

particular respecting its breeding, when it begins to build its nest, the materials it uses for the purpose, the number of eggs it lays, the variation in their color, size and shape,—all these particulars are the real history of a bird; and in the account of each species of British birds I endeavour to give as many of them as possible." The Introduction to Volume II contains a paper of 24 pages 'On the Protective Colour of Eggs,' by Mr. Henry Dixon, which will be noticed at length in some future number of 'The Auk.'

Mr. Seebohm's work abounds in passages which invite comment, but lack of space forbids a more extended notice.—J. A. A.

Ingersoll's 'Country Cousins.'*—This well-written work, intended to entertain and assist 'those who take delight in out-door studies,' consists of twenty-one articles, devoted to a variety of subjects, reprinted from the various periodicals in which they originally appeared. Birds come in for a fair share of notice, mainly in the chapters entitled 'A Wet Day with the Birds' (pp. 21-30), 'Birds of the Brookside' (pp. 39-48), and 'A Chat about Bob White' (pp. 175-181). The book as a whole is much better written, both as regards truthfulness and style, than popular works on natural history often are, the writer for the most part contenting himself with subjects with which he is personally familiar, and in which he is especially interested. He therefore writes intelligently, largely from original observation, and in the main correctly, but there are here and there lapses which a little more care would have saved. This is not often the case in the ornithological portions of the work, but a pleasantly written account, several pages in length, of the Long-billed Water Thrush (*Siurus motacilla*) is marred at its close by the statement, "This is a northern bird." The Spotted Sandpiper, the three species of *Siuri*, and the Quail (*Ortyx virginianus*) are the species accorded most attention.—J. A. A.

Langille's 'Our Birds in their Haunts: A Popular Treatise on the Birds of Eastern North America.'†—Several months have now elapsed since the appearance of this long-promised book, on which the author has been at work, he tells us, for the past twelve years. It is a compact volume of 624 pages, sparsely illustrated by woodcuts, most of which are borrowed from the second edition of Coues's 'Key.' Its scope will appear from the opening sentence of the preface: "The first aim of this work is to render as popular and attractive as possible, as well as to bring within a small compass, the sum total of the bird-life of Eastern North America." Had

* *Country Cousins: Short Studies in the Natural History of the United States.* By Ernest Ingersoll, Author of 'Friends Worth Knowing,' 'Knocking Round the Rockies,' 'The Ice Queen,' etc. Illustrated. New York: Harper & Brothers, Franklin Square, 1884. 8vo. pp. 252. Plates, and woodcuts in the text.

† *Our Birds in their Haunts: a Popular Treatise on the Birds of Eastern North America.* By Rev. J. Hibbert Langille, M. A. Boston: S. E. Cassino & Company 1884. 8vo. pp. 624, woodcuts in the text.

the title of the work been restricted to 'Our Birds in their Haunts', and had the author contented himself with biographical sketches of the birds with which he was personally familiar, he would have escaped numerous embarrassments, and his book would have had a charm which has been largely forfeited by reason of its more pretentious scope.

A third of the preface, and occasional paragraphs throughout the volume, are devoted to the author's notions of the religious aspects of ornithology, and he often works into the narrative what he is pleased to consider evidences of a 'Creator', or of 'design', in the structure or habits of birds. Without so much as a show of either logic or modesty, he attacks the theory of migration which was proposed, independently, by Wallace of England and Palmén of Finland, and bluntly announces his conclusion that the phenomena of migration are "caused by the laws of instinct, superintended by an Infinite Intelligence." Seemingly ignorant of the laws of hereditary habit, he delights in calling upon the supernatural for the explanation of very simple facts. However gratifying this may be to his brother Divines, it is certainly out of place in 'A Popular Treatise on the Birds of Eastern North America.'

In the preface the author says that he has incorporated in his book "a good deal of direct information from Hudson's Bay, by means of an excellent correspondent. This last feature of original investigation should specially commend the work to the scientist." The book was read from beginning to end, and every record from the above source was carefully noted. The task completed, just a dozen species were found, and every one of these has been known from Hudson's Bay for at least thirty-five years, and several for a much longer period! From a clerical standpoint, the mention of a dozen birds from a given locality where they have been known for nearly half a century may be regarded as "a good deal of direct information," but the reviewer, who looks at the matter from an ornithological standpoint, is hardly prepared to admit, in consideration of the total absence of a new fact of any kind, that "this last feature of original investigation should specially commend the work to the scientist."

The arrangement of the subject matter is novel and not unattractive. The Chapters are entitled: 'Hoar Frost'; 'Snowed In'; 'Open Winter'; 'Below Zero'; 'A January Thaw'; 'Voices of Spring'; 'A Bluff and the Cat-tails'; 'Along the Creek'; 'Early April and the Phœbe'; 'Later in April'; 'Late in April'; 'The Third of May'; 'The Swamp, The Field, and The Lake'; 'The Tenth and Eleventh of May'; 'Peewees and the Hooded Warbler'; 'Birds around the House'; 'The First Days of June'; 'Georgian Bay'; 'Tenting on the Niagara'; 'Bird-life in Nova Scotia'; 'New Jersey Coast and the Osprey'; 'Autumnal Days'; 'Reminiscences'; 'Gleanings'. Under each of these headings a number of species are disposed of. There is a fair index, but no table of contents.

