

CORRESPONDENCE.

EDITOR OF 'THE AUK':

In the notice of Lloyd-Jones's paper on feather pigments in the last April number of 'The Auk' (Vol. XXXIV, p. 232) there is one statement which might be misleading, and I should accordingly like to put on record a somewhat fuller statement of the point in question. Speaking of the so-called blue color of domestic pigeons the review states that "blue as in all birds is a structural color." It is true spectral blue in all birds is a structural color, for as Lloyd-Jones says: "No blue pigment substance has ever been discovered in the integument of higher vertebrates." The point is, to quote further: "The color called 'blue' in domestic pigeons has very little claim to that name. It is not at all comparable to the blue of the bluebird, jay or indigo bird, but resembles more the so-called blue of the rabbit or maltese of the cat. In other words, the color belongs more properly among the grays than among the blues. The 'gull-gray' of Ridgway ('12, plate 53) is a fair representation of the blue of the domesticated pigeon. Typical spectrum blue, however, is found among tropical members of the pigeon family," and there it is doubtless due to structural causes. The 'blue' of the domestic pigeon is then merely a neutral tint such as might be produced by a layer of soot on snow, or by any intimate mixture of black and white. In the pigeon "the blue effect is produced by a layer of pigment-free material intervening between the eye [of the observer] and the pigment mass" in the barbule cell of the feather.

Sincerely,

LEON J. COLE.

University of Wisconsin, Nov. 1, 1917.