So much for this particular case from the bird photographer's point of view; as a more general comment on Mr. Allen's condemnation of Mr. Roosevelt's "inaccurate habit of mind," it will be sufficient to quote, as above suggested, the passages which Mr. Allen instances in support of his accusation. The first occurs on page 156 of the paper referred to, where, in a foot-note, Mr. Roosevelt says:

" Mr. Job's photographs of nesting nighthawks, whip-poor-wills, grouse, quail, woodcock, snipe, and least sandpipers show birds that actually are concealed by their coloration when on their nests. His photographs of nesting gannets, murres, guillemots, black skimmers, ibises, noddies and pelicans, and his and Mr. Finley's photographs of nesting gulls, terns and herons of many species show birds of a strikingly advertising coloration which coloration reveals them to every onlooker as they sit on their nests. The young herons, although not as advertisingly colored as the adults, have a revealing rather than a concealing coloration; the young anhingas are even more advertisingly colored than the adults; the young of some of the other birds seem to be concealingly colored."

The second passage, appears on page 220 of the same paper. Here Mr. Roosevelt writes:

"Take for example the descriptions and photographs of waterbirds by Messrs. Chapman and Job; no one can look at the photos of the black skimmer and stilt on their nests without seeing that even in that critical position their coloration is highly advertising, while the coloration of their young is concealing; no one can look at the photographs of the nesting egrets, anhingas, cormorants and pelicans without seeing that both the adults and the young are exceedingly conspicuous, without a vestige of concealing coloration; no one can look at the photographs of the nesting woodcock, nighthawk, Wilson's snipe, bob-white, and upland plover without seeing that they possess a concealing coloration."

Perhaps the reader can discover in these quotations some evidence of an "inaccurate habit of mind and slap-dash style of thinking," but I confess that I have been unable to do so. To my mind Mr. Allen's whole argument is here based on his assumption that photographs of birds in nature do not represent the birds as they would appear "under average conditions in their natural surroundings," an assumption which I believe will not be supported by an unprejudiced consideration of the recorded evidence.

Very truly yours,

Frank M. Chapman.

American Museum of Natural History,
Dec. 10, 1912.

The A. O. U. Check-List. Third Edition.

Editor of 'The Auk':

Dear Sir: — I beg to submit herewith some comments which I presented before the last meeting of the A. O. U. in regard to the third edition of the Check-List of North American Birds.

It was with eager interest that somewhat over a year ago I opened this volume for the first time, for, although it was my personal opinion that our knowledge of North American subspecies was not nearly complete enough for the preparation of a List that would be in any way permanent I knew that earnest, conscientious work had been done on it by able men, and I was delighted to see the result of their labors. My first impressions were altogether favorable. I liked the general arrangement, the manner in which subspecies were grouped under species and the range given for each, and the statement of the locality from which the type came. The geographical ranges seemed wonderfully complete and I found the accents a correction to many unconscious errors in pronunciation. I was pleased to find the old order retained for its convenience, and to read in the Preface the brave confession of ignorance as to a true classification; for, while such an eminent avian anatomist as Pycraft holds that the earliest birds were small and arboreal, how can we hope to prepare at present a correct phylogenetic tree, since early avian fossils are few and among them we find such specialized large and flightless birds as *Hesperornis* in the Cretaceous and *Gastornis* in the Lower Eocene? So I felt we had an altogether excellent work, which would long be the standard, and for which the Committee of the Union could not receive too much praise.

But as I began the actual use of the book in ornithological work I ran into strange anomalies and omissions that led me to suspect that though the head was undoubtedly gold baser metal might be found elsewhere. And as I read the Sixteenth Supplement, published in 'The Auk' for last July, I was still more puzzled by rulings that seemed strange, and sometimes totally inconsistent with the body of the work. For, having disclaimed responsibility for the classification and given due credit for the geographical distribution, the Committee certainly must be held responsible for the standing of all the species and subspecies recognized in this new edition. In the annual supplement, the authors can be held liable only for the changes made or rejected therein, but certainly state their belief in the correctness of the new edition as a whole by printing it over their signatures.

Musing on these matters as I turned the pages of 'The Auk,' I came to the interesting editorial which requested, it seemed to me, loyalty by the Union to the decisions of the Committee. In the value of loyalty I heartily agree, for without recognition of authority there can be no stability in nomenclature or anything else. But to whom should we be loyal! That was my first thought; for, I confess, the names of the Committee had left my memory. At the head of the article referred to I found them — the foremost American ornithologists, men who have done and are doing immensely valuable work, and to whose opinion on all questions strictly of nomenclature and classification we naturally bow. But is their judgment infallible regarding the recognition of new subspecies? Only two have done much work in this direction within recent years, and of these one is notoriously indifferent to the decisions of the Committee. As the others are certainly competent to do work of this kind, and as most of them have

an abundance of material at their disposal, I am forced to the conclusion that either they are indifferent to the subject or believe that all North American subspecies of value have already been recognized. Neither of these standpoints, I think it must be admitted, is one likely to result in a favorable attitude toward proposed subspecies, though the intention to be just to all cannot be questioned.

