

ulating the genial author upon the successful issue of his undertaking. The second volume, completed this year upon the appearance of the final one of the numerous parts in which the whole has been issued, carries the Birds "of Song" through the remainder of the oscinine Passerines, while those "of Beauty" include the clamatorial Passerines, the Picarions, and the Psittacines. These are illustrated upon 18 colored plates—a few of the subjects of these compositions having been already treated in Vol. I—raising the number of plates to 36, evenly balanced between the two volumes in which the work is now finally bound. They are handsomely bound in full Russia, gilt-edged, and beautifully printed with rubricated margins and other typographical elegancies. There is no falling off in the execution of the plates, and in fact no more luxurious a work on ornithology has appeared in this country of late years. Mr. Nehrling steadily maintains to the finish the faithful and careful preparation of the text to which he addressed himself in the beginning; it is written with fine feeling, good temper, and excellent judgment, to present popular life-histories which shall "combine accuracy and reliability of biography with a minimum of technical description." The birds with which the author is familiar from personal experiences are treated in greatest detail—some of them as completely as by any previous writer; and the rest are handled with judicious eclecticism in borrowing from the writings of others, always with generous acknowledgement. The author shows great tact in this particular—it is the reverse of that scissors-and-pastepot method of compilation which pads too many popular treatises. No more attractive and presentable volumes on our birds are now before the public; and we trust that this labor of love, as it certainly has been on Mr. Nehrling's part, may meet with the full measure of recognition it so well deserves. The author has taken and will long maintain a unique position in North American ornithology; we did not prophesy aside from the mark, though we ventured to do so before the event, in recording our conviction that Nehrling would awake some day to find his writings ranked with those we are accustomed to call classic.—E. C.

**Chapman's 'Bird-Life.'**<sup>1</sup>—When Mr. Chapman's excellent 'Handbook of the Birds of Eastern North America'<sup>2</sup> was published it was very evident that the author had made a special study of the needs of young students of ornithology and other non-professional bird-lovers. That his task had been admirably executed is a matter of general information;

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<sup>1</sup> Bird-Life | A Guide to the Study of | Our Common Birds | by | Frank M. Chapman | Assistant Curator of the Department of Mammalogy and | Ornithology in the American Museum of Natural | History, etc. | With seventy-five full-page plates and | numerous text drawings | by Ernest Seton Thompson | author of Art Anatomy of Animals, the Birds of Manitoba, etc. | New York : D. Appleton and Company. 1897. 12mo. pp. xii + 269.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Auk, Vol. XII, pp. 282-284.

and therefore, when the preparation of a second book by Mr. Chapman was announced, bird students awaited its publication with great interest. That their expectations will not be disappointed is reasonably sure, for 'Bird-Life' is a work of equal merit with the 'Handbook,' and will doubtless, by reason of its wider scope and somewhat different purpose, prove even more generally useful. Although conceived in the same spirit the two books are nevertheless quite distinct in their character; for, while the 'Handbook' is, as its title indicates, essentially a systematic and descriptive synopsis of the birds of the eastern United States, 'Bird Life,' although of less extent, is more comprehensive in its plan, the first seven chapters being devoted to as many distinct subjects. Thus, on seventy-three of the two hundred and sixty-one pages of text the relations of birds to man, evolution, coloration, migration, voice, nesting, and kindred topics are discussed concisely, entertainingly, and instructively, the concluding portion consisting of a "field key" to the common land-birds of the northeastern United States. This last portion of the book embraces two parts so essentially distinct from one another that it would seem a separate title should have been given to the latter portion, since it is not in any sense a 'key,' but a descriptive synopsis.

The "field key" proper, which covers something over eight pages, is very different from the 'keys' of the 'Handbook,' being a purely artificial grouping of more than one hundred familiar species according to (1) habits and (2) coloration. The species are divided into three main groups, as follows:—"First Group. Birds that catch their insect food in the air;" "Second Group. Climbing and Creeping Birds"; "Third Group. Birds not included in the preceding groups." The third group is subdivided into five sections, according to coloration. Section I, includes those species with yellow or orange in the plumage; Section II, with red in the plumage; Section III, with blue in the plumage; Section IV, birds conspicuously black or black and white; Section V, birds not included in the preceding sections.

While the utility of keys based upon such purely artificial characters, for the more ready identification of birds by persons wholly unfamiliar with even the rudiments of classification, may not be questioned, it is very evident that Mr. Chapman's efforts in this line are not entirely successful; it is probable, however, from the nature of the case, that no one else will be able to do better. In the first place Mr. Chapman found it necessary to exclude females and young, a restriction at once minimizing the value of the key; again, the same species is repeated in different sections, the Ruby-crowned Kinglet occurring among species which are said to be *without* red in the plumage and also among those which *have* red; Section V, includes a species (Towhee) embraced also in section IV; and although the third group is stated to contain "birds not included in the preceding groups" it nevertheless does include two species (Kingbird and Flicker) placed also in the first and second groups, respectively. It also seems that the first group is not very satisfactorily limited, since many

an observer would naturally seek there the name of some Red-headed Woodpecker, Cedarbird, Redstart, or Fly-catching Warbler which had attracted his or her attention.

The untitled portion following the field-key takes up in systematic order (following the sequence of the A. O. U. Check-List) the species mentioned in the key, and describes, somewhat in detail, but very interestingly, their salient characteristics of habits, voice, etc. Several statements in this portion of the work may, however be fairly questioned while others require correction. Of Grebes, it is said (p. 86) that they "are quite helpless on land. They can not even stand erect on their toes . . . but when resting, support themselves on the whole length of the foot or tarsus." Grebes, however, are not only able to stand erect on their toes, and frequently do so, but walk also in this position. Plovers are characterized as differing from Snipe in possessing "three instead of four toes"; a very erroneous diagnosis, since several genera of Plovers possess a well-developed hallux while some Snipe have none! Woodpeckers are said (p. 136) to be "represented in all the wooded parts of the world except Australia and Madagascar." They are quite wanting also in New Guinea, New Zealand, and the whole of Polynesia, and a recent high authority states that no species of the family is known to have occurred in Egypt. Young Hummingbirds are likened to "a tangle of tiny pink limbs and bodies" (p. 149). Are young Hummingbirds, even when newly hatched, ever pink? Those that I have seen were very dark-colored—a sort of livid gray or slate-color.

The particular points to which attention is called above are, of course, comparatively trivial inaccuracies. Not so, however, the statement (on page 2) that birds, like reptiles, have the heart three-chambered, since it is well-known that in this respect birds agree with mammals (which have a four-chambered heart) and not with reptiles.

These criticisms of 'Bird-Life' are not made in any captious spirit, but to show that the book, like practically all others, is not wholly free from faults. It may truthfully be said that 'Bird-Life' is a book which will prove most useful to those requiring the kind of information which it professes to give, and which no other book supplies in so concise and entertaining a form. The illustrations are, in the main, excellent, and of course add greatly to both the utility and attractiveness of the volume.  
—R. R.

**Publications Received.**—Barlow, C. The Story of the Farallones.

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Cooke, W. W. The Birds of Colorado. (Bull. 37, State Agricultural College, Fort Collins, Colorado.)

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