

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).

for the 'Sensations') only through later compilations.

At the risk of appearing tedious in a matter which is by no means of trivial importance, namely, that of accuracy of citation, we may direct attention to the following pertinent comments taken from the introduction to Tannery's work above referred to:

Combien de fois voit-on de nos jours des érudits, et des plus consciencieux, citer telle page et telle ligne d'un volume qu'ils n'ont jamais eu entre leurs mains! C'est la conséquence forcée du système de citations à la mode, et qui, indispensable pour certains ouvrages, n'en est pas moins inutile et, par suite, abusif la plupart du temps. Il y a là un étalage d'érudition aussi facile qu'illusoire; qui s'est donné la peine de vérifier, par exemple, cent citations de suite dans tel ouvrage moderne, même des plus justement renommés, peut savoir seul combien il a chance d'en trouver d'inexactes ou de complètement fausses sur cent autres au hasard.

Then follow these two excellent prescriptions:

(1) Ne jamais citer avec précision un travail sans l'avoir lu intégralement; (2) se borner à l'indispensable, c'est-à-dire aux seuls cas où l'on peut désirer que le lecteur, pour être mieux convaincu, ait effectivement recours à l'ouvrage invoqué.

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POSTSCRIPT.

Through the courtesy of the Editor of SCIENCE it is possible to append a word to the foregoing after proof had already been passed for press. In the issue of SCIENCE for October 21, Dr. Emmons suggests that remarks of mine with reference to him in an earlier article (No. 502) 'seem to flavor of a certain disingenuousness.' This may be construed as implying that the article was contributed subsequently to an exchange of personal letters, in which Dr. Emmons courteously disclosed his authority.

In point of fact this assumption, or implied assumption, is incorrect, my former article having been already in train of publication at the time our correspondence took place. Before it was actually printed there was opportunity to be sure, for certain alterations to be made in the proof, incorporating the later information obtained from Dr. Emmons. But having in the meantime taken pains to verify *his* authority, and finding that

von Zittel too was in error, it seemed best to leave the original text unchanged, and bring up the matter afresh on some future occasion; and had this intention been carried out earlier, it is probable that our esteemed Washington colleague would have no grounds for misapprehension.

C. R. E.

October 22, 1904.

PALÆONTOLOGIA UNIVERSALIS.

THE writer desires to call the attention of American geologists to the fact that this very important work has but 21 subscribers in the United States, while France has 63 and Germany 96. Certainly the geologists and geological libraries of this country are not yet supplied with this publication. Fasciculi I. and II. have been issued; these contain 97 sheets redescribing and refiguring 46 of the old and little known species. It is intended to issue annually from 150 to 160 sheets, treating of about 80 species. The annual subscription price is \$8.00. Subscriptions may be sent to G. E. Stechert, No. 9 East Sixteenth Street, New York City. Those persons or institutions desiring further information regarding this work, with samples of the plates, will be supplied on application to Professor Charles Schuchert, Yale University Museum, New Haven, Conn.

CHARLES SCHUCHERT.

A PROPOSED GEOGRAPHIC DICTIONARY.

THE increase in interest and the clearer understanding of the origin of many topographic features have caused a great increase in the number of what may be called technical topographic terms during the past twenty years. Further travel and study along geographic lines in foreign countries have led to the gradual adoption by us of many foreign topographic terms for various forms of relief. This growing body of terms is at present scattered through a large mass of literature, usually inaccessible to most students. The present writer's experience has shown very clearly the need for some authoritative dictionary of topographic terms which shall bring together not only the less well known terms, but also those which are now in frequent but very loose use. To meet this need he began