

It is not proposed to enter into any detailed criticism of this volume. Some idea of the scope of the work was given in the former notice; we are glad to hear that an English translation is in preparation, and when this appears a further opportunity will be given for a general account of the whole. In point of interest the second volume is fully equal to the first; there is, however, perhaps more room for adverse criticism of certain parts. Speaking quite generally it may be said that while the "biology," or natural history of the subject is admirable, the morphology is on the whole rather weak. The former, however, is the more important for the general reader, for whom the book is intended.

The account of reproduction begins with the asexual organs of propagation, including spores, buds, and gemmæ. This is succeeded by the much more extensive section on reproduction by fruits, including all sexual processes. The great value of this part lies in the extremely full, and in many respects original, treatment of the fascinating subject of the pollination of flowering plants, to which nearly 300 pages are devoted. Special stress is laid here on the phenomena of *geitonogamy*, or the crossing of different flowers on the same inflorescence, and of *autogamy*, or self-fertilisation of hermaphrodite flowers. The whole account is of the greatest possible interest, and familiar as the subject has now become, innumerable fresh points of view are opened up.

The second part of the volume is on the history of species, including the whole subject of variation. Changes produced by external agencies, such as parasitic fungi, and gall-forming insects, form the subjects of special sections.

As regards the origin of new species, the author, like Prof. Weismann, attributes the greatest importance to sexual reproduction, and especially to cross-fertilisation. He occupies a peculiar position in so far as he believes that hybridisation has played an important part in nature as a source of new forms.

This second part of vol. ii. includes classification, and a fairly full account is given of all the important groups of plants, each cohort, or "Stamm," receiving separate treatment.

Sections on the distribution of species, and on their extinction, conclude the book.

A really good index is added, which will be a great boon to all who wish to make use of the vast store of facts which the book contains. The illustrations, consisting of twenty coloured plates and 1547 figures in the text, reach the same high standard as those of the previous volume.

To the book as a whole the highest praise must be given. No such popular account of the natural history of plants has appeared before. The publication of an English version will be anticipated with great interest.

D. H. S.

*Bibliografia Medica Italiana.* By P. Giacosa, Prof. straordinario di Materia Medica e Chimica fisiologica all'Università di Torino. (Torino-Roma: L. Roux e C., 1893.)

THIS work is a collection of abstracts of the chief papers bearing on the medical sciences published by various Italian authors during the year 1892. Prof. Giacosa has been aided in his work by several experts, whose names are a sufficient guarantee for the accuracy of the abstracts, such as Profs. Marcassi of Palermo, Maggiora of Modena, and Sperino of Torino. The medical reading public is familiar with the excellent *Jahrbücher* and *Centralblätter* published in Germany, which deals chiefly, though not exclusively, with scientific papers by German authors. There has been a great want of similar publications of Italian work, and Prof. Giacosa's "Bibliografia" is a welcome addition to medical literature. In it will be found abstracts of all the chief Italian papers published

in 1892 on parasites and helminthology (zoology), physiology, biological chemistry, pharmacology, histology, human and pathological anatomy, bacteriology and hygiene. The abstracts are done by experts in the particular subject, are short but clear and intelligible, and have the advantage of not being critical.

*The Evolution of Decorative Art.* By Henry Balfour, M.A., F.Z.S. (London: Percival and Co., 1893.)

It is remarkable that in these days, when the question of "origins" holds a place of commanding importance in almost every department of investigation, comparatively little should have been done to trace the evolution of art back to what Mr. Balfour calls "its very simplest beginning." Mr. Balfour does not, of course, undertake to present in this small book anything like a complete view of the subject. His aim is merely to indicate some of the main conclusions to which he has been led by his own researches. He finds in early art three distinct stages—(1) adaptive; the appreciation of curious or decorative effects occurring in nature or as accidents in manufacture, and the slight increasing of the same by artificial means in order to augment their peculiar character or enhance their value as ornaments; (2) creative; the artificial production of similar effects where these do not occur (imitation or copying); (3) variative; gradual metamorphosis of designs by unconscious and conscious variation. Mr. Balfour brings out admirably the significance of these stages, and it is scarcely necessary to say that the Pitt Rivers collection, of which he is curator, provides him with ample means for the clear and effective exposition and illustration of his ideas.

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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#### Palæontological Discovery in Australia.

MANY readers of NATURE will learn with interest that I have this day received a telegram from Prof. Stirling, of the University of Adelaide, as follows:—

"Made discovery immense deposit fossil remains excavated several nearly complete skeletons Diprotodon besides two thousand bones also large Struthious bird giant Wombat particulars letter."

I need scarcely add that I shall await with impatience the promised particulars of this discovery, which may prove to be one of great importance.

ALFRED NEWTON.  
Magdalene College, Cambridge, April 21.

#### An International Zoological Record.

IT is much to be regretted that the praiseworthy agitation of this subject, opened by Mr. Minchin (NATURE, vol. xvi, p. 367), has not been continued. There cannot be the slightest doubt of the desirability of such a reform. Possibly the reason why the letters of Mr. Minchin and Mr. Bathers (*ib.* p. 416) have not aroused more interest lies in the fact that they both wrote as recorders. They showed the absurd burdens that the actual system imposes upon the recorders; but they left somewhat in the background the advantages which the great world of zoologists could receive.

However this may be, it is certain that the rank and file of investigators of the present day are supporting an utterly unnecessary burden, and one from which they ardently desire to be freed. Any one who desires to test the sentiment has only to make inquiries among those of his acquaintance. Having myself agitated in this quiet way a method of reform that had occurred to me nearly two years ago, I can hardly doubt that the concurrence of opinion is strong enough to effect a radical change, if only concerted action can be taken.

Mr. Minchin and Mr. Bathers have pointed out that the