

Reviews.

["Catalogue of the Natural Science and Technical Periodicals in the Libraries in Melbourne," compiled by T. S. Hall, M.A., D.Sc., with the assistance of E. R. Pitt, B.A. (Second edition.) By authority: J. Kemp, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1911.]

THIS small but laborious task has been a labour of love by its collaborateurs. It is a most useful reference, and students and others will not only thank its compilers, but the Hon. W. A. Watt, as Treasurer of Victoria, for authorizing its publication by the Government Printer. Mr. Kemp might, however, have made it a still more easy and ready reference had he used, instead of cumbersome capitals for the principal names, the Clarendon type, of which he possibly has good fonts.

["The Destructive Insects of Victoria." Part V. By C. French, F.L.S., &c.]

IN Part V. of the "Handbook of Destructive Insects of Victoria," recently published, Mr. C. French, as Government Entomologist, carries forward his idea of making the public also acquainted with the value of insectivorous birds. By means of coloured plates and descriptive letter-press, twelve species are here presented. There are among them such well-known birds as White Ibis, Straw-necked Ibis, White-fronted Heron, Bustard, Jackass, Magpie, and Stone-Plover. Argument for complete and consistent protection of all such "friends of the farmer" can never be too frequently or too forcibly put. In Part I. of the "Handbook," issued in 1891, Mr. French began his crusade by a list of insect-eating birds. In Part III. (1900) eight species of insectivorous birds were figured, and their services recorded. Part IV. (1909) contained fourteen species. The plates in Part IV., and in this part now to hand, are printed by a newer method of colour-printing. The bird plates in Part V. are drawn by Messrs. C. C. Brittlebank and L. C. V. Anderson, and reproduced by Messrs. Osboldstone and Co., Melbourne. Price (exclusive of postage), 2s. 6d. Obtainable at any leading bookseller's.

["Birds of the Water, Wood, and Waste." By H. Guthrie-Smith. Whitcombe and Tombs Limited, Little Collins-street, Melbourne. 1911.]

BIRD-LOVERS of the Dominion will welcome this volume, which is of the genus of White's "Natural History of Selborne," inasmuch as it treats of the wild life of a single locality, and comprises the observations of a true naturalist. Here are no discussions about nomenclature. It is a book of field ornithology, evidently written with keen delight, in which every reader is like to share.

Mr. Guthrie-Smith has studied the birds of Tutira to some purpose. Tutira is situated in the northern portion of Hawke's Bay. It is a sheep station, with "natural advantages of barren and waste land." But the lake, which is some miles in length, "may be considered the heart of the run. Round it centres all the station's life; all sheep tracks, roads, and stock routes lead to it." There is a peninsula, and, not far off, limestone ranges. The lake is a haunt of Ducks, Herons, Grebes, Bitterns, and other aquatic birds. The present volume deals with fewer than a score species, a chapter being devoted to each; but the author writes from first-hand knowledge, and the result is that the reader unfamiliar with New Zealand's avifauna learns more than he would from the perusal of a more pretentious and fuller work. The bird biography is, perhaps, the best method of popularizing ornithology. The most interesting chapters are those on the Weka Rail, the Fern-Bird, and the Tui. Mr. Guthrie-Smith has an easy style of writing, although he sometimes offends with such phrases as "happening on" and "dropping on." Here is a pleasant passage relating to the Mountain-Duck:—

"Dipping in summer's heat from the fern-clad downs and terraces of pumice grit, often have I enjoyed the cool damp of his fern-hung gorge, and have paused long to watch him in his solitudes. The little waterfalls dash into diamonds on his slate-blue plumes. He is thoroughly at home on the bubbling champagne pools. Where the swift stream shows each polished pebble clear he can paddle and steer with ease."

There are gleams of humour in the book, and the author writes in the liveliest manner about a pet Pukeko called "Budget," or "Budge" for short, and "Uncle Harry," a tame Pigeon. It would have added to the value of the volume had the scientific names of the different birds mentioned in it been given. Even in a popular work these should be included.

Bearing in mind the great difficulties of obtaining outdoor photo-pictures of birds and their nests, Mr. Guthrie-Smith's records are extremely good. Special mention may be made of the "Pukeko's (Bald-Coot) Nest," "Harrier's Nest," "Falcon Feeding Young," "Pair of Wax-eyes (*Zosterops*) at Nest," "Hen Pigeon and Young," "Warblers," &c. Many of the illustrations are almost duplicates, such as Blue Ducks in river and in pool. Again, river scene with same. Perhaps the numbers of the Pigeon are warranted in view of the "passing" of the Passenger-Pigeon of North America. Some of the subjects are pure landscapes showing several planes, the part of ornithological interest being merely a detail. It is not necessary to fill up the whole plate with a bird study, neither is it wise to make the principal subject too small a part of an illustration. The "happy mean" always scores best. Mr. Guthrie-Smith's pictures have been technically well reproduced in photogravures and half-tone blocks by Messrs. Hood and Co., Middlesbrough, England.