

SCIENCE

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WHITMAN'S WORK ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE GROUP OF PIGEONS

THE three volumes containing the work of Professor Charles Otis Whitman on pigeons published by the Carnegie Institution of Washington is a fine memorial to one of the leaders of zoological research in America. In the course of the sixteen years devoted to this work Whitman brought together birds from all parts of the world, bred them, studied their juvenile and adult plumages, and their habits, and made many crosses between different species. When he died in 1910, his extensive and valuable collection of living birds was saved through the devotion and sacrifices, both personal and financial, of Dr. Oscar Riddle, the editor of these posthumous volumes. After that first year of precarious existence, the Carnegie Institution met during the five years following the expenses of maintenance, and during this time the birds, under Dr. Riddle's care, were transferred to the laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor where Whitman's work is being carried forward. Without this support only a fragment of Whitman's results could have been preserved or the birds kept to complete many of the important problems that were at the time of Whitman's death still unfinished. The editing of the work has been admirably done by Dr. Riddle. It is a fortunate circumstance that what was left fell into the hands of one familiar with Whitman's ways of thinking, and thoroughly conversant with the many problems that had grown out of Whitman's studies; for "not more than one fifth of the matter" was in shape for publication when Whitman died.

Volume I. gives Whitman's views and his evidence for orthogenetic evolution. The editor says in the preface, Whitman "has accumulated the most weighty evidence for

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¹ Posthumous words of Charles Otis Whitman. The Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1919.