

observers are agreed, viz. that they have much more power in their households than is generally supposed, and that their status is universally recognised by all heads of families who desire to lead quiet lives. Mr. Parker quotes the case of a Captain Ch'ên as an illustration of common official domestic affairs.

"He" (Captain Ch'ên) "had a wife—*passée* of course—who ruled the roast in that watchful and relentless way in which capable French women *d'un certain âge* rule a busy café. Captain Ch'ên bought, sold, and exchanged concubines freely, this freedom evidently being the common basis upon which agreeable terms had been made between himself and his wife. . . . Like a sensible man, he always showed formal respect to his wife; and, although he never took her to the various forts, camps, and war junks in or on which he was from time to time employed for months at a stretch, he always consulted her; left the purse strings in her charge; and gave her feminine command over all the concubines and 'slaveys' not actually with him."

Mr. Parker evidently has the gift of tongues, and finds it equally easy to communicate with the natives of Peking, the Hakka people of Canton, and the speakers of half a dozen or more dialects throughout the Empire. In the present work we have the results of this polyglot ability, and in a succession of short chapters, or notes, he throws countless side-lights on the kaleidoscopic aspects of the Chinese question and the social life of the people.

#### OUR BOOK SHELF.

*The Home-Life of Wild Birds.* By F. H. Herrick. Pp. xix + 148. (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1901.) Price 10s. 6d. net.

IN this attractive and beautifully illustrated volume the author lays claim to having invented a new method of studying and photographing birds in their native haunts; and he is certainly to be congratulated on the success of his efforts. Although his method of working is somewhat different, Mr. Herrick may be said to have done for some of the commoner birds of North America what has been effected by the Messrs. Kearton for those of Britain; and higher praise than this it would be difficult to bestow. To the English reader the book will be especially welcome, as throwing a flood of light on the habits of species with which he is necessarily unfamiliar. Among the most successful of the author's efforts are his photographs of cedar-birds, or waxwings, with their nests and young, which illustrate in full detail the mode in which the nestlings are fed and tended by their parents, and the curious postures assumed by the latter in the course of their duties. The attention devoted by these birds to their offspring is well indicated in the following passage, where it is stated that, on one occasion, "with half-spread wings and with back to the sun the mother protected her little ones for a full hour from the broiling sun, while her mate came repeatedly and handed out the cherries."

Instead of photographing from a long distance, or with a camera placed near the nest and worked by the observer from a distance by means of a string, the plan adopted by the author is to bring the nest and its surroundings within a short distance of the observer, who is himself concealed. If the nest be situated on a branch at a considerable height from the ground, the bough is carefully cut off and fixed, with the nest, in its natural position near the ground in a good light. If, on the other hand, the nesting site be a tussock of grass in thick coppice, the whole mass is dug out and transplanted to the open. The photographer takes his station in a green tent, through a hole in the canvas of which the camera can be brought to bear on the nest and its surroundings. When the nest is in a situation to which the tent can be brought

near, and where the light is good, its natural position is not interfered with, and only such boughs as obstruct the view are cut away.

It might be thought that the removal of a nest and its surroundings from a height of 40 feet to within a yard or so of the ground, or from the shade of a dense coppice to the glare of sunlight, would seriously disturb the parent birds. This, however, according to the author is not the case if proper precautions be taken. "No injury," writes Mr. Herrick, "is wrought upon old or young. The former nesting conditions are soon forgotten, while the new are quickly adopted and defended with all the boldness of which birds are capable."

The method is at present only in its infancy, but by its aid we may hope in time to have permanent records of the complete life-history of a large number of birds during their nesting-seasons.

R. L.

*Finishing the Negative.* Edited by George E. Brown, F.I.C. Pp. 160. (London: Dawbarn and Ward, Ltd., 1901.)

ALTHOUGH there are many very excellent handbooks on photography in general, there are few which give so much useful and necessary information regarding the treatment of the photographic plate after the negative has been obtained. Many amateurs consider the negative ready for printing after a few spots have been obliterated and perhaps a small retouch here and there; but a glance at this book gives one the idea that the negative is by no means ready for printing, but may be improved (in the case of beginners probably not) by many of the numerous hints here brought together. The separate chapters of this book are devoted to the manipulations of drying, hardening, clearing and removing stains, different methods of intensification and reduction, softening and increasing contrasts, varnishing, stripping, retouching portrait negatives, handwork on back and front of negative, spotting and blocking out, and many other aids to producing a "perfect" picture, concluding with special hints for applying the above processes to the working of celluloid and stripping films.

The editor of the book tells us that in many of the chapters he has had the able help of several workers in these special lines of work, so that the reader will find the hints both practical and instructive.

The book will certainly fill a gap as regards the special branches to which it is devoted, and the many well-chosen illustrations considerably aid the text in showing the reader the "before" and "after" stages of many of the manipulations described.

*Text-book of Elementary Botany.* By Charlotte L. Laurie. Pp. ix + 142. (London: Allman and Son, Ltd., n.d.) Price 2s. 6d.

THIS little book supplies the information required for such examinations as the junior Oxford and Cambridge, and is specially adapted to a school curriculum. Despite some defects which are mentioned below, the author is to be congratulated on having written an elementary botany which shows some new features and by its character and conciseness avoids the dull level of most similar works. There is much that calls for favourable comment. The language is simple, and technical words are slipped in easily with derivation or other simple explanation; the illustrations are original, for the most part extremely good and well reproduced, and throughout the book an admirable balance is maintained—no easy matter when the compass is so small. There are three parts to the book, dealing with morphology, classification and physiology respectively. Very wisely, no attempt is made to treat of internal anatomy, so that all exercises can be worked out with the lens and scalpel. In the morphological part, useful summaries pick out at intervals the main data for description or comparison; also numerous ecological references are worked in. One must