Seebohm's Birds of the Japanese Empire. * — As a fitting conclusion to his numerous and valuable contributions to Japanese ornithology Mr. Seebohm has issued a handsome volume which intends to be a representation of the present status of the avifauna of Japan. His first labor in this field commenced eleven years ago with a paper entitled 'Remarks on Messrs. Blakiston and Pryer's Catalogue of the Birds of Japan' (Ibis, 1879, pp. 18-43), and the book before us may—in some respects at least—be regarded as a further elaboration of that same 'Catalogue' which started a new era in Japanese ornithology. This being the case, it is highly to be regretted that Mr. Seebohm has not found it necessary to refer to the numbering and nomenclature of Blakiston and Pryer's catalogue in each special case, the more so since he has deemed a synonymy of the species entirely superfluous. The omission is particularly unfortunate, for it will be remembered that Mr. Seebohm's rules of nomenclature, as well as their enforcement and application, are entirely his own, and quite unique. I shall only mention a few examples. Mr. Seebohm is, I believe, the inventor of the now famous '*auctorum plurimorum*' principle which was intended to strike terror to the hearts of those authors who believe in an inflexible law of priority. But like most lawmakers, Mr. Seebohm does not feel himself bound by his own laws. If *he* can discover ("rake up" is his own expression, Br. B. Eggs, I, p. xix) an old and musty name, then the '*auctorum plurimorum*' appellation is flung to the winds, and forgotten is the proud announcement: "It is not necessary for me to encumber my nomenclature with a third name, either to denote the species to which it refers, or to flatter the vanity of the author who described it." We have once before called attention to this with regard to *Diomedea albatrus*, and we are again forcibly reminded of it by finding the Sacred Crane of Japan called *Grus japonensis*. Fancy Mr. Seebohm "raking up" one of Philip Statius Müller's names! But Mr. Seebohm is nothing, if not inconsistent. In 1883-1885 he published a most delightful 'History of British Birds' in three volumes. In this he gives a very elaborate and, in most cases, very accurate synonymy of every English bird, even the most common ones. Looking over the English ornithological literature one is almost tempted to regard such a proceeding as equivalent to carrying coals to Newcastle. Five years later, when treating of the comparatively unknown birds of Japan, presumably for the benefit of readers who have but little opportunity to settle the questions of synonymy for themselves, he finds these lists "useless." How is the ornithological student in Japan, who has no other book of reference than Seebohm's, to locate such names as *Cuculus telephonus*, *Corvus orientalis*, *Dryobates leucotos*, *Columba intermedia*, *Turtur douraca torquatus*, etc., etc., which occur in other publications on Japanese ornithology? These synonymical lists would certainly be much more useful in a work on the 'Birds of the Japanese Empire,' than the large woodcuts and descriptions of the deep

*The Birds | of the Japanese Empire | By | Henry Seebohm | London: R. H. Porter. | 1890. 8vo., pp. xxiv+386, with map and figures in the text.

plantar arrangement of the tendons, the shape of the sternum, the osteology of the feet, etc., of such birds as do not come within 5000 miles of Japan! By leaving out all this extraneous matter, and by adopting the same typography as in the 'History of British Birds,' enough space could have been obtained for exhaustive synonymies and full descriptions.

In regard to descriptions it may be stated that while there is one accompanying each species, it is in many, if not in most cases, insufficient. Usually it only refers to the adult bird, while in some instances it is hardly more than a pretense. What is thought of a specific description of "*Sitta cæsia*" (one is obliged to quote some of Mr. Seebohm's names in this way) consisting of the following words only: "The Nuthatch has the bill of a Woodpecker with the tail of the Tit"!

For those who know the birds which Mr. Seebohm treats of and the names he gives them the present volume is useful, because it gives a nearly complete list of all the birds hitherto recorded as inhabiting Japan, with most of the published information as to their occurrence and their habits, collected in one place. But it would have been more useful still, if it had had been more complete in both respects. Another reviewer has pointed out some of these omissions ('Nature' for Oct. 30, 1890), but the most obvious one has not yet been mentioned, for the celebrated *Pitta nympha* of the 'Fauna Japonica,' which our own Jouy re-discovered, is entirely left out!

On p. 32 *Bubo blakistoni* is given as peculiar to Japan, particularly Yezzo, though it has been recorded from the mainland by Taczanowski.

