

THE ZOOLOGICAL RECORD.

The Zoological Record, Volume the Fortieth; Relating Chiefly to the Year 1903. Edited by D. Sharp. (London: The Zoological Society, 1904.) Price 30s.

YEAR by year this invaluable publication appears with commendable regularity, and year by year its bulk steadily increases, the bulk of the present issue being nearly double that of its predecessor of forty years ago. Hitherto the subscribers have yearly obtained more for their money, but there are limits beyond which even the generosity of a great scientific society cannot go, and it has consequently been decided, although with reluctance, that in future the price of the annual volume must be increased. The bulk of the present volume has been somewhat diminished by printing it on thinner paper than its predecessors; and, although this innovation may have been unavoidable in order to bring the weight within the limits laid down by the Post Office for transmission abroad, it cannot be said to be altogether an improvement, as in places the type shows through in a decidedly obtrusive manner.

Whether such a radical alteration was really inevitable may perhaps be doubtful, for it is quite evident that a large amount of space might be saved if a uniform plan were adopted throughout the work. For instance, in the section on mammals 385 titles are recorded and their subjects epitomised in a space of forty-two pages, whereas in the section on echinoderms no less than 105 pages are taken up in dealing with 339 papers.

If such prolixity is necessary in the one case, it is equally essential in the other; and, conversely, if the brief mode of treatment will suffice in one instance, it should be adopted in the other. Much space might also be gained, without any loss, in the sections on reptiles and fishes, as well as in certain others.

This lack of uniformity in treatment is, in our opinion, the one point in which this "Record" compares unfavourably with the one issued by the committee of the "International Scientific Record"; and it is high time that it was amended. Surely the editor is strong enough to keep his contributors in hand, and to make them do the work his way and not their own. As an instance of this slackness of the guiding hand we may refer to the fact that in one of the sections the recorder has been allowed to adopt the spelling *Meiocene* and *Pleiocene*, which is both wrong (on the supposition that we form our scientific names through the Latin) and pedantic. If any alteration in orthography of this nature were permitted, it should be the substitution of *Pleistocene* for *Pleistocene*; but if such a change were made it should run through the entire volume.

The comparatively early date at which many of the sections are now sent to press renders it impossible to include so many of the papers for the year to which they specially refer as was formerly the case, but this is a matter of no great moment, so long as such papers make their appearance in the volume for the following year.

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Mistakes and omissions there must of course be; but these seem to be few and far between. We notice, however, in the mammal part that *Condylarthra* has been put in place of *Amblypoda*, while in the concluding paragraph of the first page of his introduction to the insects the editor is guilty of a blunder which should cause him to be lenient to the shortcomings of his contributors. Whether he can escape blame for errors like the omission of a reference number in the penultimate line of p. 21 of the mammal part may, however, be open to question.

Taken all in all, the volume is a marvellous production, both as regards accuracy, fulness, and the comparatively early date of its appearance; and the editor and his staff are entitled to the best thanks of the zoological world. When we have said that the "Zoological Record" still stands without a rival, we have said sufficient.

R. L.

OUR BOOK SHELF.

A Synonymic Catalogue of Orthoptera. By W. F. Kirby. Vol. i. Orthoptera Euplexoptera, Cursoria, et Gressoria. (Forficulidæ, Hemimeridæ, Blattidæ, Mantidæ, Phasmidæ.) Pp. x + 501. (London: the Trustees of the British Museum, 1904.)

THE value of such a general synonymic catalogue as this work is obvious, but the increased interest which has been taken in Orthoptera in recent years, and the rapidly accumulating mass of literature, has made a complete and systematic catalogue of this order an urgent necessity. The work is upon the same model as the author's previous catalogue of dragon-flies. The species are numbered, though no particular order appears to have been followed; the distribution is given in the margin, and synonymy is attached, although a complete list of references is not given in every case. One of the most prominent features of the list is the conscientious manner in which the author refuses to admit as synonymous such names as to the absolute identity of which he is not personally convinced, resulting in an apparent multiplication of species. Thus, on pp. 30 and 31, we find *Spongiphora parallela*, *S. therminieri*, *S. dysoni*, and *S. croceipennis* all entered as separate species, though nowadays there are few who doubt their identity, and fewer still who can discriminate between them. Again, on p. 2, *Diplatys gerstaeckeri* and *D. longisetosa* are regarded as separate, although it is impossible to distinguish them. To such an extent does the author carry this principle, that he admits names published with figures only, such as *Pygidicrana huegeli*, Sharp, and even *Ancistrogaster petropolis*, Wood, based upon a reference and an illustration in a popular work. But yet he relegates *Psalis indica*, Hagenb., var. *minor*, Borm., as a synonym of *P. guttata*, Borm., although the describer insisted upon the extreme variability of the older known species. But questions of nomenclature and classification are of necessity controversial; many may disagree with the author's arrangement of the genus *Labidura*, in which a number of insufficiently described so-called species are regarded as valid, only on account of the difficulty of proving their identity with the excessively variable and universally distributed *Labidura riparia*, Pallas.

Otherwise, changes of well-known names are few. We are glad to see *Blatta* retained, at the expense of *Stylopyga* for *orientalis* and not for *germanica*.