

and each of these systematists having his followers writing and publishing under the system they favor most, produce the confusion so much complained of.

The subject of classification is now under consideration by a committee of the most able living Ornithologists, and it is to be hoped that their labors will result in the arrangement of a system of universal application which will be practically permanent.

As regards American birds, there are at present two different lists of names before the public,—one by Dr. Elliot Coues, a most accomplished scholar and brilliant writer, and another by Mr. Robt. Ridgeway, the accurate, careful curator of the bird department of the Smithsonian Institution. Either of these might be quite sufficient were the other out of the way, but having *two* only leads to confusion.

In most of the older systems it was customary to place the birds of prey first on the list, in consideration of their great size and strength, the noble (?) eagle occupying a place in the foremost ranks; better acquaintance with these birds shows us, however, that they do not possess the noble qualities attributed to them, that they are slovenly and irregular in their habits, often gorging themselves with carrion, and remaining for days in a state of dozing stupidity till the calls of hunger again force them out in search of things new and old.

I think it was Professor Liljeborg, of Upsala, who first advocated the view that the birds entitled to the highest rank should be those which are possessed of the greatest amount of nervous irritability, and have all bird-like peculiarities most fully developed. When we consider that these peculiarities include swimming on the water, hopping on the ground, perching on trees, hopping nimbly from branch to branch and making their presence known by their characteristic and melodious voices, we readily see the justice of giving the first place to the passerres, or perching birds, all of which have a much higher organization than the birds of prey. This arrangement is adopted generally by both Dr. Coues and Mr. Ridgeway, yet they differ slightly in detail, one giving the first place to our familiar garden songster, the Robin, and the other to the Wood Thrush, a handsome bird of shy and retiring habits, seldom seen except in its favorite haunts in the bush. These and similar