

*The British Journal Photographic Almanac and Photographer's Daily Companion, 1919.* Edited by George E. Brown. Pp. 644. (London: Henry Greenwood and Co., Ltd., 1918.) Price 1s. 6d. net.

It is very satisfactory that this annual has survived the war, for it is indispensable wherever photography other than mere routine work is actively carried on. The present volume is the fifth issued since August, 1914, and suffers the most severely of all from the restrictions that necessity has imposed upon us. However, even this is a substantial volume, in which none of the main features that we have been led to expect are omitted. The article by the editor is on "Photographic Definitions," and these are arranged according to subject in a series of sections, each of which is a kind of running commentary on the subject of its title. The commercial uncertainty of the present time is shown by the comparatively few prices that are given in the advertisements. The most useful section to the student, the "Epitome of Progress," shows that notable advances have been made in the science of photography, as well as in the prices of materials. We regret that formulæ for the use of metol and glycin as developers are not given. Metol, certainly, is as generally useful as ever it was. Perhaps these were removed because of their "enemy origin," but they have for some time been "British-made," and figure in at least two or three places in the advertisement pages.

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

*[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts intended for this or any other part of NATURE. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]*

##### The Directorship of the Natural History Museum.

THE Director of the British Museum (Natural History) is about to retire, and we learn with deep apprehension that the principal trustees, with whom the appointment rests, have received, or are about to receive, from the general body of trustees a recommendation to pass over the claims of scientific men and to appoint a lay official, who is at present assistant secretary. The former directors, Sir Richard Owen, Sir William Flower, and Sir Ray Lankester, like the present director, Sir Lazarus Fletcher, were all distinguished scientific men. The Natural History Museum is a scientific institution. There is a large staff of scientific keepers and assistants. The director has to represent natural history to the public, to other scientific institutions at home, in the Dominions and Colonies, and in foreign countries, and to the many Government Departments with which the museum has relations. He must represent it with knowledge and authority. There are few posts with such possibilities of advancing the natural history sciences, of making them useful to the nation, and of interpreting them to the public. The existence of the post is a great stimulus to the zeal and ambition of zoologists and geologists.

The arguments alleged in favour of the recommendation are trivial. It is stated that a former director was allowed by the trustees to leave the administrative details to the member of the clerical staff whom it is proposed to promote, that he per-

formed these duties with ability, and during the tenure of the present director retained and extended his powers. It is urged that the tenure of the new director would be short, as he would have to retire in two years under the age limit. It is pleaded that promotion would entitle him to a larger pension, and that he need not be called director, but only acting-director.

Plainly, if the assistant secretary be the only man who knows the details of administration, it is important that the permanent director should be appointed at once, in order to have the opportunity of learning them before taking them over. In actual fact there is nothing in the administrative work of the directorship that could not be learned in a few weeks or months by any person of ordinary intelligence. At least two of the present keepers are eligible for the vacancy, have attained the necessary scientific standing, and have ample experience of the museum itself. To pass over these or several eminent and eligible men not on the staff in favour of one of the ordinary office staff would be an affront to scientific men and of grave detriment to science.

W. BOYD DAWKINS, F.R.S. (Honorary Professor of Geology and Palæontology, Manchester).

J. COSSAR EWART, F.R.S. (Professor of Natural History, Edinburgh).

F. W. GAMBLE, F.R.S. (Professor of Zoology, Birmingham).

J. S. GARDINER, F.R.S. (Professor of Zoology, Cambridge).

WALTER GARSTANG, D.Sc. (Professor of Zoology, Leeds).

E. S. GOODRICH, F.R.S. (Aldrichian Demonstrator of Comparative Anatomy, Oxford).

W. A. HERDMAN, F.R.S. (Foreign Secretary, Royal Society, Professor of Natural History, Liverpool).

S. J. HICKSON, F.R.S. (Professor of Zoology, Manchester).

J. P. HILL, F.R.S. (Jodrell Professor of Zoology, London).

W. E. HOYLE, D.Sc. (Director, National Museum of Wales).

ARTHUR KEITH, F.R.S. (Hunterian Professor and Conservator of the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons).

J. GRAHAM KERR, F.R.S. (Regius Professor of Zoology, Glasgow).

E. W. MACBRIDE, F.R.S. (Professor of Zoology, Imperial College of Science).

W. C. MCINTOSH, F.R.S. (Emeritus Professor of Natural History, St. Andrews).

J. E. MARR, F.R.S. (Woodwardian Professor of Geology, Cambridge).

P. CHALMERS MITCHELL, C.B.E., F.R.S. (Secretary, Zoological Society of London).

E. B. POULTON, F.R.S. (Hope Professor of Zoology, Oxford).

R. C. PUNNETT, F.R.S. (Arthur Balfour Professor of Genetics, Cambridge).

A. C. SEWARD, F.R.S. (Master of Downing College, and Professor of Botany, Cambridge).

A. E. SHIPLEY, F.R.S. (Master of Christ's College and Reader of Zoology, Cambridge).

W. J. SOLLAS, F.R.S. (Professor of Geology, Oxford).

JETHRO J. H. TEALL, F.R.S. (lately Director of the Geological Survey of Great Britain).

J. ARTHUR THOMSON, LL.D. (Professor of Natural History, Aberdeen).

February 27.