

the use of an unusual terminology. For example, his "frontal boundary layer" is what we are accustomed to call the anterior layer and his "scratches" are small crypts. The photographs are beautifully reproduced, but it would be easier to follow the suggested classification if Dr. Eskelund had used a higher magnification in examining the eye before photographing it. It also seems doubtful whether he has described anything like the possible number of types. There seems, for example, to be little or no reference to racial differences, which are often great, or to the effects of racial interbreeding.

It will certainly be generally admitted that there

is some hereditary factor influencing iris pattern. Indeed this has been shown already by the work at the Galton Laboratory on both normal and pathological irides in man and animals. To what extent, however, reliance can be placed on a classification, necessarily rough, to subserve any medico-legal purpose is uncertain. It is probable that iris pattern is as individualistic as fingerprint pattern and it might prove to have an even greater identification value, since it cannot be obliterated. Its value in proving heredity must, however, remain doubtful until many more pedigrees of several generations have been examined in different races.

## Fossil Gastropods

### Handbuch der Paläozoologie

Herausgegeben von O. H. Schindewolf. Band 6 : Gastropoda. Lieferung 1, Teil 1 : Allgemeiner Teil und Prosobranchia. Pp. viii + 240. (Berlin : Gebrüder Borntraeger, 1938.) 45 gold marks.

ALTHOUGH students of most nationalities are now well provided with text-books of palaeontology, no comprehensive work of reference giving a complete survey of existing knowledge of the subject has appeared since the publication of Zittel's famous "Handbuch der Paläontologie" (1876-1893). To remedy this deficiency a new "Handbuch" (a term the connotation of which appears to have undergone a process of evolution) is now in course of preparation under the general editorship of Prof. O. H. Schindewolf. The collaboration of nearly fifty specialists, belonging to several nationalities, has been secured for this work, which it is proposed to publish in twenty volumes, the majority of which will consist of several *Lieferungen*. The appearance of the first part of this huge undertaking is thus an event of some importance to palaeontologists.

The author, Dr. W. Wenz, is well known as an authority on the Cainozoic non-marine Gastropoda and the compiler of the very substantial section of the "Fossilium Catalogus" which deals with this group. Even for such an indefatigable worker, the preparation within a few years of a treatise defining and classifying every recognized genus and subgenus of the Gastropoda, from the Cambrian faunas to those of the present day, must have been no mean task. It is true that M. Cossmann's "Essais de Paléoconchologie Comparée" (1895-1925), not quite completed owing to its author's premature death, has to some extent

paved the way for this work by assembling an enormous quantity of data concerning the range and distribution of the various groups and by giving good descriptions and figures of genotypes. So far as the Palaeozoic genera (with which the present part mainly deals) are concerned, however, Dr. Wenz does not appear to have been much influenced by the ideas on classification advanced by his predecessor.

The general scheme of classification adopted is that given in J. Thiele's "Handbuch der systematischen Weichtierkunde" (1929-1935), which is likely to remain the standard work of reference on the Recent Mollusca for some time to come. Except for a series of introductory chapters, which include a useful review of modern ideas on gastropod phylogeny, the present part deals entirely with the Archæogastropoda, the first of the three orders into which the subclass Prosobranchia is divided. Much of the detailed classification proposed is certainly new; a great part, no doubt, is merely tentative in view of the dissimilarity of many of the groups dealt with to Recent forms of known anatomical characters. It would have been preferable if the author had indicated which families are erected for the first time.

In matters of nomenclature this work appears to conform strictly with the International Rules, and no attempt has been made to perpetuate obsolete names by the arbitrary selection of *nomina conservanda*. The wise decision has been made to dispense with the 'section' as a taxonomic group subsidiary to the subgenus. Well printed text-illustrations, almost entirely copied from pre-existing works, illustrate the most important genera.