

RECENT LITERATURE.

Birdcraft.¹—Readers of Mrs. Wright's 'Friendship of Nature' will heartily welcome her as a contributor to ornithological literature. We have been so surfeited with local lists and stereotyped annotations, that the originality with which she treats her subject is refreshing. Untrammelled by traditions, and with a style having no taint of clinging technicalities, she has modelled her volume after her own idea, with results no one can fail to applaud. Introductory chapters on 'The Spring Song,' 'The Building of the Nest,' and 'The Birds of Autumn and Winter,' picture in a charming manner the principal events of the bird year. Insensible indeed must he be who can read these chapters without being affected by the enthusiasm which pervades them. With the touch of a genuine bird-lover, a touch which reminds us of Michelet, she describes the return of the feathered host from its winter quarters, the homecoming of the familiar garden dwellers, their nest building, the appearance of the young, and finally their retreat with their parents as the season wanes. How earnestly we wish these chapters could be placed in the hands of every boy for whom 'ornithology' means a collection of empty egg-shells! What a new point of view they would give him! Birds are not enemies to be robbed, persecuted, or killed, but friends whose acquaintance may prove an endless source of pleasure.

After some suggestions on 'How to Name the Birds,' which are practical and to the point, we have a 'Synopsis of Bird Families,' and on page 57 reach the 'Bird Biographies.' The succeeding 223 pages are devoted to the biographical treatment of 200 species of birds of the Northeastern States.

The plan adopted is admirable for its clearness, separate paragraphs being devoted to 'Length,' 'Male and Female' (or either alone), 'Song,' 'Season,' 'Breeds' (= breeding range) 'Nest,' 'Eggs and Range.' This is followed by a sketch of the bird's characteristic haunts and habits, and here Mrs. Wright is at her best. Combining rare literary skill with a keen appreciation of a bird's distinctive traits, she has given us pen pictures of her feathered favorites which will stand for all time.

It would indeed be a graceless task to criticise in detail so pleasing a volume. Mrs. Wright's observations have been largely confined to her garden, and that wider experience would in some cases cause her to alter

¹ Birdcraft | a Field Book of two hundred Song | Game, and Water Birds | By | Mabel Osgood Wright | Author of "The Friendship of Nature" | With Full-page plates containing 128 Birds in their natural colors, and other Illustrations | New York | Macmillan and Co. | and London | 1895 | All rights reserved. 8vo. pp. xvi + 317, Coll'd pll. x, Uncoll'd v. Cloth, \$3.00, net.

her views and quote or compile with more discrimination, we feel sure she would readily admit.

The illustrations have been "adapted and grouped from Audubon's 'Birds of America,' Dr. Warren's 'Birds of Pennsylvania,' DeKay's 'Ornithology of the State of New York,' and . . . Fisher's 'Hawks and Owls of the United States.'" We wish we could say that they are worthy of the text. The colored plates show that the process by which they were reproduced is not available for the purposes of ornithological illustration. The half-tone black and whites are excellent when they are from good originals, as for example, Fisher's 'Hawks and Owls'; others are from DeKay and there seems to us no excuse for using these effigies at this late day. We all know, however, that publishers rarely look at this matter from the author's standpoint, and we can wish Mrs. Wright's book no better fortune than that in the future editions it is sure to reach, it may have illustrations in keeping with the exceptionally high character of the text — F. M. C.

Chapman's 'Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America.'¹ — Falling on a time of growing popular interest in our native birds, this volume which, in its fullest sense, justifies the title of 'Handbook,' is marked for a career of extended usefulness.

The region covered by the work—North America east, say, of the meridian of the Mississippi River—although not co-terminous with any natural faunal tract, forms, nevertheless, a convenient and sufficiently definite geographical field. The more formal treatises on North American ornithology, which cover the region by inclusion, were not designed to slip into easy use outside of a specially interested class. Therefore, the considerable company of interested but not-too-devoted bird-lovers is to be especially congratulated on the appearance of this work.

"I have not addressed an imaginary audience, nor have I given my prospective readers what, theoretically, I thought they ought to have, but what personal experience with students of birds has led me to believe

¹ Handbook of Birds | of Eastern North America | with Keys to the Species | and Descriptions of their Plumages, Nests, and Eggs | their Distribution and Migrations | and a Brief Account of their Haunts and Habits | with Introductory Chapters on the | Study of Ornithology, How to Identify Birds | and How to Collect and Preserve Birds | their Nests, and Eggs | By Frank M. Chapman | Assistant Curator of the Department of Mammalogy and Ornithology | in the American Museum of Natural History, New York City; | Member of the American Ornithologists' Union, etc. | With Full-page Plates in Colors and Black and White | and Upward of One Hundred and Fifty Cuts | in the Text | New York | D. Appleton and Company | 1895. 12mo. pp. xiv + 421. 20 full-page pls.; 115 figs. in text. Library edition, cloth, \$3.00; pocket edition, flexible morocco, \$3.50.