

NOTES AND NEWS.

DR. ELLIOTT COUES died at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Md., Dec. 25, 1899, as the result of a grave surgical operation performed on Dec. 6, after several months of seriously impaired health, at the age of 57 years.

Dr. Coues was not only one of the Founders of the American Ornithologists' Union, but one of the self-constituted committee of three that sent out the call for a congress of ornithologists that resulted in the founding of the Union. He was at one time its President, and always one of the most valued and influential members of its Council, and of the Committee on the Nomenclature and classification of North American Birds, drafting considerable portions of its 'Code of Nomenclature,' and acting with the Committee in the preparation of both editions of the Check-List and its various Supplements. As an all-around ornithologist, his position was in the first rank of the cultivators of this science, and his influence upon the progress of technical ornithology in America is second only to that of the late Professor Baird, of whom he was a pupil; while in popularizing the subject his influence has been far greater than that of any other writer. His 'Key to North American Birds,' published in 1872, was a popular handbook that opened an easy path to would-be students of ornithology. His enthusiasm, remarkable facility of expression, vivacity of style and originality of thought always enlivened his writings, however technical the subject, and imparted to his bird biographies a charm and vividness few writers can hope to attain.

It is with the deepest sorrow that we have to record the loss of one so eminent in the annals of our science, while still at the height of his powers; his death will be felt as a personal loss by all the members of our Union and as a grave loss to our science. He was kind-hearted and helpful, of great tenacity of purpose, impulsive and imaginative, sometimes aggressive, and not always discreet in his methods of controversy. His capacity for work was almost phenomenal, and there was a decided touch of genius in his mental organism. His friendships were firm and lasting, and he did not easily forget an injury, whether fancied or real.

In accordance with a standing order of the Union respecting deceased Active Members (see *Auk*, XII, p. 199), a special memorial of his life and work will be presented at the next meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union, and published later in 'The Auk.'

DR. D. WEBSTER PRENTISS, one of the Founders of the American Ornithologists' Union, and for twelve years an Active Member, died at his home in Washington, D. C., Nov. 19, 1899, at the age of 56 years. Owing to failing health, he resigned his Active Membership in 1895, and

on the acceptance of his resignation he was reelected as a Corresponding Member.

Dr. Prentiss was born in Washington in 1843, and was a graduate of the Columbian University and of the University of Pennsylvania, where he took his medical degree. He served with distinction as a surgeon in the civil war, and later became one of the best known and ablest physicians of Washington. For many years he also held the chair of *Materia Medica and Therapeutics* in the Columbian Medical College, which he filled with marked ability, and was beloved and revered by his students. He published much on medicine and surgery, and was a good naturalist. His chief ornithological publication was 'A List of Birds ascertained to inhabit the District of Columbia,' etc. (1862), with Dr. Coues, a second edition of which, under the title 'Avifauna Columbiana,' appeared in 1883. He never lost his interest in ornithology, but the exacting demands of his profession prevented his devoting much time to strictly ornithological work.

MR. W. W. COLBURN, an Associate Member of the American Ornithologists' Union, died suddenly of heart failure at his home in Springfield, Mass., Oct. 17, 1899, at the age of 60 years. Mr. Colburn was born at New Boston, N. H., and was graduated from Dartmouth College in 1861. Later he was a teacher in the Lawrence Academy at Groton, Mass. For twelve years he was principal of the High School at Manchester, N. H., and in 1874 became principal of the High School at Springfield, Mass., which position he held till 1890. After his retirement he received private pupils and conducted classes in natural history. He was greatly respected, and one of Springfield's best loved citizens, taking a prominent part in the social and educational life of the city. "He was perhaps the best ornithologist of the section, and his services in spreading popular instruction concerning our songbirds and in awakening a sentiment against their destruction and their use in millinery had been most valuable. He had been president of the Peabody Society, which has for its aim the protection of our native birds." In conjunction with Mr. Robert O. Morris, he published in 1897 a nominal list of 203 species of wild birds observed in Forest Park, Springfield, Mass., in the Report of the Park Commissioners for that year.

