lowing this are 'Reflections suggested by the New Theory of Matter,' by Arthur James Balfour; a discussion of 'The Mathematical Physics of the Nineteenth Century,' by Horace Lamb; 'Heredity and Evolution,' by William Bateson; 'The Perception of the Force of Gravity by Plants,' by Francis Darwin; 'The Ethnological Work of Lane Fox,' by Henry Balfour; 'On Mountains and Mankind,' by Douglas W. Freshfield; 'Correlation of Reflexes and the Principle of the Common Path,' by C. S. Sherrington; and 'Invention and Discovery,' by Charles A. Parsons. The number contains the index to Vol. LXV.

*Bird Lore,* for September-October, contains articles on 'President Roosevelt and Bird Protection'; 'A Woodcock at Home,' by E. G. Tabor; 'October Bird Music,' by Earle Stafford; 'King Cole, a Biography,' by Susan M. Morse; the sixth paper on 'The Migration of Warblers,' by W. W. Cooke, and the 'Climatic Variation in Color and Size of Song Sparrows,' by Frank M. Chapman. There are also book reviews and notes, the Audubon Department and an educational leaflet on the 'Screech Owl,' by William Dutcher.

Beginning in January next, a new educational journal, entitled 'The Nature Study Review,' will be published bi-monthly with Dr. M. A. Bigelow, adjunct professor of biology at Teachers College, Columbia University, as managing editor.

## *DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE.*

### THE METRIC SYSTEM.

To the Editor of Science: I wish to object to a statement recently made with regard to the use of old names in countries that have accepted the metric system. It has been said that the common people in continental Europe are not yet fully accustomed to the metric system, and have partly retained the old names in preference to the new ones.

This is absolutely untrue, as far as it refers to Germany. After the official introduction of the metric system in that country, it took a very short time—if not a fortnight, certainly only a few months—to make the 'masses' familiar with it, and about a year after its introduction there was nobody but a few old and decrepit people that had been unable to master it. In fact, there was general rejoicing on account of the riddance from the old and cumbersome system. Indeed, a few of the old words are occasionally used in Germany, but only such that come very close to a metric unit ('Pfund,' 'Maass'), and these are always used in the metric sense, and nobody wants to imply by this that he is opposed to the metric system, or that he is unable to grasp it: it is merely a variety of speech, and distinctly individual or local.

The whole discussion of the metric system carried on recently in Science has been very amusing to the writer, and has furnished stuff for merriment to others. Is it actually the case that the opponents of the metric system believe that the American people are incapable of accomplishing the identical thing that has been done in Germany thirty years ago in a surprisingly short time? Is it actually impossible to obtain correct information about the way it was done there, and about the consequences and incidents connected with this change?

A. E. Ortmann.

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## *SPECIAL ARTICLES.*

### IS MATTER TO BE ABOLISHED?

Of late we have been hearing many intimations that matter has had its day. Formerly matter and its properties engaged the attention of the physicist. Later the ether was discovered, and now we are told that the ether and electrons are all that will be left, when the new discoveries have been fully digested. In connection with these statements I wish to lay down a few propositions which may have been overlooked.

It does not appear that electricity has ever been separated from something that has mass.

The propositions that matter has mass, and that a mass of matter has inertia, seem to me to be fundamentally different from each other.

If the inertia of matter can be accounted for as an electromagnetic phenomenon, it may be measured in new units. Instead of being merely a mass phenomenon, it may be referred