

too. Figures show that on the average not more than one young bird in a nestful reaches maturity and a single Cowbird is of probably greater economic value than a single Warbler owing to its greater size. Therefore more than ever is the hostility against the Cowbird a matter of sentiment and not of economy.

Mr. Taverner, as in his previous works, strives to suppress the subspecies as much as possible and we find in the brief mention of the subspecies which is appended to the account of the species, again and again such statements as: "the distinction between the two forms is too fine for general recognition" or "the differences are so slight as to be of little popular interest." We quite agree with the advisability of suppressing the subspecies in such a work as Mr. Taverner has written, in the majority of cases, because as he says they are too finely drawn to concern the general public. But we must not lose sight of the fact that subspecies are not based upon degree of difference but upon the criterion of intergradation and that there are many subspecies quite as distinct as many species. Indeed some of the subspecies of Song Sparrows are far more easily distinguished than are the small Flycatchers to which full recognition is accorded. If it is a question of which forms can be recognized by the general student and which cannot, we are going on the degree of difference schedule which has nothing to do with subspecies, and it would be far better to accord the most distinct forms of Song Sparrow, Horned Lark, Fox Sparrow, etc., their place in the list regardless of whether they write their names in two words or three. As a matter of fact that is exactly what is done in another popular book, Walters' 'Wild Birds in City Parks.' The general reader cares not a rap whether two forms intergrade or not but he wants all the birds that he can distinguish placed on his list.

This commentary is not intended as a criticism in any way of Mr. Taverner's excellent book but merely a suggestion of a "way out" of a difficult problem which confronts many authors who in their attempts at a solution appear to us to be confusing two very different propositions.—
W. S.

Audubon's Delineations of American Scenery and Character.¹—

How many of our older ornithologists who were fortunate enough to have had access, in their youth, to a copy of 'Audubon' have pored by the hour over the "episodes" which the author inserted after every fifth bird biography of his first three volumes. In them he described many of his personal experiences as well as places that he had visited in his varied travels through the wildernesses of America.

Just where the term "episode" is applied to these sketches we are not

¹ *Delineations of American Scenery and Character.* By John James Audubon. With an introduction by Francis Hobart Herrick, Ph.D., Sc.D., Professor of Biology in Western Reserve University, Author of 'Audubon, the Naturalist: A History of His Life and Time.' G. A. Baker & Company. New York, 1926. pp. i-xlix, 1-349. Price, \$4.50.

clear although that is the title by which they are most generally known. A search through the first volume of the 'Ornithological Biography' fails to find it used while the title page of the three volumes in which the sketches occur refers to them as "Delineations of American Scenery and Manners" which is different again from the title used by Prof. Herrick in the book now before us.

It has been a matter of general regret that many of our host of younger bird students have been unable to obtain a copy of the classic work of the great painter naturalist, as no recent edition has been published. Now however the need, so far as the episodes are concerned, has been met in the publication of fifty-nine of them—all but the one dealing with the feet of birds, in a separate volume edited by Prof. F. H. Herrick the well known authority on Auduboniana.

Besides the episodes or delineations there are reproduced the prefaces to the first and second volumes of the 'Ornithological Biography' and there is a biographical and historical preface by Prof. Herrick and an excellent reproduction of the Inman portrait of Audubon as a frontispiece.

The book is handsomely printed and attractively bound and the reading of the classic episodes will fire the enthusiasm of many a would-be naturalist and prove profitable reading for all who may be interested in the early history of America, though they should also read Prof. Herrick's remarks upon the inconsistencies of some of the episodes as set forth in his 'Life of Audubon.'—W. S.

Banfield's 'Last Leaves from Dunk Island.'¹—Many of our readers are familiar with the writings of the "Beachcomber" of Dunk Island—E. J. Banfield; with his twenty-five years sojourn on the little island, two and a half miles off the coast of Queensland, Australia, and with his death there in June, 1923, with no companion but his devoted wife.

His books recall in some respects the writings of Thoreau while his isolation from the world has been likened to the life of R. L. Stevenson. Three volumes were published during his life, 'The Confessions of a Beachcomber,' 'My Tropic Isle,' and 'Tropic Days' and now we have a number of short sketches, originally published in the 'Townsville (Australia) Bulletin', and some other manuscripts, issued in a posthumous volume under the title 'Last Leaves from Dunk Island,' with the sympathetic editorship of A. H. Chisholm, the well known Australian ornithologist, also a lover and chronicler of nature.

These sketches, thirty-two in number, cover a variety of subjects—the devastating cyclone of 1918, stories of the native blacks and numerous bird biographies treating of the Metallic Starling, Sunbirds, Swamp

¹ Last Leaves from Dunk Island. By E. J. Banfield. With Introduction by A. H. Chisholm, Australia, Angus Robertson, Ltd. 89 Castlereagh Street [Obtainable at the British Australian Bookstore, 51 High Holborn St., London E. C. 1] 1925, pp. i-xxvi + 1-232, and 34 illustrations. Price 12s. 6d.