

(see Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila., 1897, p. 368). Col. Meinertzhagen also includes in his discussion of the origin of the Egyptian fauna an interesting consideration of evolution and the ways in which it operates, which we cannot for lack of space consider here.

Mr. Moreau identifies some 90 species of birds in the paintings and carvings on ancient tombs, etc., and considers that the most potent factor in the extermination of many of these was the disappearance of the papyrus thickets with the increasing aridity of the country.

The work proper is a very fully annotated list of the birds of Egypt and under each species we find reference to the original description and synonyms, a full description of the several plumages and paragraphs on distribution, nidification and field characters.

The illustrations are numerous including many text figures, thirty-eight full page plates in color and three maps. The artists are G. E. Lodge, Roland Green and H. Grönvold. There is also a frontispiece portrait of Mr. Nicoll with a brief biography.—W. S.

Lynes' 'Review of the Genus *Cisticola*.'—The Grass-warblers of the genus *Cisticola* have long been a stumbling-block to systematic ornithologists. Although in most cases easily distinguished in life by their habits and habitats, many of these little birds display a variety of plumage, seasonal and sexual, which has led to the naming of more species and sub-species than in reality exist.

During the years 1920 and 1921 Rear-Admiral Lynes made an extended collecting trip to Jebel Marra, an isolated mountain in central Darfur, and in 'The Ibis' for the years 1924 to 1926 he wrote an excellent account of the birds he collected. Seven species of *Cisticola* were obtained and in identifying these he encountered difficulties which necessitated a careful taxonomic study of the genus as a whole. This he reserved for an appendix and in the meanwhile completed his account of the rest of the collection. Then turning his attention to this single genus he began a comprehensive study of all the available material in the combined collections of several of the larger museums of the world. With this unrivalled series at his disposal many of the errors and misunderstandings of the past were cleared up and a provisional classification adopted. Realizing, however, the necessity of a better knowledge of the birds in life in order to elucidate certain problems of relationship, Admiral Lynes then commenced an extended tour of the greater part of Africa with the express purpose of meeting as many species of *Cisticola* in their nesting season as possible. On his return, with much added knowledge, he resumed his study of the museum skins, the outcome of which is a work of 673 pages and 20 colored plates.¹

Unquestionably this represents the most exhaustive study ever made on a single avian genus, and Admiral Lynes is to be congratulated upon the

¹ Review of the genus *Cisticola*. By Rear-Admiral H. Lynes, C.B., C.M.G., M.B.O.U. &c. *Ibis*, 12th series, vol. VI, Supplementary number, pp. 1-673, pls. I-XX. August 1930.

excellent manner in which he has amassed and reviewed an enormous amount of data relative to the taxonomy and life-histories of the members of this genus whose range, though mostly African, extends to the Palaearctic, Indian and Australasian zoogeographic regions. The plan of the work differs somewhat from the usual stereotyped pattern followed by most systematists and in consequence a study of its structure is necessary before attempting a study of its contents. Perhaps the most noteworthy innovation is the relegation of the full synonymy to a single chapter at the end of the work, which functions also as an index. This may not meet with approval on all sides, but it nevertheless has some advantages.

A chapter of introductory matter is followed, in chapter II, by a check-list of the species and subspecies recognized. New forms are here printed in bold-faced type and rejected names (e. g. synonyms, *nomina nuda*, &c.) are briefly referred to under each species. Forty species and 154 subspecies are recognized, as against 174 species and 54 subspecies described prior to August 1930. Four new species, twenty-four new subspecies and three new names are proposed.

The forty species are arranged in eleven groups, but these are not afforded generic or subgeneric rank. A list of names available in the event of subsequent "splitting" is given on page 26. Five species which have until now been placed in the genus *Cisticola* are disposed of as follows:—three (*C. melanura* Rchw., *C. angusticauda* Rchw., and *C. alticola* Shell.) are grouped near *Apalis* and its allies; one (*C. incana* Sel. & Hartl.) is made the type of a new genus, *Incana* (p. 638); and *C. flavigularis* Sharpe is considered a *nomen nudum* and probably an error.

