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Membership Conditions in the a O U

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and the wide range offered for quotations on the several topics mentioned. An appendix containing 285 titles referred to by numbers in the text, gives the sources drawn upon. Naturally the same author is cited in many different connections, so that some twenty of the principal sources form the basis of nearly two hundred of the references.

It may seem unkind to say that a careful reading of this very interesting book has suggested a modification of the subtitle, to read, in place of "the bird as he is in life," the bird as the author would have him in life, since none of the bad traits of birds,—it must be admitted that all birds are not wholly angelic, but share with man some of his bad traits as well as all his good ones,— seem to be passed over in silence or with a statement to the effect that the species has been woefully slandered by "sensational writers." Very few birds are really more injurious than beneficial to man, and these are indirectly rather than directly so, through their destruction of other birds of greater use to man than they are themselves. The author's lapses, which are few, are on the side of friendship to the bird, and do not detract materially from the usefulness of her book, which, besides affording pleasant and instructive reading to a host of bird lovers, will exert a much needed influence in behalf of the birds.— J. A. A.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Membership Conditions in the A. O. U.

EDITORS OF 'THE AUK':—

Dear Sirs:— I question the wisdom of the rule or by-law of the A. O. U. which limits the number of "fellows" and the number of "members." It seems to me that this is unjust, unreasonable and un-American from every point of view; though there may be good reasons for it which I do not understand, certainly none have ever come to my notice. It seems to me that when the work of a "member" has reached a certain standard of importance he should be advanced to a "fellow" — this standard, of course, to be judged and determined by the Board of Fellows who elect. From my point of view there are several men in the class of "fellows" whose work, whose renown or whose service to ornithology is far inferior to that of several "members" who cannot be advanced to "fellows" because that class is full, and I ask if there is any justification in a limited class of "fellows" sufficient to offset so unjust and unsatisfactory a condition as this appears to be?

Limiting the class of "members" also works a like injustice. The class of "associate members" is open to anyone who has \$3.00 per annum

to pay. He is not required to know so much as a chickadee from a crow. It is the first step,—in short the primary class of our National Ornithological Association.

Now why should an "associate" be barred from an advance to the "members" class after his services to the cause of Ornithology have become recognized as of some degree of importance sufficient to entitle him to advancement? I doubt if anyone can show but that there are "associate members" just as much entitled to be advanced to "members" as some of those who have received such advancement? Is it a good policy to keep a man years in the "associate" or primary class waiting for a vacancy in the "members" class, and when a vacancy occurs, he or his friends must put up a fight for it and if he wins it is at the expense of some others whose claim to advancement is as good or better than his own? That is why I resigned from the A. O. U. after a six or seven years' membership in the primary grade. I felt that I had been there long enough, yet to be advanced meant that I stood in the way of someone more entitled to it than I.

I would say make the standard of "fellows" and "members" as high as you like but leave room for all who attain it.

Yours very truly,

JOHN LEWIS CHILDS.

Floral Park, N. Y.

July 15th, '08.

[Mr. Childs, in transmitting the above letter for publication, expressed the desire to have it followed by such comment as the editors might wish to make. This gives an opportunity for explanations that may interest others who share Mr. Childs's point of view. He says, very truly, that there are men in the class of Fellows whose services to ornithology are far inferior to those rendered by many who are in the class of Members, a condition of affairs which seems to him as very unjust and unreasonable, though, he adds, there may be good reasons for it which he does not understand.

Mr. Childs objects to a limited membership; but it has long been recognized by societies of all classes — in art, literature and science — that membership is sought for and valued in direct proportion to its numerical limitations. Mr. Childs would have eligibility to Fellows in the A. O. U. determined by a "Board of Fellows," but such eligibility can be determined only by the establishment of a standard, and experience has long shown that a standard can be established *and maintained* only by declaring that certain classes of membership shall not exceed a certain number.

The condition complained of by Mr. Childs had its origin long ago, and is due to contingencies that were not foreseen. The American Ornithologists' Union was organized twenty-five years ago. The tremendous advancement in all departments of science during the last quarter-century is well known, not only in respect to discoveries and methods of work, but in respect to the number and training of those engaged in scientific

research. One unfamiliar with conditions in ornithology in this country twenty-five years ago cannot appreciate the greatness of the change. In consequence of this change the standards of admission to the higher grades of membership, not only in the A. O. U., but in other scientific societies with limited memberships, have also been raised. Twenty-five years ago the number of what would now be considered expert ornithologists was very small, and men who would not now be considered eligible to the present class of Members were accepted readily for the higher grade, being then, without question, among the fifty leading ornithologists of America.

It could not, however, be foreseen that men who were then promising and enthusiastic students of birds would later become absorbed in some other lines of research or that others had practically completed their career as ornithologists.

Aside from the purely honorary grades of membership, the American Ornithologists' Union was originally divided into Members (now Fellows) and Associates, the former limited to fifty, the latter numerically unlimited. Fifty for the former, in which there has always been one or more vacancies, seems still a reasonable limit, if membership in this class is to have any significance. Since then a grade of Members, between Fellows and Associates, has been established, limited to one hundred and, as in the case of Fellows, this limitation carries its implied distinction, a distinction which would be vague or wanting were the number unlimited.

It is hardly just to apply present day standards to conditions that prevailed a quarter of a century ago. Nor is the A. O. U. exceptional in regard to the conditions about which Mr. Childs offers complaint. Exactly the same conditions obtain in our own National Academy of Sciences and in Foreign Academies, where the candidates for membership far exceed (sometimes by 75 per cent.) the vacancies, and greatly excel in scientific attainments many who have long been honored members, and who were the peers of their colleagues when elected.—EDD.]

NOTES AND NEWS.

J. V. BARBOZA DU BOCAGE, an Honorary Member of the American Ornithologists' Union, died recently at his home in Lisbon, at the age of 84 years. For many years he was Professor of Zoölogy in the Royal Polytechnic Institute and Director of the National Zoölogical Museum at Lisbon. He was especially known for his investigations in African ornithology, to which he contributed a long series of papers.

His 'Ornithologie d'Angola,' published in two parts (1877 and 1881) is a work of about 600 pages, with 10 colored plates, and gives a very complete résumé of the avifauna of the Portuguese Possessions in Africa. He also wrote numerous papers on African mammals and reptiles. It is