

ORIGIN, ETC., OF THE FAUNA AND FLORA OF CENTRAL AMERICA.

[THE following summary and conclusions on the origin and geographical distribution of the Mammalia, Reptilia, Batrachia, Pisces, Arachnida, Chilopoda, Diplopoda, and Prototracheata of Central America, and the faunistic divisions of the region, have been kindly supplied by Messrs. R. I. Pocock and C. Tate Regan; and Mr. W. B. Hemsley has given us a similar account of the Flora. These valuable contributions are based upon our present knowledge of the subject, bringing the account up to date. As regards the Insecta, which occupy so large a portion of the work, no satisfactory conclusions can be formed till they have been more thoroughly collected and studied in other tropical regions, and perhaps till we know more of them in a fossil state.—ED.]

FAUNA.

MAMMALIA.

By R. I. POCOCK, F.R.S.

Since the publication of Mr. E. R. Alston's volume on the Mammalia of Central America in 1882, great advances have been made in our knowledge of the subject. The past history of many of the orders and families has been more or less accurately ascertained by palæontological research, principally in the United States and in the Argentine; and the modern methods of collecting and preserving existing material have led to the discovery of large numbers of genera, species, and subspecies, and in addition have thrown such light upon the vertical and horizontal distribution of American Mammals, as a whole, that it has become possible to map their zones and provinces with much greater precision.

This progress in accuracy of information has been accompanied by a gradual change in the conception of systematic terms, with the result that what our predecessors ignored as "local varieties" are now regarded as "species" and, by a logical sequence, the old-time species are being given the rank of genera. Quite apart, too, from the names that have been introduced to designate new forms, considerable changes have taken place in the nomenclature of long-established species and genera. Opinions may differ as to the advisability and advantage of the alterations coming under these headings, but they have to be admitted and dealt with by faunistic and systematic workers.