

apply as vigorously as the surgeon the rules of antisepsis and asepsis." We are convinced that while, in an experimental course carried out by students, it is perfectly feasible and of great utility to insist upon rigid antiseptic precautions in such experiments as require it, they not only introduce an unnecessary complication in cases in which the animal is to be sacrificed, but often interfere seriously with, and always distract the attention of the student from the real object of the observation. Further, most of the work on mammals which can and ought to be performed by students is of such a nature that a strict adherence to antiseptic technique throughout the whole experiment is practically impossible. If the argument that "it is a bad discipline to have two styles of operation, since certain details of the antiseptic method will be fatally neglected when one wishes in exceptional cases to apply it," be a sound one, we ought seriously to enquire whether the reckless custom of wearing one sort of dress in summer and another in winter is not very likely to result in a fatal confusion of times and seasons, muslins and mackintoshes, shirt-waists and sealskin coats, and to lead to such awful inversions as ducks in December and ulsters in July, or whether any man who respects his stomach and has a conscientious regard for the interests of his insurance company, can afford to permit his cook to dabble at the same time in the cumulative mysteries of roast and boiled.

G. N. I. S.

The Home Life of Wild Birds. A New Method of the Study and Photography of Birds. By FRANCIS HOBART HERRICK. New York and London, G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1901. Pp. xiii + 148.

In 'The Home Life of Wild Birds,' Francis Hobart Herrick has given us a most valuable treatise and one which is sure to be of the greatest assistance to those who are following the perplexing pastime of bird photography. The author states the truth when he says that animals should be studied as animals and not as if they were human beings. If some others had shared this commendable belief, an enormous amount of trash would be absent from the book shelves and consequently seekers

of truth would be saved a corresponding amount of annoyance. We have no objection to well-written fairy tales, fables, or stories of personified animals, but when an author states or implies that his human thinking and acting animals are truthfully portrayed, and the alleged facts are taken from nature, then we consider he should be most severely criticised.

Taking advantage of that force which for convenience we term parental instinct, Mr. Herrick overcomes the chief difficulty that besets the bird photographer. The method is to remove the nest from its surroundings, whether it be in the tall tree, deep wood, swamp or impenetrable brier patch, and set it up in a good light, so that the branch or other support of the nest will occupy the same relative position as in the old site. It was found that the parent birds soon got used to the new surroundings and attended the young as if nothing unusual had happened. By the aid of a green tent which concealed the operator and outfit, and when in use was open only at a point in line with the lens, the affairs of the little family could be observed with perfect ease at a distance of only a few feet. In this manner the author spent what must have been many happy days in observing the interesting movements that were taking place in and about the nests of the robin, cedarbird, kingbird, chestnut-sided warbler, bluebird, brown thrasher, red-eyed vireo, nighthawk and many other species.

The 137 pages which detail these experiments are full of valuable facts and suggestions and will surely be welcomed by those who care to learn the mysteries of bird life. The numerous photographs which enliven the book, with the exception of a few distorted on account of the nearness of the object, are admirable, and in connection with the text undoubtedly will stimulate many to seek a fascinating recreation so well described and illustrated in this volume.

A. K. F.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE.

THE COAST PRAIRIE OF TEXAS.

THIS physiographic feature, which extends for a distance of nearly four hundred miles, from