

tions, now also form two series: the Science Parts being published twice a year, in December and April, and the Polite Literature and Antiquary Part once a year, in December. Quite recently the Academy have determined to publish another series of quarto *Transactions* under the title of "The Cunningham Memoirs," part 1 of the first volume of which, containing a memoir by Dr. John Casey, F.R.S., on Cubic Transformations, has just appeared.

The publications of the Royal Dublin Society are of the same type as those of the Irish Academy, except that they are exclusively confined to science. Of their new series of *Transactions*, parts 1 to 13 of volume 1 have been published, and for convenience of publication the first two parts of volume 2, containing "Observations of Nebulæ and Star Clusters, 1848-1878," by the Earl of Rosse, have also appeared. The first two volumes of these *Proceedings* have been published, and a part makes its appearance pretty regularly every third month. Following the example of the Academy, the memoirs forming the *Transactions* are published separately.

It would thus appear that not only is there evidence of scientific life among the societies of Dublin, but that there is also an abundant opportunity for the publication of any really valuable scientific information, and so far at least as the publications of the Irish Academy are concerned they fall in no respect as regards type, paper, or illustrations, behind the best of our London societies.

JOHN DUNCAN

ALONG with a cheque for 5*l.* to John Duncan, whose story was told by Mr. W. Jolly in NATURE of January 20, we have received the following note from Mr. W. Westgarth:—

January 27, 1881

DEAR SIR,—On reading the account of John Duncan in your last week's issue, it occurred to me that surely your readers would respond to your invitation to get up a small fund, say of 100*l.* to 200*l.*, for the brave old man who has so long and perseveringly fought, and against all "odds," for the cause of science and mind. I enclose 5*l.* towards the object. Should you see objections to opening a list in NATURE, please send on my small dole to Mr. Jolly as he directs.

W. WESTGARTH

We have the greatest pleasure in acting upon Mr. Westgarth's hint, and we trust that many of our readers will be prompt to follow his good example. Subscriptions addressed to the Editor of NATURE, 30, Bedford Street, Covent Garden, W.C., will be duly forwarded. We have already received the following:—

	£	s.	d.
W. Westgarth	5	0	0
Publishers of NATURE	5	5	0
F.R.S.	0	10	0
Mrs. Forster	1	0	0

CASSELL'S NATURAL HISTORY¹

THE third volume of this useful cyclopædia of zoology consists of the concluding portion of the Birds by R. Bowdler Sharpe, and of the Reptiles and Amphibia by the Editor. On glancing over the well-printed and beautifully-illustrated pages, a few facts have struck us, to which, for the benefit of the series, we would call the editor's attention. In the opening sentence of Chapter I. of this volume we are referred to "the preceding chapters" for an account of the Picarian birds. The context proves it should be to the preceding volume. This, which might mislead the reader, is evidently the result of the publication of the work in parts, and could be easily avoided.

All through Mr. Sharpe's portion of the work, when the scientific names of birds are referred to they are

¹ "Cassell's Natural History." Edited by Prof. P. Martin Duncan, M.B., F.R.S. Vol. III. (London, Paris, and New York: Cassell, Petter, Galpin, and Co., 1880.)

quoted generally within brackets in the same line as the popular name; while in the editor's special portion no such useful uniformity is attended to. Sometimes, as on p. 245, the eye has to wander from the text to foot-notes at the bottom of the page; sometimes, as at p. 248, the name is quoted after Mr. Sharpe's fashion (for a mixture of both styles see p. 362). The use of the word "kind," when the editor refers to "species," is in our judgment, though perhaps sanctioned by its use in the English translation of the Bible, not happy. Thus we read that, while genera among the reptiles are abundant, "kinds" are numerous. The "kinds" of some families swim freely; some "kinds" have a skin; by the way, what kind of a reptile be it that has no skin? In other cases the word "member" instead of species is used. Is it not a mistake to say that in many Chelonians "the well-known 'tortoise-shell' covers over all the hind parts." Surely in *Caretta squamosa* the tortoise-shell plates cover over most of the carapace. While the families of the Chelonian order are given, we find, when we come to the Lacertine order, no intelligible mention of the families of the split-tongued lizards. In referring to the important paper on Archæopteryx by the Professor of Geneva, the editor ought to have seen that the name of Carl Vogt was correctly spelled. The divisions of the Snakes is such as must necessarily confuse any student. The sub-order Thanatophidia is made to include two sub-orders in the text, when in the table of classification one of these sub-orders, Solenoglypha, is called a family. The groove-fanged Opisthoglypha are included with the Aglyphodontia with solid teeth. In a work of this nature nothing is, we take it, of more importance than that there should be some well-defined system of classification, not necessarily to be treated of in full detail, but as far as is possible to be rigidly adhered to. That this is possible, a glance over the sections of this and the previous volume treating of Birds will abundantly demonstrate; and that this is practicable, even with an extreme compression of space, is also to be proved by an appeal to the way in which the eighth order of Birds is managed, where, though only three pages were allowed to this most interesting and important of orders, yet we are even in these few lines enabled to get an idea of the orderly sequence of its families. This work is in many ways so excellent, that we venture on these criticisms with the object of trying to keep it up to a fairly good standard, and of making it useful in some measure as a work of reference.

As specimens of the excellent illustrations in this volume we have, through the courtesy of the publishers, the opportunity of presenting to our readers the two following. The Common Quail (*Coturnix dactylisonans*) visits Europe in the summer, when prodigious numbers are trapped and sold for purposes of food. Waterton mentions that 17,000 specimens were brought to Rome in one day. They are to be found in large quantities on the coasts of the Mediterranean, and so abundant are they in the beautiful Island of Capri, that it is said that it was from this source that the bishops in the olden times derived a large part of their wealth. The Quail is most rapid in its flight, and performs long and fatiguing journeys. Sunset is its time for active exertion; during the day it remains quite quiet, reserving its energies for the evening, when it goes off in quest of food.

Their favourite nourishment is insects, but at times they feed on grain and seeds; small stones are also swallowed to facilitate digestion. The habits of the quail are most unamiable and unsocial, and generally, when they meet with one of their own species, they display a very pugnacious disposition. The female has a much better nature; she is a most excellent mother, even protecting young birds who have been deprived of their parents' care. She builds her nest of small portions of plants, and lays eight to fourteen eggs; these are pear-