

News and Views

Wilhelm Junk

WILHELM JUNK, the well-known publisher of natural history books, will be seventy years of age on February 3. He was born in Prague on February 3, 1866, and comes from a family with strong leanings towards natural history, which had been living there for centuries. Since his youth he has combined successfully his work as an antiquary and publisher with his inherited inclination towards the descriptive side of natural science. The "Coleopterorum Catalogus" of which, since 1910, 145 parts have appeared; the "Lepidopterorum Catalogus" which, begun one year later, contains 70 parts up to the present; the "Fossilium Catalogus", divided in two sections—animals and plants—of which 90 parts have appeared; the "Animalium Cavernarum Catalogus" accompanied by a number of valuable catalogues; then the standard work, unique in the province of biology, namely, the "Tabulæ Biologicae", containing tables of data dealing with biology which, through being continuously supplemented by the "Tabulæ Biologicae Periodicae", keep abreast with the latest development of science, are among the works he has published. The untiring services which Junk has rendered to scientific activities have been rewarded by the granting of honorary doctorates by the Universities of Frankfurt-on-Main and Innsbruck, and he has been elected an honorary member of the Svenska Linné Sällskapet in Stockholm. Junk is continuing unabated his activities as a publisher, and is planning the publication of new works, among them the large edition of the "Hymenopterorum Catalogus" and the supplementary volumes to Oppenheimer's "Fermente".

The National Geographic Magazine

AN article in the January issue of the *National Geographic Magazine*, which begins the sixty-ninth volume, records the remarkable growth of interest in the publication and its widespread circulation. Nominally the organ of the National Geographic Society of Washington, U.S.A., the magazine began as a slim brochure in 1889, a year after the Society was founded. A membership role of 165 increased to 1,000 by 1899, but efforts to improve the circulation met with little success. Most of the members were in Washington, where the Society provided lectures: few were outside and practically none overseas. The Society was poor and had no premises of its own. Then in 1900, Mr. G. Grosvenor became the editor, a position which he still occupies. This marked a new era in the destinies of the Society and its magazine. Henceforth, instead of the Society supporting the magazine, the position was reversed and the continually expanding circulation of the magazine has brought large revenues to the Society, which has employed them in financing many

important expeditions, of which the most recent was that of Capt. A. W. Stevens to the stratosphere. Mr. Grosvenor set a new standard for the magazine in width of interest, authoritative articles, topical matter and, above all, abundance of fine and often unique illustrations. To that has been added in recent years natural colour photographs in every issue and the frequent addition to the black and white maps in the letterpress of large supplementary coloured maps.

THE National Geographic Society is now housed in a large block of buildings in Washington, where there is stored its library of a quarter of a million photographs from every part of the world, including many taken by its own staff photographers. Every issue of the magazine contains pictures of exceptional value and in numbers unequalled in any similar publication. Many of the issues include articles on birds, mammals and marine life. The circulation of the magazine has now reached more than a million copies a month, and may well be said to be world-wide. Naturally, most of the members, for every subscriber is a member of the Society, are resident in the United States, but a hundred and fifty thousand members live outside the United States. Great Britain and Ireland have more than forty thousand. India has more than two thousand and China nearly as many. It would be difficult to find a country where the magazine does not circulate. Thus Afghanistan, Arabia, Liberia, Basutoland, Iceland and the Solomon Islands may be cited as lands that each have more than a dozen subscribers. Even the New Hebrides, Norfolk Island and Siberia figure among the list of members. The Society deserves to be congratulated on its wonderful achievement.

The Curvature of the Earth

ON the occasion of his ascent to the stratosphere above Dakota in November 1935, Capt. A. W. Stevens took a number of photographs of great interest. The National Geographic Society, which organised the balloon ascent, directs particular attention to one of these photographs which was taken at a height of 72,395 ft. This picture, which covers 33,000 sq. miles, includes a stretch of horizon 220 miles in length taken at a distance of approximately three hundred miles. A stratum of haze lies above the horizon, but the curve of the horizon can be noted when the picture is projected on a screen, or, more clearly, when a ruler is laid across the picture. The photograph is not yet published, but the *National Geographic Magazine* of January, which contains a long account of the flight by Capt. A. W. Stevens, contains an earlier photograph taken by him in the Andes from a height of 21,000 ft. which also shows the curvature of the horizon.