BREHM'S TIERLEBEN¹

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The famous work of Brehm, which first appeared in 1864, has been thoroughly revised and improved by the addition of recently acquired knowledge, under the editorial direction of Professor zur Strassen. It will consist in this—its fourth edition—of thirteen volumes, with about two thousand figures in the text, more than five hundred colored plates, etchings, and wood cuts, and thirteen maps.

The editor's preface gives so much valuable information concerning the new form of the great Natural History of Animals, that we present it herewith in English.

"When the Bibliographic Institute first proposed to me several years ago that I should prepare a new revised edition of Brehm's Tierleben, my first impression was that the revision must be limited to the absolutely necessary changes. For with respect to 'Brehm,' like almost all German zoologists, I have stood since my childhood in a relation of sincere affection, and I half felt that a 'bettering' of the honored and esteemed book in important points was impossible.

"In the revision it has been my primary aim—with the full approval of the publishers—to retain those features to which the 'Tierleben' owes its reputation: the fresh vitality and popular exposition combined, in the happiest manner, with wealth of content. But, on the other hand, it became clear to us that the process of bringing 'Brehm' up to date could not this time be limited to the introduction of new discoveries and the omitting of antiquated material, but that, modification of the general plan in numerous important points was unavoidable. Above all, that the great acquisition of our time, the theory of evolution, must be emphasized more strongly than previously. Even externally, instead of the descending series, that order must be chosen which, beginning with the simplest organisms, leads upward to the highest. In the text, moreover, reference should be made to the descent and blood-relations of animals wherever they may be determined with sufficient certainty. On this account it seemed necessary, to a greater extent than previously, to describe the structure of animals and the functions of their inner parts. For with the greater extending of naturalistic knowledge even the public has become more familiar with this aspect of animals. Rich additions in the way of anatomical illustrations, in which the work formerly was almost entirely lacking are provided.

"And finally, there is still another important point: Animal Psychology. In the old 'Brehm' mention was often made of the 'feelings' of animals, and especially of mammals and birds; of their 'loves, hates, and fears'; and what they do instinctively was referred, without much thought, to their 'intelligence' and

¹ Brehm, Alfred E.: Tierleben. Allgemeine Kunde des Tierreichs. Vierte, vollständig neubearbeitete Auflage, herausgegeben von Prof. Dr. Otto zur Strassen. Leipzig und Wein, Bibliographisches Institut. 1911. (13 Bände in Halbleder gebunden zu je 12 Mark.)

their 'reason.' This is not a severe reproach to Alfred Brehm when one remembers how general, at that time, was the humanizing of animals, even among scholars. Nor is it to be regretted for Brehm's brilliant success in winning for the animal world that cordial interest of readers, most of whom had never troubled themselves about it before, was certainly due in large part to this very humanizing. Nowadays we know, that with the intelligence of animals in doubtful status, almost all of their wonderful performances can be explained in a simpler manner, by associated impressions of the circumstances accompanying their favorable and harmful experiences, or mostly even as inborn instincts. And since even now we do not know any means of judging about the 'feelings' and other mental processes of animals, it is better to remain silent concerning them. This modern point of view must be taken as the basis in a new edition of 'Brehm.' This is not equivalent to saying that the new 'Tierleben' will be any less sympathetic, or that the use of it by the laity, or even by children, will be less attractive. On the contrary, the wonderful purposefulness and perfection of the animal instincts, and the oftentimes amazing way in which apparently intelligent acts may be simply explained, probably will be more captivating for the present-day reader of 'Brehm' than the earlier humanizing.

"It therefore became clear that so far reaching a transformation as the one planned could not be effected by one person alone; the work must be divided. That delightful writer, the Director of the Zoological Garden of Berlin, Professor Ludwig Heck, undertook the revision of the 'Mammals,' which he knows so thoroughly. Professor (Doctor) William Marshall, the widely beloved author of '*The Walks of a Naturalist*'—who died in the midst of the task—turned over for the division on 'Birds' the rich material which he had been gathering for years toward a great ornithological work. For the 'Reptiles and Amphibians' the well-known specialist, Doctor Franz Werner, Professor in the University of Vienna was secured. 'Fishes' was undertaken by Doctor Otto Steche, privat docent at Leipzig, who has worked upon it at home and carried it with him in his journey around the world. Professor (Doctor) Richard Heymons of Berlin revised the volume 'Insects,' in which the spiders and millipeds are included. With each of these groups this scholar is thoroughly acquainted through his own investigations. The revision of the remaining 'Invertebrates' I undertook myself.

'Especial attention has been given to the illustrations—always a noted feature of the 'Tierleben.' In this it was worth while to take advantage of the modern processes of reproduction."

To condense the remaining page of the preface—no pains were spared to obtain accurate, realistic, and artistic drawings. Skilled artists were employed, who, in certain instances, made drawings from life in Africa, Asia, various parts of Europe, and England.

The new "Tierleben," of which at present the sixth volume, "Birds," has appeared, will stand as the authority among natural histories of animals. It is highly desirable that it be translated into English.