Bowdler Sharpe Collection

THE LATE MR EDWARD BLYTH.

DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS death has been busy amongst zoologists; and, following close upon the footsteps of Kaup and Agassiz, another distinguished naturalist has passed away. It would seem that the mortality has been greatest amongst ornithologists, George Gray, Jerdon, and Jules Verreaux having departed in rapid succession; and now Edward Blyth is no more. He died on Dec. 27, somewhat suddenly, at his sister's residence in London, at the age of sixty-two.

We feel sure that all readers of *The Field*, to whom his signature of "Zoophilus" or "Z." has been so long familiar, will hear of his demise with regret. This event demands more than a passing notice at our hands, for there are many who hold that Mr Blyth was the foremost zoologist of the day in point of practical acquaintance with all branches of naturalhi story.

To an excellent acquaintance with geology and botany he added a sound experience of comparative anatomy; but it is chiefly as a writer on the higher classes of vertebrated animals that his name will be handed down to posterity. For forty years his facile pen has contributed articles on all kinds of subjects, and the only drawback to an intimate acquaintance with his writings lies in the fact that they are distributed over a multitule of periodicals, and are therefore often inaccessible to the student

To give some idea of the activity of Mr Byth's mind, we may mention that the Royal Society's catalogue of scientific papers to the year 1863 gives a list of eighty-six articles contributed by him to different periodicals. This of course does not include the great number published by him since that date, notably in the *Ibis*, the Zoological Society's Proceedings, and the columns of *The Field*. His earliest efforts were directed to British ornithology, and many excellent essays, abounding in original observations, were contributed to the *Magazine of Natural History*. In 1836 he published an edition of "White's Selborne," which contrasts favourably with the numerous other editions of that deservedly popular book. In 1840 appeared an edition of Cuvier's "Animal Kingdom," in which the portion relating to mammalia, birds, and reptiles was ably supervised by Mr Blyth.

Shortly after this we find him at Calcutta, where he had been appointed curator of the Asiatic Society's Museum, and where, a few years later, he published two very useful catalogues of the mammals and birds in that collection, and was a frequent contributor to the magazines of India.

In the field of Indian ornithology his old friend Dr Jerdon had been working for many years when Mr Blyth arrived in Calcutta; but there is no doubt that his advent there gave an impetus to zoological study in that country, the fruits of which are becoming more and more apparent every day. A host of well-known names, as Layard, Swinhoe, Hume, Tickell, Tytler, Blanford, and Beavan, could testify their indebtedness to the deceased for the unselfish and ready assistance which he was ever willing to impart. He was an unwearied correspondent; and nothing shows better the respect and esteem in which he was held by his fellow-workers in zoology than the high terms in which on every occasion his name was mentioned by them. As an instance of this we may quote the following remarks of Mr Hume in a recent publication on the ornithology of India:

> This gentleman *made* the Calcutta Museum, and for some twenty years his talents shed a lustre on the Asiatic Society, which its then members did but little to merit. . . . . The name of Blyth the naturalist will be known and respected by men of science for all time throughout the civilised globe.

Before leaving India Mr Blyth had been in failing health, and a visit to Burmah, with a view to re-establish it, enabled him to make many important identifications in regard to the zoology of that country.

For some time previous to his death, he had been engaged in preparing a zoological appendix to a projected work by Sir Arthur Phayre on the history and productions of this comparatively little known country. From the forward state of his manuscript, we trust that ere long it will see the light.

In 1864, Dr. Jerdon completed his work on the "Birds of India," which, though comparatively small, met with a success unparalleled in the annals of ornithology. Upon this work Mr Blyth wrote a most excellent commentary, which was published in the *Ibis* for 1866, and this may be regarded as one of the most important of his essays. Of the numerous articles from his pen which have appeared in our own columns our readers need scarcely be reminded, but in any list which might be given of them special mention should be made of those on the wild types of animals, the horned sheep, the Gruidæ or crane family, and the zoological collections on the Continent. The numerous references to Mr Blyth's writings which appear in "The Descent of Man" testify to the high esteem with which his opinions were regarded by Mr Darwin.

It is only to be regretted that so able a naturalist did not live to give to the world in a collected form the extraordinary fund of information which he had amassed in the course of his active career.