

vided if we are to keep within measurable distance of the chemists and other groups, who have been more wise than we are. The difficulties can be met and a tremendous impetus given to biology by a cordial, frank and sympathetic study of the problem and by effective and whole-hearted cooperation in carrying out its solution.

American biologists have established a working organization by combining the forces of more than twenty national societies into a single union. With the help of the National Research Council, this union has sought and found financial support for editorial expenses and has assurances from its members of subscriptions to help pay for manufacture and distribution costs. It has made a five-year study of abstracting problems, and through the successful conduct of *Botanical Abstracts*, *Bacteriological Abstracts*, *Endocrinology* and other partial services has developed experience and a trained personnel in this field of bibliography. Through the "Bibliographic Service" of the Wistar Institute the animal biologists of the country have had seven years' experience in the preparation of authors' abstracts. All these things are brought as contributions toward the establishment of what seems to be the most necessary publication agency as yet unprovided.

In return we ask that our fellow-workers abroad join with us in planning and operating a biological abstracting service which will truly represent the world's contributions in all branches of the subject, and which will serve, in the largest measure, to make our bibliographic labors easy and effective. To that end we have invited the appointment of foreign representatives who will work directly with the committee provided by the union and the National Research Council. We sincerely hope our English friends will accept our invitation in the spirit of service which prompts it.

C. E. McCLUNG

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

I HAVE just read with much interest the brief article by Dr. P. Chalmers Mitchell on "Abstracts and the *Zoological Record*," published in *SCIENCE* for January 16.

It has been a great regret to zoologists the world over that the *Zoological Record* has had difficulty in meeting the cost of publication.

The *Record* is indispensable to workers in zoology and discontinuance of, or serious delay in, its publication, would prove a serious handicap.

It is noted that something over £150, a ridiculously small amount, have been contributed by American institutions and individuals to help tide the *Record* over the period of deficit. The California Academy

of Sciences was glad to contribute to this fund. It is hoped that many other institutions will do likewise and thus insure the uninterrupted continuance of this necessary publication.

BARTON WARREN EVERMANN

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

The following resolution was passed unanimously by a thoroughly representative meeting of British zoologists held in the rooms of the Zoological Society of London on January 10:

This meeting of British zoologists is of opinion that it is in the highest degree desirable that an effort should be made to extend the system of publishing comprehensive abstracts of zoological literature, and we desire to place on record our great appreciation of the work that has been done to this end by the American Committee for *Biological Abstracts*.

We are, however, also of opinion that the scheme that has recently been submitted for our approval is open to serious objection in various directions. Only some of these need here be mentioned, *viz.*:

(1) The magnitude of the work involved appears to have been underestimated.

(2) The financial arrangements so far made public are obviously quite inadequate for the purpose, which is a most serious point; it would be folly to assume that any publication of abstracts in pure science can be made self-supporting, and no scheme of this kind should be put into operation until satisfactory arrangements have been made for some permanent endowment.

(3) The proposal to publish the abstracts of the whole of biological literature in a single journal is unsatisfactory; such a journal would be extremely cumbersome and highly inconvenient for all classes of workers. Bearing in mind the probable great increase of literature in the future, a much sounder plan would be to institute separate journals dealing with convenient sections of scientific work.

(4) The abstracts will be very much shorter than those now being published in this country, and this brevity will seriously detract from their value to most workers.

(5) The estimates for indexing are entirely inadequate.

(6) No provision has been made for the utilization or coordination of the various biological abstracting organizations that already exist in this country and deal adequately with several branches of science; apparently it is proposed to reduplicate their work, but in a less useful form.

In the circumstances we consider that this scheme requires drastic revision.

FRANK BALFOUR BROWNE

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

LOUIS AGASSIZ AND "DARWINISM"

SOME persons to whom I have told the following incident have advised me to publish it, but until now

I have refrained from doing so, because I knew of the matter only at second hand, and as I made no notes at the time, I can not quote exactly, but only in substance. I had recently a conversation with Professor A. H. Tuttle, for many years at the University of Virginia, and our discussion led to mention of the position of Louis Agassiz upon evolution. Professor Tuttle in his early years went to Harvard to study with the late Jeffries Wyman, and, one day, as he was talking with the doctor, Tuttle mentioned Agassiz' opposition to the theory. He has kindly written out his recollections of what Wyman said and which he has permitted me to quote.