The technical descriptions are woven into the narrative (which is always a mistake) and in most cases are insufficient to admit of positive identification except in strongly marked species. The most striking defect in the book—a defect which appears with provoking frequency, and

might so easily have been remedied that it is inexcusable—is the absence of authorities for the great majority of non-original statements. A still more serious omission is the lack of precise data concerning rare or unusual occurrences which have fallen under the author's notice. Quite a number of inaccuracies have crept into the book, doubtless through want of more extended observation or reading. Their character may be seen by the following: The White-bellied Nuthatch is "at all times strictly insectivorous." The nest of the Chipping Sparrow "is never very near the ground." "Concerning all Woodpeckers, an account of the habits of one comes very near being an account of them all"; and again, the Red-headed Woodpecker, "in most respects, is so like other Woodpeckers in habit as to need but little special history in a work like this"! The Hudsonian Tit is "in all respects similar in habit" to the Black-capped Chickadee!!

After enumerating several grievous charges against the Crow he goes on to say: "But, as in the case of many other transgressors, there are some weighty things to be said in his favor. In the same field from which he steals the corn, he destroys many noxious worms and insects, especially cutworms; not to speak of the snakes, moles, and mice." Now everybody knows, or *ought* to know, that snakes rank among the best friends of the farmer; and as to moles, they certainly cannot be regarded as enemies. Moreover, it might be a difficult task to prove that the Crow does kill moles. The same remark applies to the Short-eared Owl, which, according to our author, "feeds especially on mice and moles."

The statement that the European Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) "is common in North America" is a striking instance of the unfortunate manner in which blunders are perpetuated for many years (in this case seven) after they have been pointed out and corrected.

The Redpolls are confused under a single species (*A. linaria*), and similar errors occur in other places. There are some strange incongruities in the treatment of subspecies. One is given great prominence—the subject of a special article—while the existence of others is not even hinted at. It is a little remarkable that an author who has been for twelve years engaged in the preparation of a book on birds, and who has spent much time in the field, should not have heard the song of so common a bird as the Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*) till the end of the eleventh year (May 1883). It is also surprising, and not a little discouraging, to find doubt expressed concerning the method of so well-understood a performance as the drumming of the Ruffed Grouse.

Typographical errors are rare, though the statement that the Barn Swallow is *four* and a half inches long may probably be classed under this head. At the bottom of page 487 Wood *Thrush* is printed where Wood *Duck* is clearly meant.

Having now done duty as a critic, there remains the far more agreeable task of pointing out some of the many really valuable and praiseworthy features of the book. The reader is soon impressed with its strongest recommendation, which is the manifest trustworthiness of the original matter. The author is a good observer, and his biographies are, in the

main, accurate and well expressed. He evidently has a keen ear, and in putting bird music on paper has been more successful than many of his predecessors. He knows how to use both gun and glass, and has the good sense never to trust the latter in matters of identification.

His careful descriptions of the physical features of several localities where much of his field work has been done contribute largely to the interest and importance of the biographies that follow. The accounts of the Ducks that frequent Niagara River and Lake Ontario contain much that is new; and attention is directed to the little-known habit of the Canada Goose of foraging in wheat-fields.

Concerning the breeding of the White-bellied Swallow on the Mud Islands in Yarmouth County, Nova Scotia, he says: "I saw the nests of this species on the ground under flat stones, and in holes in the ground. They were elegantly lined with the feathers of the Herring Gull and of the Eider Duck, the feathers being so laid that the tips curved upward and nearly concealed the eggs."

His personal observations on the Horned Lark, the Butcher Bird, and many other species are full of interest and are written in a free and pleasing style. He has heard the rich night-song of the Ovenbird, and his heart has been stirred by the unspeakable melody of the Hermit Thrush. Indeed, he is a real lover of nature, and the reviewer, though forced to mention certain errors and omissions, is still in deep sympathy with much of the author's narrative.—C. H. M.

Stejneger on the Wrens of the Subgenus *Anorthura*.*—A synopsis of the various forms is given, with their synonymy. Six species and two subspecies are recognized, as follows: (1) *Troglodytes borealis*, (2) *T. parvulus*, (2a) *T. parvulus bergensis* (subsp. nov.), (3) *T. pallescens* (sp. nov.), (4) *T. alascensis*, (5) *T. hiemalis*, (5a) *T. hiemalis pacificus*, (6) *T. fumigatus*. The paper has special reference to Mr. Seebohm's treatment of the same group in his 'History of British Birds,' by whom all the known forms of *Anorthura* are degraded to subspecies of the European *T. parvulus*.—J. A. A.

Stejneger on the Ptarmigans of the Group *Attagen*.†—This paper embodies the results of Dr. Stejneger's extended and careful investigation of this difficult group of birds—more difficult than almost any other, owing to their nearly continuous moult, and to the scarcity of material collected at corresponding seasons of the year, and properly authenticated as to date of collection. The conclusions here reached are to some extent tentative, and the author appeals for further aid in the way of material. The species and subspecies recognized are as follows: (1) *Lagopus muta*,

* Ueber einige Formen der Untergattung *Anorthura*. By Leonhard Stejneger. Zeitschrift für die gesammte Ornithologie, I, pp. 7-14, Feb., 1884.

† A Brief Review of the Lagopodes belonging to the Group *Attagen* Kaup. By Leonhard Stejneger. Zeitsch. für die gesammte Ornithologie, I, pp. 86-92, pl. v.