

*Monographie der Molluskengattung Venus, Linné. 1. Band. Sub-genus Cytherea, Lamarck. Von Dr. Eduard Römer. 4to. (Cassel, 1869.)*

NATURALISTS have been divided into those of the field and those of the closet. The author of this monograph may be classed in the latter category; and he certainly shares the indefatigable industry of his countrymen. Such labour, however, when applied to subjects of natural history, sometimes tends to an excessive multiplication of species; and its utility is in that respect questionable. Professor Römer, in a critical examination of the species of *Venus* which he published in 1857, enumerated 145 species arranged in eight sub-genera. In the present work one only of these sub-genera is treated, and includes no less than 209 species. We may well ask, with Cicero, "Quousque tandem abuteris patientiâ nostrâ?" A common European species (*Circe minima*) is described in two sections under different names; and some of the author's new species seem to be merely the young of well-known forms. The method in which he subordinates this host of species is unusual. Eight sections of the sub-genus *Cytherea* are named and described; and the specific names are applied, not to the genus or even to the sub-genus, but to each section. The sectional name is used in a generic sense; so that *Venus meretrix* becomes *Meretrix meretrix*, and *V. Dione* is converted into *Dione Dione*. The description of species is not in every case consistent with the sectional characters. In the first section, *Tivela*, the shape is stated to be "trigona;" but in *T. nitidula* we find it is "ovato-elliptica," and in *T. nucula* "cordato-ovata." It would also be more convenient to have the descriptive characters given in the same order throughout. In the description of the first species colour takes precedence of sculpture; in that of the second species the order of these characters is reversed. The same confusion occurs as to the teeth and pallial scar as well as to other characters. But the excellence of the illustrations compensates to a great extent for the small blemishes which it is the unpleasant duty of a critic to point out. The plates are fifty-nine in number and contain many hundred figures, all of which are evidently truthful, admirably engraved, and exquisitely coloured. The monograph must be indispensable to collectors, who are better pleased with a redundancy than with a paucity of species. Dealers have the same feeling.

J. GWYN JEFFREYS

*Abstracts of Two Papers on the Geography of Disease.*

I. The Geographical Distribution of Heart Disease and Dropsy in England and Wales. II. The Geographical Distribution of Cancer in England and Wales. By Alfred Haviland, M.R.C.S. Pp. 18. (London, 1869.)

THIS pamphlet contains a reprint of two papers, in which the author has endeavoured to map out the districts in which the particular forms of disease above-mentioned are most frequently encountered. The subject of his geographical distribution of disease is a most important one in its bearings upon the great question of the causation of disease. It is a subject, however, in which the facts should be many and the conclusions few, if he who draws them wishes to make lasting contributions to the science of medicine.

*Leçons sur la Physiologie Comparée de la Respiration.*

Par Paul Bert. (Paris: Baillière. London: Williams and Norgate.)

IN his preface, the author to some extent apologises for the imperfections of this volume, on account of the difficulties, including "the singular penalty of the laboratory over which he presided," attending the delivery of the course of lectures of which it forms the report. No apology, however, is needed for an

interesting and admirable series of discourses on a difficult and yet important topic. The book does not profess to be a complete Treatise on Respiration, but rather treats fully of certain selected points, such as the respiration of tissues, the gases of blood, the respiratory mechanism in various classes of animals, asphyxia, &c., &c. The "graphic method" is employed throughout, by far the larger number of the illustrations being representations of various respiratory movements. We would especially call attention to the chapters on the respiratory movements of fishes, amphibia, reptiles, and birds, in which the graphic method brings out many singular and interesting facts. Even in matters of science, national characteristics come to the surface; and quite apart from the language, it is generally an easy matter to distinguish the work of a Frenchman from that of German or an Englishman. Prof. Bert's work is no exception to the rule, though we must add, with singular pleasure, that it is far more cosmopolitan than many of the writings of his fellow countrymen. The author has evidently studied and appreciated the labours of countries other than his own.

*Systematische Beschreibung der bekannten europäischen zweiflügeligen Insekten. Von J. W. Meigen, Achter Theil, von Hermann Loew, Erster Band. Schmidt, Halle, 1869. (London: Williams and Norgate.)*

PROFESSOR LOEW, who is to be regarded as the highest authority on European Diptera, contents himself in this book with supplying a sort of supplement to Meigen's great work on the insects of that order inhabiting Europe. It is, perhaps, to be regretted that he does not rather direct his efforts to the production of a complete systematic work on the subject, but he probably thinks that the time is not yet ripe for such an undertaking, and in the meanwhile the full and detailed descriptions of species detected since the publication of Meigen's last volume will be most welcome to entomologists. The present volume contains descriptions of 182 species of two-winged insects, belonging to various families from the *Tipulidæ* to the *Dolichopodidæ*, and especially of numerous forms of *Asilidæ* and *Bombyliidæ*. No fewer than 138 of the species are described as new, and the greater part of the remainder are species described by Professor Loew himself in various scattered papers.

*Nachrichten von der K. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften und der Georg-Augusts Universität zu Göttingen, aus dem Jahre 1869.*

THE volume of "Reports of the Royal Society of Sciences and University of Göttingen," for 1869, which has lately reached us, contains a great number of papers of considerable value, for the most part relating to mathematics, physics, and chemistry. There are also some memoirs relating to literary antiquities, but natural history receives little attention, the only papers being a notice of some marine animals and their metamorphoses by Dr. E. Mecznirow, and a revision of the *Butomaceæ*, *Funcaceæ*, &c., collected by the Brothers Schlagintweit in Upper Asia by M. F. Buchenau, to which we may specially call the attention of botanists, as a good many new species are described in it.

*Via Medica. A Treatise on the Laws and Customs of the Medical Profession, in relation especially to Principals and Assistants; with Suggestions and Advice to Students on Preliminary Education. By J. Baxter Langley, M.R.C.S., F.L.S. Third edition. (London: R. Hardwicke. 1869.)*

THIS little work is full of most useful information concerning the subjects indicated on its title-page. That it meets a demand for information of this description is sufficiently indicated by the rapid sale of the two previous editions.