names when the specific name is omitted. There can be no objection to the practice of occasionally shortening a trinomial to a binomial when it must be often repeated in the text, but the use of the apostrophe in such a connection is arbitrary and whimsical.

We have another criticism: *viz.* that, Mr. Bicknell's style would be improved were he to condense and simplify his sentences, which are frequently involved, and sometimes positively obscure. His choice of words, too, is often unfortunate; — in short, he has yet to learn that the simplest English is the strongest and best.

Mr. Dutcher's paper is short, occupying less than three pages. The author argues that the Fish Crow is "a permanent winter resident in its northern habitat [*i. e.* the Lower Valley of the Hudson River, Long Island, the coast line of Connecticut, etc.), instead of a rare summer visitor" as has been generally supposed. The evidence cited is apparently conclusive, but its bearing would be more fairly stated if the word "winter" had been omitted from the sentence quoted above.

In general appearance the present volume offers little that can be criticized. The paper is good and the typographical execution nearly faultless. We do not like the use of capitals for proper specific names in the scientific titles, but that is a point on which naturalists are not agreed, the botanists refusing to accept the uniform rule followed by most zoölogists. The seemingly capricious use of capitals for the English names, especially noticeable in Dr. Merriam's paper, is less defensible, and we are at a loss to understand the total absence of an index, the volume otherwise being apparently complete.

But these are trifling matters and, as a whole, Volume I of the "Transactions of the Linnæan Society" is a credit to its originators and publishers. May the series which is to follow be a very long one.—W. B.

SAUNDERS'S NOTES ON SOME LARIDÆ FROM PERU AND CHILI.*—The present paper treats of a collection of *Laridæ* made on the coasts of Peru and Chili by Capt. A. H. Markham of H. M. S. "Triumph." Fifteen species are represented; among these is a specimen (the third one known) of *Xema furcatum*, the large southern congener of the circumpolar *X. sabinii*. The text is accompanied by a beautiful colored plate, illustrating the adult and young plumages of this "rarest of Gulls, and one of the rarest of all known birds," now rediscovered after an interval of forty years' fruitless search.

Mr. Saunders is one of the few scientific writers who possess the happy faculty of making a technical treatise interesting to the average reader. The present paper is not inferior to his previous ones in this respect; moreover it has a direct value to the student of North American ornithology, for much of its subject-matter—especially the concluding remarks on the coloration, changes of plumage, distribution, and probable ancestral origin of the Gulls of the Pacific Ocean—relates to species which are included in the North American Fauna.—W. B.

HOFFMAN'S LIST OF BIRDS OBSERVED AT FORT BERTHOLD, D. T.†—In a paper of about nine pages Dr. Hoffman gives the result of some

*On some Laridæ from the coasts of Peru and Chili, collected by Capt. Albert H. Markham, R. N., with Remarks on the Geographical Distribution of the Group in the Pacific. By Howard Saunders, F. L. S., F. Z. S. Proc. Zool. Soc. of London, June 6, 1882, pp. 520-530; with colored plate of *Xema furcatum* adult and young.

†List of Birds observed at Ft. Berthold, D. T., during the month of September, 1881. By W. J. Hoffman, M. D. Proc. Boston Soc. Nat. Hist., Feb. 1, 1882.

observations made during September, 1881, at Fort Berthold, Dakota Territory. Fifty-seven species were identified, a fair number considering the season and the limited time spent in the field. The annotations are usually very brief, one of the longest being that relating to the Bald Eagle, from which we quote the following: "During the last week of September 'Eagle Hunters' of the Hidatsa and Arikaras [Indians] started out for the purpose of catching these birds for their tail feathers, which are highly prized for head ornaments and war bonnets. The price paid for very ordinary feathers was seventy-five cents, while good ones brought a dollar and frequently a dollar and fifty cents apiece. The method adopted in catching eagles is as follows: after selecting one of the most elevated points of land, a hole is dug large enough to allow the watcher sufficient room to turn around in. Branches, leaves, and grass, are then laid across the opening so as to give everything the appearance of the surrounding country. A live rabbit or domestic fowl is then secured by a thong and placed over the top of the artificial surface in which openings are left for the hidden observer. Should an eagle alight to secure the quarry, he is immediately caught by the legs and tied. Often the captives are taken to camp to be plucked after which they are again set at liberty."