The following is a statement, as accurately as I can, after repeated and careful effort, recall it, of the incident of which I told you. The words of Agassiz surprised me so much that they were especially impressed on my memory, and I am sure that they are here given substantially as I received them. Of the accuracy with which they were quoted by Wyman no one who ever knew him could have any question.

It was my good fortune to be (1870-72) a student in the laboratory of Jeffries Wyman. He was not only a colleague of Agassiz, but also his neighbor and one of his most intimate friends. In those days "Darwinism" was a very live subject. I had read every thing that Agassiz had published which bore upon it. One day I asked a question about his violent opposition to it of Professor Wyman.

In reply he told me that at first they had discussed the subject quite freely; at the last time it was mentioned, after his statement of some considerations based upon his own personal work then in hand, Professor Agassiz exclaimed:

"Wyman, if I were a comparative anatomist, as you are, I should probably think as you do. But I can not accept this new doctrine consistently with the views that I have already put forth [referring, of course to his 'Essay on classification'] and I do not intend to!"

"After that," added Professor Wyman, "of course neither of us said anything more about it to the other."

In one of my many talks with the late Professor A. S. Packard, who studied for several years with Agassiz and who always remained intimate with him, he told me that Professor Agassiz, in the last year of his life, said (I quote only the substance, not the exact words): "The greatest mistake of my scientific life has been in fighting the theory of evolution. I saw that it was coming for years and my 'Essay on classification' was written largely to forestall it. I believed it all wrong, but now I see that it will prevail."

This, of course, is merely my recollection of a conversation some forty years ago, but it made such an impression on me that I am confident that I have the substance correctly.

J. S. KINGSLEY

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

NEW ORLEANS AND YELLOW FEVER

I NOTICE on page 14 of the November 14 issue of SCIENCE, the last statement began, "About a month ago a case of yellow fever was reported in New Orleans without causing a ripple of interest in the medical profession."

While I fully endorse the sentiment expressed in the entire article, which I know is written in accord with the modern conception of preventive medicine, nevertheless, I thought it advisable to call your attention to the fact that this case of yellow fever was not reported in New Orleans. The patient, a Mexican, passed through New Orleans from Mexico and stopped for about two days. We were advised of the diagnosis of yellow fever eight days after he had left the city and had died in Houston, Texas. Without going into details, I am reliably informed that the U. S. Public Health Service has since considered the diagnosis of yellow fever erroneous.

New Orleans has not had a local case of yellow fever since 1905; a few isolated cases since that time have all been cases coming up through quarantine.

E. L. LECKERT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH,
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

Helmholtz's Treatise on Physiological Optics, translated from the third German edition. Edited by JAMES P. C. SOUTHALL, professor of physics in Columbia University. Published by the Optical Society of America. 1924. Volume I. The Anatomy and Dioptrics of the Eye. (pp. xxiv + 482).

THIS is the first volume of the English translation of Helmholtz's great and original work on physiological optics. It is not merely a reproduction of Helmholtz's own epoch-making treatise on this subject, but it is a translation of the famous third edition published in Germany between 1909 and 1911 long after Helmholtz's death, under the auspices of the late Professor W. Nagel, in collaboration with Professor A. Gullstrand and Professor J. v. Kries. This edition, brought up to date at that time and enriched by the contributions of these new editors, was expanded into a work published in three large volumes, which comprised perhaps more than double the contents of the original. The English edition also contains some additional new material written by Professor Gullstrand and Professor v. Kries, an article by Dr. Christine Ladd-Franklin and various notes and compilations made by the editor and his collaborators. Thus, for example, the first volume on "The Anatomy and Dioptrics of the Eye," which is the special vol-