

ogy. His greatest achievement was in recognizing the importance of the hookworm disease and in carrying out with the aid of the Rockefeller fund wholesale measures for its suppression. Dr. Stiles discovered the American variety of hookworm and made a complete survey of the south. At a result of this work the most severe cases of the disease have been eliminated from this country.

Dr. Stiles in receiving the medal told of the contempt that in his early days was cast upon those who attempted to make utilitarian applications of a science like zoology. But in spite of this attitude of hostility toward applied zoology he decided in 1891 to enter the field. Since then zoology has been of service to public health in many ways and there are great opportunities for the future. For instance typhoid fever is now so well understood that it could be completely eradicated by sufficient effort. Dr. Stiles stated he received the medal not so much as an individual but rather as a representative of the Public Health Service.

Dr. Albert Einstein of Berlin was called upon at the close of the session and replied very briefly in German, saying that he would not then speak, but would try to learn English before his next visit to Washington.

E. E. SLOSSON

#### SCIENCE SERVICE

### THIRD AWARD OF THE DANIEL GIRAUD ELLIOT MEDAL

THE third award of the Daniel Giraud Elliot gold medal, namely, for the year 1919, together with the honorarium, was voted to Robert Ridgway in recognition of the eighth volume of "The Birds of Middle and North America," which appeared in the year 1919. The two previous awards of this medal were to Frank M. Chapman for his "Distribution of Bird-Life in Colombia," which appeared in 1917, and to William Beebe for the first volume of his "Monograph of the Pheasants," which appeared in 1918. Thus for the third time an American ornithologist secures this medal, an award which is open to the zoologists and paleontologists of the world.

In his address as chairman of the Elliot

Medal Committee Professor Osborn spoke as follows:

In undertaking this great work Ridgway was not only placing the crown on his labors of a third of a century, but was giving expression to a plan made by Baird a half century before. Ridgway was therefore doubly inspired when, in 1901, he undertook the stupendous task of preparing a ten-volume treatise on all the birds of the western hemisphere north of South America. With unremitting zeal, and always maintaining the standard of thoroughness and accuracy set by the first volume of the series, he continued his labors until eight volumes have appeared, the last in 1919. Each volume contains about 850 pages, or a total of 6,800 pages in all. Nearly 900 genera are defined and over 3,000 species and subspecies described.

While giving expression to his exceptional powers of analysis and description trained by years of experience and observation, Ridgway has produced a work which in method, comprehensiveness, and accuracy, as well as in volume, has never been surpassed in the annals of ornithology.

It is interesting to add that, like the poet, the ornithologist is born, not made. Remote from museums, libraries, and naturalists, Robert Ridgway was born at Mt. Carmel, Illinois, July 2, 1850. At the age of fourteen we find him trying to identify local birds with the aid of Goldsmith's "Animated Nature" and Goodrich's "Natural History." His first touch with Washington as the great center of ornithological research came through a letter enclosing a colored drawing of the Purple Finch, to which the young ornithologist gave the name "Roseate Grosbeak" (*Loxia rosea*). This letter found its way to the sympathetic hands of Assistant Secretary Spencer F. Baird of the Smithsonian Institution. In Baird Ridgway found a preceptor and friend eminently qualified to guide his special talents. Baird found in Ridgway a pupil who in due time became his worthy successor; and cordial relations then established have continued to bear fruit during the succeeding fifty-seven years.

At the early age of seventeen, that is, in 1867, Ridgway was appointed zoologist of the United States Geological Survey of the 40th Parallel, under Clarence King. Remaining in the employ of the government, he became, in 1880, curator of the Division of Birds in the United States National Museum, a position he still occupies. He was a founder of the American Ornithologists' Union and from 1898 served as its president. A retiring

disposition and close application to his studies have prevented him from taking a prominent part in the activities of natural history organizations, and thereby he has gained time for research which has placed to his credit a greater number of works than has been produced by any other ornithologist. With Baird and Brewer he collaborated in the production of a five-volume quarto on the "Birds of North America." This was followed by his standard "Manual of North American Birds," "Nomenclature of Colors for Naturalists," "Birds of Illinois," and "Color Standards and Color Nomenclature," a work generally accepted by naturalists throughout the world. Meanwhile he had published also some five hundred papers of varying length, and it was not until 1901 that the way was prepared for his *magnum opus*, "The Birds of Middle and North America," the eighth volume of which has won for him the award of the Daniel Giraud Elliot Medal by the National Academy of Sciences.

According to the deed of gift, the award of the Elliot Medal is made "to the author of such paper, essay or other work upon some branch of zoology or palæontology published during the year as in the opinion of the persons, or a majority of the persons, hereinafter appointed to be the judges in that regard, shall be the most meritorious and worthy of honor. . . . As science is not national the medal and diploma and surplus income may be conferred upon naturalists of any country, and as men eminent in their respective lines of scientific research will act as judges, . . . no person acting as such judge shall be deemed on that account ineligible to receive this annual gift, and the medal, diploma and surplus income may in any year be awarded to any one of the judges, if, in the opinion of his associates, he shall, by reason of the excellence of any treatise published by him during the year, be entitled to receive them." Nominations on the work of the year 1920 in zoology and palæontology should be addressed to the Home Secretary of the National Academy of Sciences, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., by whom they will be forwarded to the committee on award.

HENRY FAIRFIELD OSBORN

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY,  
NEW YORK CITY, May 4, 1921

## SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

### THE UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

THE United Engineering Societies have issued a statement in regard to the situation in the United States Patent Office, calling attention to the fact that wholesale resignations are crippling the service to the point of disorganization and are creating conditions that threaten American industrial enterprise and invention. The council, through its Patents Committee, of which Edwin J. Prindle, of New York City, is chairman, reports that the situation has become almost intolerable and quotes the new commissioner of patents, Thomas E. Robertson, as saying that remedial legislation at the present session of Congress is **necessary if results approaching disruption are to be prevented.**

The council appeals for support of pending patent legislation, which provides sufficient increases in salaries to check the exodus of employees from the Patent Office to private employment. In a little over one year, 110 members of the force of examiners, numbering 437, have resigned. During the first three weeks of the Harding administration six highly trained experts left the service to accept salaries two or three times as great elsewhere. In the past year 142 of the 560 clerical workers have resigned. There are thirty clerks in the Patent office who receive only \$60 a month who would get \$1,100 a year under the new salary bill.

Commissioner Robertson is quoted as stating that the Patent Office runs one of the largest ten-cent stores in the world. The enterprise has as its stock about 75,000,000 copies of about 1,500,000 patents, and new patents at the rate of from 600 to 1,000 a week add 50,000 more copies to be taken care of each week. Many patent copies are sold for a dime apiece during the year. There is a stenographic department handling legal work that turned out 13,000,000 words in the past year and brought in \$62,000 revenue.

It is the opinion of the engineering, research and manufacturing associations of the United States that the scientific and industrial interests of the country are being jeopardized by