

question occurred to me at the moment, and I should like to propose it to the readers of 'The Auk,' whether birds may not be subject to a revival of the sexual passion in autumn, and whether this may not be connected with the well-known fact that many species have a second period of song after a longer or a shorter interval of silence. Is anything known on this point?

BRADFORD TORREY.

Boston, October 13, 1885.

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## NOTES AND NEWS.

MR. JOHN BURROUGHS has achieved a reputation as a popular, though not over-correct, writer on a variety of natural history topics, and is the author of many delightful essays about birds, and has even come to be looked upon as somewhat of an ornithologist, not only by the general public, but by ornithologists themselves. But his recent effusion on 'Bird Enemies,' in the 'Century' for December, 1885 (pp. 274-278), is for him at least an unfortunate production, being surprisingly weak on the score of intelligence, to say nothing of good taste. It is grossly erroneous in statement, slanderous in spirit, and betrays a degree of ignorance and a narrowness of vision on the part of this well-known writer, which would be quite beyond belief were not his name appended to the article. In speaking of the *natural* enemies of birds he is either not up to his usual standard, or we have heretofore ranked his proficiency in matters of this sort quite too highly. But when he classes ornithologists "as among the worst enemies" the birds have, and closes his article by saying, "but the professional nest-robber and skin-collector [his pet epithets, as the context shows, for ornithologists] should be put down, either by legislation or with dogs and shotguns," he betrays the usual intolerance begotten of ignorance. No further proof of his lack of appreciation of the requirements of science is required than his dictum that a student of ornithology "needs but one bird and one egg of a kind." Comment on such a statement in these pages would be superfluous, but unfortunately the general public is as ignorant as this 'blind leader of the blind.'

Can it be that our friend is so entirely unconscious of the wholesale slaughter of birds for millinery purposes as his complete silence on this subject would seem to indicate?—a slaughter which runs into the millions annually, compared with which the total destruction of birds for scientific, or *quasi*-scientific, purposes is as 'but a drop in the bucket.' Can it be, too, that his acquaintance with genuine ornithologists is so slight that he does not know that they, as a class, are among the best friends the birds have; that they never destroy wantonly or needlessly, and often regret the necessity of taking the lives of birds in behalf of scientific progress; that they deplore and frown upon much of the egg-collecting done in the

*name*, but not in the spirit and interest, of science; and that they are already combining aggressively to check the wholesale slaughter of birds, the real extent, purpose, and source of which our violent critic seems never to have dreamed? While intelligent criticism is generally welcome, and usually beneficial, an ignorant tirade is unquestionably harmful, even to the cause it is intended to promote; and it is to be hoped that when next Mr. Burroughs assumes the rôle of public censor he will have a fair degree of acquaintance with the subject he takes in hand.

THE A. O. U. Committee for the Protection of Birds met at the office of Mr. William Dutcher, 51 Liberty Street, New York City, on December 12, and organized for work by the choice of Mr. George B. Sennett for Chairman, and Mr. Eugene P. Bicknell for Secretary. Several new members were added to the Committee, and there was some preliminary discussion of plans and methods of work. A second meeting was held on December 19, at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, in accordance with a vote passed at the previous meeting to hold a sitting (for the present at least) at 4 P. M. on Saturday of each week, at the American Museum. At each of these sittings seven of the twelve members of the Committee (all of those resident in New York) were present, and much was done in the way of preliminary work. A subcommittee was appointed to collect statistics respecting the extent of trade in bird skins for millinery purposes, and the destruction of birds, particularly in the neighborhood of New York, and also elsewhere in the United States; and another subcommittee to procure a full series of the legislative enactments of the different States in behalf of bird protection, as a basis for intelligent action in respect to this phase of the subject.

It seemed to the Committee that a large part of its work must be directed, for the present at least, toward a diffusion of information among the people at large respecting the very serious magnitude of the destruction of bird life for purely mercenary purposes, and its necessarily terrible influence in diminishing the number of birds—an effect already in many instances appallingly evident—and the creation of a sentiment against the use of birds for decorative purposes, and in general for the better protection of our native birds. The Committee has already begun the collection of material bearing on this general subject, which will soon be elaborated and widely published.

AT THE meeting of the Nuttall Ornithological Club, held December 1, 1885, the annual election of officers was held, resulting in the re-election of the present incumbents, except Recording Secretary H. A. Purdie and Corresponding Secretary J. A. Allen, the former having resigned and the latter being no longer in Cambridge. The officers for 1886 are as follows: President, William Brewster; Vice-President, W. A. Jeffries; Recording Secretary, Arthur P. Chadbourne; Corresponding Secretary, H. A. Purdie; Treasurer, Charles F. Batchelder.

The meetings are held the first and third Tuesdays of each month, from October to June inclusive, but for the present will be informal, owing to the absence of a number of the prominent members.

THE death of Dr. Samuel Cabot of Boston, on April 13, 1885, in his seventieth year, removes another of the earlier ornithologists who were the contemporaries of Audubon and Nuttall. Dr. Cabot was graduated at Harvard College in 1836, and at the Harvard Medical School in 1839. In 1841-42 he made an expedition to Yucatan, where he gathered important collections in ornithology, discovering, among other new species, the Ocellated Turkey (*Meleagris ocellata*), described by him in 1842. From this date till 1858 he contributed numerous short papers on birds to the 'Proceedings' and 'Journal' of the Boston Society of Natural History (Proc., Vols. I-IV; Journ. Vols. II-V), relating largely to his ornithological work in Yucatan, but also to the birds of the United States, and more especially to the rarer species of New England. He also wrote briefly on other Natural History subjects. In 1850 his work in ornithology practically ceased, in consequence of the pressure of professional engagements, but he maintained a strong interest in the subject until his death. His ornithological collection and notes have passed into the possession of the Boston Society of Natural History, in which society he was for many years Curator of the department of Ornithology. The types of many of his species still exist.

Dr. Cabot's published papers on ornithology, aside from his reports as Curator, number not far from fifty, ranging in length from a few lines to seven or eight pages, and are in part anatomical. The more important of his contributions are the following: On the Birds of Yucatan, in Stephens's 'Natural History of Yucatan'; Description and Habits of some Birds of Yucatan; Red and Mottled Owls; Observations on the Character and Habits of the Ocellated Turkey; Further account of some of the Birds of Yucatan; The Dodo a Rasorial and not a Raptorial Bird; On three new Woodpeckers from Yucatan; Supposed identity of *Anas penelope* and *A. americana*, etc.

MR. John Snowdon Howland, an Associate Member of the A. O. U., died at his home in Newport, R. I., September 19, 1885. Mr. Howland was well known as an oölogist, and at his death possessed one of the finest private oölogical collections in this country, and one which was especially noteworthy for its quality. He was for many years a great sufferer from a disease which not only prevented active field work, but which often for months confined him to his bed. He was greatly respected and esteemed by those of his fellow workers who had the pleasure of his personal acquaintance.

THE publication of the A. O. U. Code and Check-List has been unvoidably delayed, but the appearance of the work within a few weeks may now be confidently expected.