Loyalty to ideals or a cause is certainly noble in a nation or an individual, but it must be founded on reason and judgment else it may degenerate to mere servility, and I find many points in both Check-List and Supplement that fail to commend themselves to me. That the recognition of subspecies is of great value anyone who has read Eagle-Clarkes 'Studies in Bird Migration' will readily admit. That their recognition must be partly at least a matter of opinion, and that the Committee often have more material than the original describer is no doubt also true; still I totally fail to see why such a bird as *Creciscus coturniculus* is recognized as a full species and *Dryobates scalaris symplectus* not thought even subspecifically distinct from *Dryobates scalaris cactophilus;* why *Phalacrocorax pelagicus robustus* and *resplendens, Dryobates villosus leucomelas* and *auduboni, Dryobates pubescens medianus* and *nelsoni, Molothrus ater obscurus* and *Ammodramus savannarum floridanus* are considered good subspecies and the characters given for *Molothrus ater artemisiæ* deemed 'too slight.' In the Anatidæ we find *Olor* recognized as a genus on a difference in feathering at the bill that occurs only in the young, and *Charitonetta* on differences of even slighter value, while *Aristonetta, Erionetta, Melanitta* and *Pelionetta*, in which differences in the facial feathering or shape of bill persist through life, are called subgenera.

Nowhere can I find any reference to *Anas platyrhynchos grœnlandica* — a good subspecies and a valuable one, as in range and characters it is somewhat intermediate between the Mallard and Black Duck. From the fact that the Mallard is given only a binomial name I should infer that *A. p. grœnlandica* was not considered good, were it not for the fact that I find such European stragglers to our shores as *Corvus frugilegus, Corvus cornix, Sturnus vulgaris, Hirundo rustica, Chelidonaria urbica* and *Motacilla alba* also given only binomial names, in spite of the fact that subspecies of each are recognized by European ornithologists. That the Committee meant they did not recognize these subspecies, or that, the actual specimens on which the American records were made not being in evidence, they felt themselves unable to determine definitely the proper subspecies was my first impression, though nothing on this point can I find in the book; but by study of the 'Ranges' I discovered the Committee considered the so-called subspecies of these birds were really independent species. For the ranges of *Corvus cornix, Corvus frugilegus, Sturnus vulgaris* and *Chelidonaria urbica* as given in the Check-List practically coincide with the ranges of the subspecies *C. f. frugilegus, S. v. vulgaris* and *C. u. urbica* as given by Hartert, while with *Hirundo rustica* and *Motacilla alba* the ranges include that of *H. r. rustica* and *M. a. alba* with one or more additional races. In the

Check-List the range of *Penthestes cinctus* is given in the Old World as Siberia from the Yenesei River east, while this region is occupied by *P. c. obtectus* according to Hartert, *P. c. cinctus* ranging from northern Scandinavia to western Siberia. *Acanthopneuste borealis* ranges from northern Norway to Kamchatka, while by the Check-List it is confined to "Western Alaska" — a range given by Ridgway for the non-accepted *A. b. kennicotti*, although we find ' Kennicott's Willow Warbler ' as the English name of the bird. On the whole for these species the Committee seem to have followed Sharpe in his Hand-List, and Sharpe was a steadfast binomialist. So we find them believing in binomials as far as European species are concerned and trinomials for American. Yet while these birds are treated with binomials we find another straggler to our shores admitted in the Sixteenth Supplement with a trinomial appellation — *Calliope calliope camtschatkensis*, a form which even such an arch 'splitter' as Hartert deems unworthy of recognition.

Seeking to comprehend just where the Committee stood I turned next to American species that are only stragglers within one borders. Of the species *Spinus notatus*, *Tiaris bicolor*, *Petrochelidon fulva* and *Ceryle torquata* subspecies are generally recognized but they appear as binomials in the Check-List, while with the first three the ranges as given in the Check-List coincide with those given by Ridgway for *S. n. notatus*, *T. b. bicolor*, *P. f. fulva*, and with *C. torquata* the range includes that of the continental form or forms, *C. t. stictipennis* of the West Indies being, apparently, considered a species, which it may well be.

All this led me to study the geographical distribution more closely with the following result. I found that Connecticut had been omitted from the ranges of *Haliæetus leucocephalus alascanus*, *Otocoris alpestris hoyti*, *Agelaius phœniceus fortis*, *Acanthis hornemanni exilipes*, *Acanthis linaria rostrata*, *Seiurus noveboracensis notabilis* and *Hylocichla fuscescens salicicola*, and that *Aluco pratincola* was not known to breed nor *Passerherbulus maritimus maritimus* and *Dumetella carolinensis* to winter there; that the Magdalen Islands were omitted from the range of *Hydrochelidon nigra surinamensis* and *Spizella pusilla pusilla*, and Massachusetts and California from that of *Arenaria interpres interpres;* that *Macrorhamphus griseus griseus* was not known to winter in South Carolina or Texas nor *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus semipalmatus* to yet breed in Nova Scotia; that *Helodromas solitarius solitarius* was not known to occur in British Columbia nor *Ægialitis meloda* to breed in North Carolina; that *Empidonax wrighti* did not occur in Yukon Territory nor *Dendroica pensylvanica* in California that *Butorides virescens virescens* and *Buteo borealis harlani* were unknown in North Dakota and that *Vermivora celata celata* was not there in the breeding season. To find these omissions it was not necessary for me to search through literature, as specimens of practically all these birds are in my own collection and were chiefly obtained by myself during the past thirty years of field-work. Many of these records have appeared in print and those that have not were at the disposal of the Committee, if they had wished

