

Dr. Menzbier. As already stated (*Auk*, Vol. V, p. 447), the work will comprise six large quarto volumes, with about eighty colored plates. Volume I will consist of a biography of Sewertzow, a list of the birds of his collection, and a general summary of the fauna of Turkestan, the remaining five volumes treating in detail of the birds in systematic order, beginning with the Birds of Prey.

The first livraison of Volume II contains the Vultures and Eagles, sixteen species of which are treated, the text ranging from four to twelve pages to each.

A very full citation of bibliographical references is followed by detailed descriptions of the various phases of plumage each species presents, while much space is given to the geographical distribution of each and to biographical observations.—J. A. A.

**Nehrling's Bird Biographies.\***—Final judgment upon this notable undertaking must be deferred until the completion of the work. At present, we can form a tolerably clear opinion of what it will be, if the promise of the prospectus is fulfilled. The early parts, which came to hand some months ago, fully sustain the publisher's announcement, and we shall watch with interested attention the progress of an enterprise which commends itself to all true lovers of bird-life. We see no reason why Mr. Nehrling should not re-gather the lines which dropped from this hand twelve years ago, and weave them into a useful, attractive and enduring fabric.

Mr. Nehrling's name is not a new one in ornithological literature, though perhaps better known to the German than to the American public as a writer on American birds. Many sketches and some more formal bird biographies of his have already appeared in German periodicals, showing him to be a careful and faithful observer, a competent author, and above all a feeling writer, in full touch with the spirit of the beautiful airy beings whose lives he portrays. The present writer has spent too many years in the technicalities and formalities of ornithology to be misunderstood as depreciating the value of such tough fibre in the development of our science. Yet there is a 'height beyond,' which the ornithologist must reach before he can understand any bird, no matter how intricate and consummate may be his knowledge of the partialities, peculiarities and particularities of many birds. Wilson and Nuttall and Audubon each reached that height; so did Michelet and Thoreau; so have John Burroughs, W. L. Shoemaker and Wilson Flagg; all told the story from a keen ether, above the clouds of synonymy and diagnoses; while Nehrling follows, at no appreciable interval.

Only those who are in the secret will realize how high is the praise we

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\**North American Birds*. By H. Nehrling. 4to. Pub. in parts, paper, 40 to 48 pp. text in each, with 3 pll. col'd. (Prospectus calling for 12 parts, 36 plates, to be completed in 1890.) Parts I, II, pp. 1-96, and six plates. Milwaukee: Geo. Brumder, 1888. Also published simultaneously in German, *Die Nord-Amerikanische Vogelwelt*, u. s. w., Verlag von Geo. Brumder.



pleasurably seek to give here. "Ideas rule the world absolutely;" but they never rule more effectually or more lastingly than when they appeal to the emotional nature. Sternly rational ideas on which the judgment stamps the seal of approbation are necessary; but they are inert in comparison with the momentum of vivid sentiment, they move nothing, not even themselves; they lack life; they lack the luxury of sentiment, of enthusiasm, of inspiration, of poetry, and consequently have no kinship with man's best consciousness. Therefore it is true that, given the luxuries of life, we can dispense with its necessities.

Mr. Nehrling seems to have a message to deliver. If this be so, and the message he brings be a true one, he will not want for hearers. If we may whisper a word of suggestion, thus early in the course of his study, it would be to keep the technicalities of the subject in the background, wholly subordinated to the main plot. His forte is the life of birds, not their dead bodies, still less their checkered synonyms. A very little such pig-iron will be ballast enough to keep things snug and trim. A terse identifiable description and one select scientific name are all the formality this history needs to stand upon, for the rest let it use wings.

With our author are the fruitful results of much personal experience, thought and feeling, shapen with a living pen. We recall no other one who has written so well in a foreign language. It makes us wish we could follow him with equal ease and pleasure in his mother tongue. For his work enjoys the distinction, perhaps singular in American ornithological literature, of original composition and simultaneous appearance both in English and in German. This argues a faith in his audience which we trust the event will justify when the publisher shall have brought his enterprise to successful conclusion. \* We may then return to the subject. This preliminary notice must be scarcely more than a word of encouragement, commendation and hearty welcome. Were we in more critical or fastidious mood, the plates of the work might feel the prick of the pen, unless we should keep in mind the price at which they are offered to the public.—E. C.

**Minor Ornithological Publications.**—In the last few years the Country has been almost flooded by 'amateur' periodicals devoted to natural history, especially to oölogy. Some of these are the productions of youthful collectors whose good intentions are only equalled by their ignorance. Others are issued largely as advertising mediums by dealers in specimens and 'curiosities.' They contain much matter that is unreliable, owing to inexperience and perhaps occasionally to dishonesty on the part of the writers. There is more which relates to well-known habits of common birds, and though extremely useful to the beginners in ornithology who make up the bulk of the readers, is of no scientific importance. Among all this chaff there are nevertheless here and there items of considerable interest and value which ought not to be overlooked.

One of the best of these journals, **The Sunny South Oölogist**, edited and published by Edwin C. Davis at Gainesville, Texas, although it showed



Nehrling, Henry. 1890. "Nehrling's Bird Biographies." *The Auk* 7, 78–79.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/4067084>.

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