

comment: we have descriptions of a large number of familiar wild animals, and in these the author has undoubtedly avoided as much as possible being at all scientifically exact. In our opinion the work would have gained in value and interest, and as an "educational" work, if the author had taken care, when he had to use scientific phrases, that he did so with some meaning. Thus it appears odd, to say the least, to read: "The bears, genus *Ursidæ*, belong in natural history to the sub-order *Carnivora*"; and that the kangaroos belong to the genus *Macropodidæ*. It would not have required a large knowledge of logic or science to avoid such mistakes.

Most of the photographs are from animals in the London Zoological Gardens, which will give a special interest to the volume.

OUR BOOK SHELF

First Year of Scientific Knowledge. By Paul Bert. (London: Relfe Brothers, 1886.)

THIS is an English edition of a little book which made M. Paul Bert's name familiar to a vast number of persons in France who knew nothing of his eminence either in science or in politics. As the title indicates, it is intended for children beginning to study science, and we know of no book better adapted for this purpose. It is a book of great merit both in style and selection of subjects. The more experimental sciences are treated as their nature demands—practically; the experiments are simple, and few will find any difficulty in performing them.

The illustrations constitute one of the special features of the book, for a diagram often conveys more meaning than a whole page of print. The language throughout is clear, and everything is simply yet accurately explained. As an example we may refer to p. 333, where the popular fallacy respecting the so-called "respiration of plants" is disposed of:—

... "Thus, simultaneously, in the same plant, two opposite phenomena take place: the production of carbonic acid by the parts that are not green, and consumption of carbonic acid by those that are green. Only, the latter activity being much more powerful than the former, the plant not only does not augment the proportion of carbonic acid in the air, but consumes what it finds there. . . . The decomposition of the carbonic acid by the green parts is quite the reverse of respiration, and bears a much closer resemblance to digestion."

The general character of the book leaves little to be desired.

La France en Indo-Chine. Par A. Bouinai et A. Paulus. (Paris: Challamel Ainé, 1886.)

THE important events of the last few years in Annam, Tonquin, and Cambodia have given rise to a quantity of literature in France, relating to this region, which has now reached enormous proportions. French periodicals of all kinds are full of papers relating to it, and new books on the same subject have been issued in many scores during the past three years. Every department of research is represented—historical, scientific, literary, antiquarian, industrial, commercial, &c. If this great flood represents, as it undoubtedly does, the keen interest taken by the French people in the countries with which they have now so close a connection, it is none the less embarrassing to foreign readers who desire to obtain a general and accurate survey of Indo-China. Amid the host of works, good, bad, and indifferent, now issuing from the French press on this region, and on every conceivable topic connected with it, it is difficult to select one which contains all that is wanted by the ordinary cultivated person, who desires to have some knowledge of countries which have been the theatre of events that have

moved Europe profoundly. At last MM. Bouinai and Paulus have produced such a book. Capt. Bouinai has served long in Tonquin, and is actually a member of the Frontier Delimitation Commission, and Prof. Paulus, of L'Ecole Turgot, though, we believe, he has never visited the country, has made it a special study, and has laboured to popularise a knowledge of it in France. The two authors have already published a very much larger work on the same subject, of which the present one appears to be an abridgment intended for wider circulation and more general information.

Perhaps the most satisfactory manner of reviewing a work such as this, which covers a large and varied field with brevity, is to describe shortly its arrangement and contents. The first chapter refers to the geography, orography, hydrography, and climate of Indo-China, including in this term French Cochinchina, Cambodia, Annam, and Tonquin. The second chapter deals with the history of French intercourse with these regions, commencing, properly speaking, with the cession to France of Tourane Bay and Pulo Condor in 1787, a cession which was due to the management of Pigneau de Béhaine, Bishop of Adran *in partibus*. All the interesting and exciting incidents of the occupation of Saigon, the Garnier and Philastre missions to Tonquin, and the events succeeding the death of Rivière down to the death of Courbet and the peace with China, are recounted with perfect clearness and accuracy. Next, the inhabitants are described, as well as the towns, and forms of religion prevailing in the countries. The aboriginal population is treated under the heads Moïs, Chams, and Muongs, a division which is perhaps sufficient in a book intended for popular reading, but which the authors themselves acknowledge to be wholly inadequate, as they refer also to "savages inhabiting the mountains," the phrase usually employed by the Chinese when speaking of a people about whom they know nothing. The ethnological questions connected with the Moïs, Muongs, Chams, and the unnamed "savages" can scarcely be answered for many years to come; but they are amongst the most interesting ones connected with ethnology in the Far East. The origin and relationship of these and other scattered fragments of once powerful peoples, not in Indo-China alone, but in Upper Burmah, and all over China south of the Yangtze, did not come within the scope of MM. Bouinai and Paulus's work, although the latter shows how little is known about them when they are all classed indiscriminately as "savages of the mountains." The fourth chapter deals with productions, trade, and communications, and the fifth with the administration in each of the countries mentioned. Finally comes a chapter on the future, a political forecast, to which we need not refer further. The work, it will be seen, goes over the whole field, and, as far as we have been able to check the statements, it is very accurate. As there is no English book on the subject, this may be recommended to readers who desire to know something of the new region which is but now being brought into close contact with Europe. Whether the French are a colonising or only a conquering people, though much debated, is a question with which we are not concerned here: what is beyond all question is that no effort is spared by the Government or the public to acquire that first indispensable requisite of all good and intelligent government, viz. a knowledge of the country and people to be governed. No expense is considered too great, no labour too burdensome, to obtain this knowledge. In this respect they set an example which one more successful colonising nation at least might well follow.

My African Home. By Eliza Whigham Feilden. (London: Sampson Low, 1887.)

In 1852 Mrs. Feilden and her husband went to Natal, where they remained for five years. On her return to