

## QUOTATIONS

### "NATURE" AND THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

THE idea of a weekly journal of science began in 1868 with discussions between Sir Norman Lockyer, the astronomer and spectroscopist, and his friends, among whom were Alexander Macmillan. Lockyer was assured of the support of T. H. Huxley, Tyndall and practically all the other leading workers in science of the time. Alexander Macmillan enlisted the support of Sir Joseph Hooker and other of his scientific friends; but much of the initial success was due to Alexander Macmillan himself, of whom Sir Norman Lockyer once wrote:

It was in consequence of his sympathy and enthusiastic assistance that the journal started. He was unwavering in his support of the belief that British science would be advanced by a periodical devoted to its interest. . . . It was the hope that a more favorable condition for the advancement of science might be thereby secured that led Mr. Alexander Macmillan to enter warmly into the establishment of *Nature* in 1869.

In this connection we might quote part of a letter written by Alexander Macmillan to Sir William Thomson (afterwards Lord Kelvin):

Lockyer is going to start a weekly Journal of Science, which we are to publish. It is meant to be popular in part, but also sound, and part devoted specifically to scientific men and their intercourse with each other. Huxley, Balfour Stewart, Wilkinson, Tyndall, Roscoe and almost every one who is about London have given him their names, and he very greatly wishes yours, as among those who promise support. May I tell him you consent?

The launching of *Nature* is chronicled in a letter to the Glasgow bookseller, MacLehose, written on November 3, 1869:

*Nature* is to be published on Thursday in London at 2.30. . . . Lockyer was peremptory that our publication day should indicate the point to which our information is brought up. The fallacy of a Saturday publication with a Thursday actual information he does not think right. . . . We start with 18 pp. of advertisements. . . . I think it will look nice.

In the complete context of this letter it is worth noting that Sir Norman Lockyer had an absolutely free hand in reviewing books published by the firm of Macmillan itself, and never hesitated to criticize them adversely if he thought they deserved it. This

absolute and complete freedom of policy has been extended to the editors of *Nature* from that day to this.

In 1919, Sir Richard Gregory succeeded Sir Norman Lockyer in the editorial chair of *Nature*. During his long period of editorship the journal made considerable progress, and its influence in the world of science has gradually become stronger and more secure. To-day it is the leading journal of science. In 1938, Sir Richard Gregory was succeeded jointly by A. J. V. Gale and L. J. F. Brimble. The extent to which *Nature* has now grown, not only in scientific but also sociological influence, must be left to the opinion of its readers.

One thing, however, we think that readers of *Nature* should know is the great debt which they owe to the publishers. *Nature* was initially launched and is still being published almost solely for the advancement of science, in spite of the fact that it is privately owned by a business firm. The present editors feel impelled to put on record their gratitude to the present directors of the House of Macmillan for the entirely free hand given them in guiding the policy of *Nature* and in deciding what shall and what shall not be published. To-day, as much as ever, if *Nature* feels that in the interests of science and culture, any book, whether published by Macmillans or not, should receive adverse criticism, then it gets it. If *Nature* desires to follow a certain policy where science is concerned, whether it be against or in support of other authorities, even the Government, then her policy is pursued relentlessly, yet, we hope, with tolerance. The directors never interfere with policy. Rather do they encourage the journal in all manner of ways, some of which have not received the recognition in the past that they deserved. In fact, it is quite possible that had the former directors not been prepared in the interests of scientific development to publish *Nature* for several decades at a financial loss, *Nature*, as we now know it, might not be in existence.

To-day, financial problems do not exist, and the considerable help given during the present very difficult times (especially of paper shortage and other exigencies of war) by the directors and their staffs certainly relieve the present editors of a considerable amount of care, and thus contribute in no small way towards the advancement of science in general and the success of *Nature* in particular.—*Nature*.

## SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

### ZOOLOGY

*Osteology and Myology of the California River Otter.*  
By EDNA M. FISCHER. Stanford University Press.  
1942. 66 pp. 37 figures. \$1.50.

Here is a brief description of this animal in preparation for a comparative study of the sea otter. It is an offset publication and excellently done.

*The Ivory-billed Woodpecker.* Research Report Num-