ONE OF the pleasantest episodes of the Seventeenth Congress of the A. O. U. was the receipt of a gift to the Union of \$100, from Miss Juliette A. Owen of St. Joseph, Mo., an Associate Member of the Union, which she desired the Council to devote to such use as seemed to it most fitting. While the sum is not large, comparatively speaking, it is most auspicious and encouraging. The subject of raising a fund in aid of ornithological research is one that has been often considered by at least individual members of the A. O. U. Council, and some little effort was at one time made to initiate such a desirable movement. Nothing, how-

ever, resulted from it, and no formal action was ever taken in the matter, until Miss Owen's unsolicited gift gave impetus to this long-cherished scheme. On the receipt of Miss Owen's gift the Council appointed a committee to consider its disposition, resulting in a report recommending that the money be made the nucleus of a fund, the proceeds of which should be devoted to the purpose already stated. In all undertakings it is the first step that counts, hence the hopefulness of the present outlook for the establishment of a fund "for the advancement of the science of ornithology." There is now both reason and ground for an appeal for further contributions toward this end; and it is hoped that this bare statement of the conditions of the case will be sufficient to prompt further and still larger gifts toward the realization of a purpose so desirable.

AN IMPORTANT monograph of 'The Birds of Cheshire,' by T. A. Coward and Charles Oldham is announced for publication early in the spring by Messrs. Sherratt and Hughes, 27 St. Ann Street, Manchester, England. It will be an octavo of upwards of 250 pages, with six plates depicting bird haunts, and a map. The main part of the work will treat of "all the birds known to occur in Cheshire," with an introductory chapter on various special topics relating to the general subject. It is to be published by subscription, at 10s. 6d. net.

ANOTHER work on British birds, announced as about to appear, is 'The Birds of Glanmorganshire,' by Digby S. W. Nicholl, in demy 8vo, also to be published by subscription, at 7s. 6d., or 7s. 9d. by post. Orders should be sent to Thomas Carter, 8 High Town, Hereford, England.

MR. REGINALD HEBER HOWE, JR., announces that he "proposes to edit, if enough subscribers are secured to insure success, a quarterly ornithological paper," to be called 'Randon Notes on Ornithology,' "to consist of from four to eight pages, composed of general articles and notes." The subscription price is 75 cents, due after the publication of the first issue. Mr. Howe's address is Longwood, Brookline, Mass.

'THE CONDOR' is the new name chosen for 'The Bulletin of the Cooper Ornithological Club,' which enters on its second volume with the beginning of the year 1900. We trust that the good record it has made during the first year betokens for 'The Condor' a long life and permanent prosperity.

THE PROSPECTUS of 'Bird-Lore' for 1900 promises to "set a new standard for popular natural history journals. The articles will be largely by recognized leaders in the world of science and letters, and of a variety which cannot fail to create wide interest." The list of contributors announced seems to make good the claim thus set forth. In connection with the journal the author has established an 'Advisory Coun-

cil' to assist bird students by placing them in "direct communication with an authority on the bird-life of their region who has consented to aid them," the announcement of which Council will be made in the next issue of 'Bird-Lore.'

It is announced that 'The Oölogists Association' proposes to hold its first meeting, probably in Washington, at some yet to be assigned date next fall. The Secretary-Treasurer of the Association is John W. Daniel, Jr., Lynchburg, Va.

THE magnitude of the business of destroying birds for millinery purposes has recently been illustrated through the accidental destruction by fire at Wantagh, Long Island, N. Y., Nov. 22, 1899, of a factory for the preparation of the skins and plumage of birds "for the purpose of ornamenting women's hats." This establishment is said to have been the largest of its kind in the United States; it was a one story building, 100 feet long and fifty feet wide, in which about fifty persons were employed in the preparation of birds' plumage for the milliner. At the time of the fire the stock is said to have contained "10,000 stuffed sea gulls, 20,000 wings of various other birds, 10,000 heads of birds, representing many varieties from the beautiful plumaged birds of the South to the plain Long Island Crow. The resources of the establishment had been severely taxed during the past year to provide long wings and single feathers, and a number of special gunners were sent out to provide a supply of those birds that would meet the demand. Long Island baymen all last winter made more money shooting birds for Mr. Wilson than they did at their regular callings of oyster gathering or fishing. The establishment had men stationed at Cape Cod, the islands off the coast of Maine, the shores of Virginia and on the Florida coasts. These men were kept busy filling special orders for certain varieties of birds found in those localities." A few days before the fire "several gunning outfits were sent out from the establishment for the winter's work. One party went out in a big sloop to secure a cargo of water fowl of different sorts, and another party was sent south with a naphtha launch to explore southern rivers for birds, and the Florida coasts will be hunted by still another outfit. Some of these gunners kill a large number of birds in a season. The greatest record made by any one man was 141,000 killed in a single season in Florida."

