SOCIETIES AND ACADEMIES.

NEW YORK ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, SECTION OF BIOLOGY.

The meeting of October 10 was devoted to reports on summer work by members. In the absence of Professor Underwood, Professor Sumner was elected temporary chairman. The members reported as follows: Professor E. B. Wilson worked at the Naples, Sorbonne and Roscoff laboratories, continuing his studies of germinal localization in mollusks. Professor Bashford Dean attended the zoological congress at Berne and the British Association meeting in Cambridge, and later visited places of scientific interest in France. Professor Bristol worked at the Bermuda Biological Station, of which he was one of the directors. Mr. Yatsu worked at the Tufts College laboratory in Maine. Mr. Kellicott worked at the Cedar Point laboratory, in Ohio, completing his studies of the development of the vascular system of *Ceratodus*. Dr. Dublin continued his studies of germ-cells at the Cold Springs Harbor laboratory. Dr. Townsend superintended the remodeling of the water-supply apparatus at the New York Aquarium. Mr. Bigelow conducted special courses for teachers in the summer school of Columbia University. Professor Sumner directed the laboratories and the biological surveys of the Bureau of Fisheries at Woods Hole.

M. A. Bigelow,
Secretary.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE.

THE EARLIEST MENTION OF FOSSIL FISHES.

For the satisfaction of those interested in verifying a disputed reference of high antiquity, one, too, which possesses the distinction of including the first mention of fossil fishes in literature, it may be profitable to indicate the source of Dr. Emmons's statement in regard to 'Origines,' briefly noticed in two articles that have appeared in Science (Nos. 502, 508) under the caption of 'Variæ Auctoritatis.'

Dr. Emmons has been good enough to inform the writer that the authority upon which he relied for the remarks in question was the abridged translation of von Zittel's 'History of Geology and Paleontology.' The German edition of this work briefly summarizes the opinions of Xenophanes on fossils '*as reported by Origen,*' the learned third-century theologian. But here endeth not the first lesson, since there is no doubt that the lamented paleontologist was mistaken as to the author who has preserved for us the views of the enlightened Eleatic.

None of the writings of Origen contains the fragment of Xenophanes which treats of the nature of fossils, but we must turn for it instead to the '*Philosophumena*' (or 'Refutation of all Heresies,' i., 14) of Hippolytus, Bishop of Portus, a voluminous third century writer, and the first great scholar of the Roman church.* The rescue of this valuable work from oblivion through the discovery of a medieval manuscript at Mt. Athos, its publication at Oxford in 1851 under the guise of a continuation of Origen, and subsequent determination of its true authorship, constitute an interesting chapter in the history of paleography.

The scientific fragments of Xenophanes and various pre-Socratic authors have been conveniently brought together, with copious annotations, in the works of Hermann Diels,† Paul Tannery,‡ Mullach and others, and are briefly discussed in the first volume of Zeller's 'Philosophy of the Greeks.' None of these fragments, however, can compensate the loss of the historical compendium drawn up by Theophrastus, which contained abstracts of the scientific views in vogue prior to the Alexandrian age, and is known to us (save

* Concerning Origen and Hippolytus one may consult Schaff's 'History of the Christian Church,' Vol. II. (New York, 1883). Their writings have been extensively published in this country and abroad.

† 'Doxographi Græci' (Berlin, 1879). *Idem*, 'Die Fragmente der Vor-Sokratiker, Griechisch und Deutsch' (Berlin, 1903).

‡ 'Pour l'Histoire de la Science Hellène, de Thalès à Empédocle' (Paris, 1887). The appendix contains a translation of the important treatise by Theophrastus 'On the Sensations.' Additional references are given in the bibliography of Osborn's excellent conspectus, 'From the Greeks to Darwin' (New York, 1894).