

meanwhile called *pha'-be* from a tree near by, dishing his tail and sweeping out after insects.

Other phœbes were seen about the same time in the vicinity. One, which was apparently catching insects for its young, was seen around one of the deep pools on the outskirts of Santa Rosa. The conditions in these places are so favorable that it would indeed seem strange if wanderers through the region were not occasionally tempted to stop.—  
FLORENCE MERRIAM BAILEY, *Washington, D. C.*

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## RECENT LITERATURE.

Hoffmann's 'Guide to the Birds of New England and Eastern New York.'<sup>1</sup>—Happy the beginner into whose hands this little volume falls! for his first impressions of bird life, whatever else may betide, will never have to be unlearned. Here is a refreshing book that sets a new standard for similar guides while putting to shame many of greater pretensions. Mr. Hoffmann's long experience as a field observer and his ready grasp of the needs of the beginner have enabled him to season his pages with much that is not only crisply original but, at the same time, is of very practical application in identifying birds afield. We are told in a few words what open eyes may see out-of-doors. The preliminary chapters are concise, the keys, entirely for field identification, are arranged for every month in the year, and the bulk of the volume is devoted to snapshot pen pictures of over two hundred and fifty familiar species of New England birds. The rarities are omitted, but so true to life are these snapshots that I am sure many of us can almost hear the songs and notes familiar to our ears and see the characteristic markings and motions so faithfully portrayed. One of the chief charms of the book is its uniformity. No species is slighted, and the care with which the author dwells upon diagnostic details of plumages, actions, and songs has perhaps never

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<sup>1</sup> A Guide to the | Birds of New England | and | Eastern New York | Containing a Key for each Season and short | Descriptions of over two hundred and | fifty Species with particular Refer- | ence to their Appearance | in the Field | By | Ralph Hoffmann | Member of the American Ornithologists' Union | With four full-page plates by Louis | Agassiz Fuertes and nearly | one hundred cuts in | the text | [vignette] | Boston and New York | Houghton, Mifflin and Company | The Riverside Press, Cambridge | 1904. — 12mo, pp. i-xiii, + 1-357, pll. iv, cuts in text. \$1.50.

been equalled. We cannot but feel regret that so much has been compressed into so little space, for this part of his work will appeal strongly to many besides the novice. The latter will revel, or very likely flounder in the keys which are certainly extremely ingenious; still the inherent disregard of birds for classification is not entirely overcome. It will strike some that the measurements have been given with a superfluous minuteness that will only tend to confuse the beginner. Why not tell him the Phœbe is 7 inches long rather than '6.99'? and the added or subtracted hundredths of an inch here and there would have made the keys look less like time-tables. Otherwise, the descriptive details, as far as they go, are admirable and it is a pleasure to turn pages which are so filled with morsels of useful information that we could wish for bigger bites. Four illustrations by Mr. Fuertes and numerous appropriate woodcuts add life to the pages, which are neatly and clearly printed. Even the cover is attractive and no one will begrudge the sooty Chimney Swift his gilded body, for ever since in 'Citizen Bird' Dr. Coues and Mrs. Wright perched him on the telegraph wires, we must expect some conventional liberties to be taken with this 'spruce cone with wings.' It is to be hoped Mr. Hoffmann's book will have the warm reception of which it is so deserving, and he himself is to be congratulated on having employed his pen to such good purpose.—J. D., JR.

Hornaday's 'The American Natural History.'<sup>1</sup>—This very useful work is intended to bridge the "chasm that is wide and deep" between "the 'scientific' zoölogy, suitable only for students in the higher colleges and universities" and "the 'nature-study' books of the grammar schools." It is not a manual of the vertebrate zoölogy of North America, as it attempts to treat only "about three hundred important and well chosen species of animals," of which a number are exotic, selected to fill in important gaps in the general system of vertebrate life. It is systematic in arrangement, beginning with the highest class, or mammals, and ending with the lampreys and lancelets. There is a general introduction of about eight pages (pp. xix-xxv), explanatory of classification, nomenclature, and other technicalities, all very useful and pertinent, and including a timely warning notice against the present tendency "to idealize the higher animals, to ascribe to them intelligence and reasoning

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<sup>1</sup>The American | Natural History | A Foundation of useful Knowledge of | the Higher Animals of North America | By | William T. Hornaday | Director of the New York Zoölogical Park; Author of | "Two Years in the Jungle," etc. | Illustrated by 227 original drawings by Beard, Rungius, | Sawyer, and others, 116 photographs, chiefly by Sanborn, | Keller, and Underwood, and numerous charts and maps | Charles Scribner's Sons | New York, MCMIV—8vo, pp. xv + 449, numerous full-page half-tones and text cuts, including maps and charts. \$3.50, postage extra.