Chapter III, the main body of the work, contains descriptions of all the species and subspecies, notes on their molts, plumages, habits and distribution, and discussions on their relationships. Keys to the species are provided, but unfortunately, when put to the test of actual usage these prove to be the weakest part of the work. The author has tried to make the keys portray his conception of the relationships and affinities of the various groups instead of allowing them to be merely artificial conveniences. On page 70, for example, near the beginning of the key there are three alternatives, viz.:—1, "Pattern-back" (with, or without a red head-top); 2, "Plain- or Pattern-back" (always with a red head-top); and 3, "Plain-back" (with some exceptions and with the head-top sometimes red). No clear-cut distinctions are given and hence, at the outset one is left in doubt as to which branch of the key to follow. Had the division been more artificial (e. g. "plain-back" versus "pattern-back" and the species grouped accordingly regardless of their natural affinities) no uncertainty would have existed. Possibly a lengthening of the key would have resulted, since "border-line" species would of necessity have to be worked in on both sides.

In Chapter IV a very useful historical résumé of the genus is followed by a list, with comments, of the more important literature, and this in turn is followed by a summary of the museum material on which the review is based. A total of 10,355 skins, including types of 36 species, 111 sub-

species, and 93 synonyms were examined. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to an account of the "Cisticola tour" which Lynes, accompanied by B. B. Osmaston, made between November 1926 and July 1927.

The plates are bound separately and relative to each figure there is a considerable amount of explanatory text; so that this is in fact an abridged review, complete in itself. Each species is figured semi-diagrammatically (i. e., with wings and tail partly spread, and with no attempt to portray life-like attitudes) and considerable ingenuity and originality is displayed in the manner in which each figure is arranged in such a way as to be directly comparable with the others. All are life-size and parallel lines running through each plate indicate differences in proportions of wing, tail, tarsus and toes in the various species in their different plumages. The drawings are the work of Mr. Grönvold, whose careful attention to accuracy and detail is responsible for the important part they play in relation to the whole work.

Students of systematic ornithology owe a debt of gratitude to Admiral Lynes for the able manner in which he has disentangled the knot into which the taxonomy of the Cisticolas has long been involved. Admiral Lynes is, we understand, back in Africa now endeavouring to clear up certain points about these birds which he was unable to solve during his previous trip.—
W. W. BOWEN.

Abel Chapman's 'Memories.'—Active to the end the late Abel Chapman was at work on this volume¹ through his last illness, until his death and had practically finished it, even to the table of contents and the text figures which, as in his previous works, he executed with his own hand.

The chapters of 'Memories' deal with incidents in his long and eventful life not fully covered in his other volumes, mainly occurring in Africa from Khartoum to Cairo. There are also two chapters dealing with Spain and four with his homeland in Northumberland. Bird Life on the White Nile is a fascinating account of a single day's observations and the account of Lake Menzaleh is the story of another bird paradise.

One chapter deals with reviews and reviewers in which Chapman humorously describes his own experience as a reviewer. His reviews were too severe for his chief who gave orders to leave books alone that he could not review favorably and later discharged him because no reviews whatever were forthcoming! In another chapter he takes a final fling at what he terms "dermatology" and many eminent scientific journals and describers of subspecies come in for sarcastic criticism. Always a lover of the outdoors and an exponent of observation of living animals he was quite unable to appreciate the work of the student of museum specimens. It is interesting and suggestive to compare his theories of migration in northern Egypt

¹ *Memories of Fourscore Years less Two 1851-1929*. By Abel Chapman, with a Memoir by George Bolam. Gurney and Jackson, London, 33 Paternoster Row, Edinburgh: Tweeddale Court, 1930, Pp. i-xxvii + 1-257. Price 21 shillings, net.