A novel feature of the list is that of the Indian names which are given for many of the common birds. With the exception of occasional bad spelling of scientific names the paper is well printed. — W. B.

CANADIAN BIRDS. — The report of the Ornithological and Oölogical Branch of the Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club for 1881, published in the "Transactions" of that Club, No. 3, pp. 26-34, consists of a general commentary on the bird-fauna, signed by Geo. R. White and W. L. Scott, and an Appendix, forming a "List of the Birds found in the vicinity of Ottawa City, specimens of which have been shot within the last few years." The list is briefly annotated, and contains 169 species of 120 genera and 39 families — among them *Podiceps occidentalis*. This is probably correct. But we are astounded to see in the list *Harporhynchus cinereus!* *Parus rufescens!* *Vireo pusillus!* *Glaucidium passerinum* var. *californicum!* This of course puts the whole affair under a cloud as an incompetent and doubtless pretty nearly worthless performance. — E. C.

CORY'S BEAUTIFUL AND CURIOUS BIRDS. — Since our last notice* of this work two parts have appeared. Part IV contains plates of *Pseudogryphus californianus*, our North American Condor; *Camptolæmus labradorius*, the Labrador Duck; and *Astrapia nigra*, the Incomparable Bird of Paradise. Part V has illustrations of *Epimachus magnus*,† the Magnificent Bird of Paradise, *Epimachus ellioti*, Elliot's Bird of Paradise, and *Pluvianus ægyptius*, the interesting Crocodile Bird of the Nile.

* This Bulletin, Vol. VI, p. 240. For earlier notices see Vol. V, p. 236; Vol. VI, pp. 111, 112.

† The above name is appended to the plate but *Epimachus speciosus* is used at the head of the accompanying text, *Epimachus magnus* being placed in the list of synonyms.

These recent issues fully maintain the high order of excellence to which we have already called attention. We trust that the work is receiving a generous patronage. — W. B.

A CHECKING-LIST OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS. — We have received proofs of the Checking-list advertised by Messrs. Southwick and Jencks in the present number of this Bulletin. It is essentially a reprint of the numbers and English names used in Mr. Ridgway's late Nomenclature of North American Birds, with the addition of species and varieties since described or found within our limits. Everyone who has made extensive exchanges knows what a task it is to write out the necessary lists of duplicates and desiderata, while the alternative of using a list of numbers corresponding with those of one of the standard check-lists, is, if anything, worse. The present list is designed to remedy both evils. It is to be printed in small type and will occupy only two sheets of thin paper. We are sorry to see that the scientific names have been omitted, but this, doubtless, was unavoidable in the preparation of a sheet that is to be sold for two cents, nor is their absence likely to be regretted by the class of persons for whom the list is presumably intended. — W. B.

SHUFELDT'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ANATOMY OF BIRDS.* — This paper reaches us too late for anything but the briefest notice. It includes chapters on the osteology of *Speotyto cunicularia hypogæa*, *Eremophila alpestris*, the North American *Tetraonidæ*, and the *Cathartidæ*. These subjects have been already treated by Dr. Shufeldt in previous papers, upon which the present work is evidently based; but its subject-matter has been largely, if not entirely rewritten, and some unfortunate errors contained in earlier issues corrected. The text is illustrated by numerous wood-cuts, some of which are apparently new, while others will be recognized by those who are at all familiar with the "History of North American Birds." The presence of these figures in a work on osteology seems to us about as appropriate as would be that of illustrations of the characteristic scenes frequented by the birds under discussion. Such a stricture, however, will not apply to the full-page lithographs by Sinclair & Son, for these acceptably present the crania and other osteological characteristics of the species treated. The paper on the *Cathartidæ* with its accompanying plates, is entirely new matter. — W. B.

* Contributions to the Anatomy of Birds. By R. W. Shufeldt, M. D., Captain, Medical Department, U. S. A., member of the Philosophical, Anthropological, and Biological Societies of Washington, Honorary Curator of the Section of Avian Osteology of the Smithsonian Institution. Twelfth Ann. Rep. U. S. Geol. and Geog. Surv., F. V. Hayden, U. S. Geologist-in-charge. 1882, pp. 593-806. Plates I to XXIV. Cuts in text.