On p. 33 *Picus major japonicus* is said to be confined to the three main islands. This statement is wrong, for I do not believe there is a single instance on record of this species having been found in Kiusiu; I am pretty certain that it does not even occur in the southern part of Hondo beyond the line Owari-Tsuruga.

On p. 309 the breeding range of *Charadrius mongolicus* is stated to extend to the valley of the Amoor, although I have long ago shown it to breed as far east and north as the Commander Islands, Kamtschatka. This reminds me of the fact that in 1887, in his great monograph of the Charadriidæ (p. 148), Mr. Seebohm states that the eggs of this species are "unknown," he having overlooked entirely that two years previously I described a fully authenticated set collected by myself and now in the collection of the U. S. National Museum.

I could go on with similar remarks, but as a reviewer's space is limited, and as I shall undoubtedly in the future have occasion to discuss these and many other points in Mr. Seebohm's book I shall only briefly call attention to the following, because they concern a group which I have already treated of in detail before.

The present writer in the 'Proceedings' of the U. S. National Museum for 1887 (Vol. X, pp. 416-429) published a 'Review' of the Japanese Pigeons, in which he treated of considerable new material and corrected several grave errors of previous authors. It is very discouraging to find that one has labored in vain. Some of the things in that paper Mr. Seebohm has seen—though in his peculiar manner, others he has entirely overlooked. Of *Janthœnas nitens* he says that it was made a new species

"on the ground that the head is brown instead of gray," and adds: "the difference is doubtless due to abrasion." It was doubtless nothing of the kind. The specimen was not at all in abraded plumage as will also be perfectly clear from my original description which says: "Entire head *and throat* of a dull cinnamon-chocolate, *glossed with lilac* on crown and occiput." Has anybody ever seen a slate colored ground color change to cinnamon-chocolate glossed with lilac by any sort of abrasion?

In that same paper I demonstrated beyond the remotest doubt, that *Turtur risorius* belongs to an entirely different subgenus from that which embraces the wild Japanese Ringed Turtle-dove, and, moreover, that the Barbary Turtle-dove, the true *T. risorius*, is also found tame in Japan. Yet, without a word of comment, Mr. Seebohm perpetuates the old and now "unpardonable blunder" (to use a Seebohmian expression).

Finally, all that Mr. Seebohm knows of the occurrence of *Turtur humilis* in Japan is limited to the example obtained by Mr. Owston from a dealer at Yokohama, in spite of the fact that on pp. 428-429 (*tom. cit.*) I gave an elaborate description of a specimen from Nagasaki.

Before concluding I should like to say a few words of the figures. Besides the exquisite woodcuts reprinted from his monograph of the Charadriidæ, we find a number of more or less crude drawings of heads. If the enormous beaks of "*Fratercula*" *pygmæa* and *pusilla* correctly represent Japanese specimens, we have certainly to do with species differing from those occurring in Kamtschatka and Alaska, but that is highly improbable. The Shags of the species "*pelagicus*" and "*bicristatus*" seem to be as much of a stumbling block as ever, in spite of all the reviewer has written and painted about them. The head on p. 210 does certainly not represent a *pelagicus*, and is probably a young *bicristatus*. The head on p. 211 looks much more like a different species than a *bicristatus*, and unless the drawing is very inaccurate the specimen from which it is taken is something else.

In reviewing this work I have felt keenly that fault-finding comes with but little grace from one who works in the same special field as the author whose work he criticizes. But, on the other hand, he is expected to speak, because he is supposed to know something about it, and it then becomes necessary to show neither fear nor favor. Mr. Seebohm himself has never handled his colleagues with gloves, and he himself would be the first one to resent any attempt at establishing a mutual admiration society.—L. STEJNEGER.

Warren's Revised Report on the Birds of Pennsylvania.*—The great demand which arose for this 'Report' immediately upon the publication of the first edition in 1888, led the Legislature to order an enlarged and

* Report | on the | Birds of Pennsylvania. | With Special Reference to the Food-Habits, based on over Four | Thousand Stomach Examinations. | By | B. H. Warren, M. D., | Ornithologist, Pennsylvania State Board of Agriculture. | Second Edition, Revised and Augumented. | Illustrated by One Hundred Plates. | —— | Published by Authority of the Commonwealth. | —— | Harrisburg: | E. K. Meyers, State Printer | 1890.—8vo. pp. xiv, 434, pll. 100.