The owner of this establishment is William L. Wilson, and it is announced that he will at once rebuild his plant. His nefarious work has long been known to our bird protectors, and various attempts have been made to entrap him in the meshes of the law, but through defects in the New York bird law he has always, by the aid of able lawyers, found a loophole for escape. The wide publicity given to his work by the press in describing the destruction of his factory should have the effect to arouse public sentiment against it, and greatly increase the danger

of prosecution to his paid emissaries, particularly in Florida, where, we are informed, the publication of the facts above given have aroused a sentiment that should result in materially checking his work in that State. An effort will also be made to secure a passage of a law by the incoming legislature of New York, which shall render it impossible for such work be carried on with safety in this State.

It is disheartening to bird protectionists to find in the public press statements to the effect that few wild birds are now employed in millinery decorations, which are, it is claimed, made up principally from the plumage of domesticated fowls and game birds killed as food. Even the aigrettes are said to be obtained without killing the birds, the plumes being either picked up from the ground after the birds have shed them, or obtained from egret-farms, just as ostrich plumes are obtained by ostrich farming. It is pretty safe to assume, though hard to prove, that such statements as these emanate from an interested source, and are put forth to dull the sense of the public to the real facts in the case. The 'general public' is unable to discriminate in matters of ornithology, and to a large extent believes what it is intended it should believe by the interested authors of such misinformation. A survey of women's head-gear, as the average woman appears in public, is a painful sight to the ornithologist, who at a glance can tell the source of these hat decorations, however mutilated and disguised, with reasonable certainty, and can realize to what an enormous extent our wild birds are still sacrificed for woman's defacement. Not only are Hawks and Owls, Terns and Gulls, Grebes and Herons, and other birds in nameless variety, but even the Brown Pelican and Turkey Buzzard are made to contribute to the barbaric display.

But worst of all is the fact that high-toned and respectable fashion journals will publish statements like that given below and fail not only to retract them when shown their erroneous and harmful character. As an example we call attention to the following: "The tender-hearted women who have refused to wear egrets on their hats and bonnets, on account of the poor mother-birds, will be glad to learn that they are not killed for the purpose of obtaining these lovely ornaments. As a matter of fact, the hunters, without powder or shot, go around (in South America or India) during the right season to the breeding or roosting grounds and collect the plumes which are cast by the male every year.

"In Venezuela the natives are beginning to farm the birds, as they are easily domesticated; and as the egrets grow again each year, the enterprise should be very profitable.

"It has long been considered a very cruel thing to wear an egret, as it was supposed that a mother-bird was killed to obtain it. We have heard harrowing descriptions of nests of young birds left unprotected while the mother-birds lay mangled on the ground—all for the adornment of heathen woman-kind. But now the most tender-hearted lady (provided

she can afford the luxury) may wear this beautiful ornament with a clear conscience."

The above is from the editorial page of 'Harper's Bazar,' of Nov. 18, 1899. It was presumed that it was put forth innocently and in ignorance of the facts, and that a respectful and courteous presentation of the truth in the matter would be not only welcomed, but would lead to a proper retraction of the erroneous statements. Not only has this not been the case, but the courtesy of even an acknowledgment of such communications, sent as private letters and not for publication, has not been vouchsafed. The inference is that no great compunction of conscience was felt on the part of the management of this leading fashion journal for a most inhumane misstatement of facts in the matter of how egret plumes are obtained for millinery use. The various reports of egret farms, located in such improbable places as Arizona, New Mexico, Venezuela, etc., have in each case proved upon investigation to be wholly mythical, as any ornithologist would expect; and, as ornithologists also know, the reported gathering of shed egret plumes as a source of millinery supply, must, in the nature of things, be equally imaginary.

APROPOS of the above related incidents Mr. Witmer Stone, Chairman of the A. O. U. Committee on the Protection of North American birds, has prepared a two-page circular devoted to a brief summary of the facts in relation to how aigrettes are really obtained. A large edition of this circular has been issued for general distribution by the Pennsylvania Audubon Society. This is a prompt and praiseworthy effort to offset the harm that must necessarily result from such cruel misstatements, sent broadcast throughout the world, as that above quoted from 'Harper's Bazar.'

The matter has also been taken up by Mr. Chapman in the New York 'Tribune' of Dec. 28, 1899, from which it appears that the 'Harper's Bazar' editorial was based on 'hearsay evidence,' which was allowed credence in the face of the facts so well known to be entirely adverse to such allegations.