them. If every field-ornithologist can find as many errors in the 'Ranges' I fear that part of the Check-List must be acknowledged to be very incomplete. The only one with whom I have corresponded on the subject, a man of long and intensive field experience and most careful and reliable in his work, writes that very many of the records which he published in 'The Auk' long ago were absolutely disregarded.

One more point and I am done. The European traveler to this country might feel himself quite at home with a portion of the avifauna of our eastern towns till he turned to the Check-List. Then he would find that *Sturnus vulgaris*, entering the Check-List through Greenland, had been introduced and spread rapidly through New England and the Middle States, but that *Passer domesticus* was not recognized as existing, and might think he had made a discovery or was wrong in his identification until he learned that our 'Manuals' and 'Local Lists' told quite another story. This seems to me an unfair discrimination in favor of our later assisted immigrant.

Louis B. Bishop.

New Haven, Conn., November 18, 1912.

[The A. O. U. Committee as well as the membership of the Union should welcome a critical review of the Check-List by someone outside of the Committee or those who were associated with it; and that such an able and conscientious critic as Dr. Bishop can find no more serious faults than those he has set forth, after two years' study of the volume, is a matter for congratulation.

His criticisms fall under three heads:

1. The ever debatable question of which subspecies and genera shall be recognized and which shall not. This matter was so fully discussed by Mr. Joseph Grinnell and the writer in the October number of 'The Auk' that it seems scarcely worth while to revert to it. One point however, should be made clear. Never so far as known to the writer has the Committee of its own initiative opened cases for reconsideration, even when getting out a new edition of the Check-List. The province of the Committee has always been to pass judgment on changes or new forms proposed in published articles, and in authorizing a new edition of the Check-List the Union did not request or expect a revision of the forms already accepted unless their status had been questioned. If Dr. Bishop will formally state his reasons for the rejection of the subspecies to which he seems to take exception the Committee will I know reconsider the question of their recognition.

2. Dr. Bishop criticises the treatment of the English Sparrow and Starling, and of European and Asiatic stragglers which have from time to time occurred within the limits of the Check-List or which occur more or less regularly in Greenland. Here his criticism is well founded. As he correctly states, the specimens upon which the records of the exotic birds were based are, in the majority of cases, not available, and either this fact

should have been stated in the Check-List, or the treatment made uniform throughout. The ranges likewise should have been those of the *species* where the binomial is used. These discrepancies are however, not very serious in the case of these exotic species which some think have no place at all in the main text of the Check-List.

3. As regards geographical distribution Dr. Bishop seems to be just a little hypercritical. The writer undertook the preliminary revision of the ranges and was forced to limit his compilation to such works as Ridgway's 'Birds of North and Middle America,' Chapman's and Mrs. Bailey's 'Handbooks,' Bishop's list in 'The Water Fowl Family' and the latest state lists. The Index to 'The Auk' was not published at the time this work was done, and to have attempted any further research in the time at his disposal would have been impossible. Subsequently, as explained in the preface to the Check-List, Dr. Merriam and his assistants on the Biological Survey revised the ranges with the aid of the extensive records of the Survey. The fact that the writer was engaged upon this work was noticed in 'The Auk' and considerable unpublished data was submitted to him, all of which was utilized. It seems hardly fair however, to charge the Committee with failing to use unpublished material in the possession of individuals, or to search out every record of the casual occurrence of a species. Some at least of the records Dr. Bishop mentions were not published until after the Check-List appeared and the Alaskan Bald Eagle was not even shot until the Check-List was almost entirely in type!

However, it would be an admirable thing if Dr. Bishop's criticism should induce some ornithologist in each State to carefully study the ranges as given in the Check-List and supply any omissions or corrections that may be necessary, for the area with which he is familiar; in order that such material shall be available to the Committee in the future.

The more discussion and the more coöperation in this work the better.

WITMER STONE.]

Destruction of Sapsuckers.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE AUK:

Dear Sir: The Directors of the Massachusetts Audubon Society by letter, and Mr. C. J. Maynard in print,[1] have objected to the recommendation by the Biological Survey of the use of strychnine in destroying sapsuckers, because hummingbirds visit the drills to feed on the sap. I would much appreciate an allowance of space in 'The Auk' for a defense of our position.

In the first place Mr. Maynard apparently has formed his opinion from a perusal of Farmer's Bulletin 506 which contains only a brief abstract of the hundred page bulletin on 'Woodpeckers in relation to trees and wood products.' In that publication it is made clear that the greatest damage done by sapsuckers is not killing trees, but rendering defective the wood

[1] Records of Walks and Talks with Nature, VI. No. 10, Dec. 5, 1912, pp. 34–37