

naturalists as peculiar to the British Islands, with the sole exception of *Mus sylvaticus wintoni*. One of the worst omissions of this nature is the absence of any reference to the marked distinctness of the British squirrel and its remarkable seasonal colour-changes. As regards nomenclature in general, we observe that while the author avoids such objectionable alliterations as *Vulpes vulpes* and *Lutra lutra*, he is in many respects—notably in the case of the bats—out of date.

In addition to existing types, the author also records extinct forms, but since the amount of descriptive matter allotted to these is very brief, the lists of genera and species are dismal and uninteresting. Nor are they free from error, *Hyracotherium*, for instance, being described as tapir-like, while *Microchœrus* is classed as an insectivore instead of as a lemur. Equally glaring are the errors in the list of fossil reptiles, where we find *Ornithostoma* among the crocodiles, the sauropod *Bothriospondylus* among the theropods, the theropod *Palæosaurus* in the sauropods, and many other errors of a similar type, in addition to numerous misprints.

The coloured illustrations, although not perhaps very artistic, are sufficient in most cases to enable the reader to identify the various species without difficulty, while the excellent glossary of technical terms should prove useful to the beginner. While welcoming this little volume as an honest attempt to popularise a knowledge of the British mammals and reptiles, we cannot but regret that the author did not seek specialist advice and assistance before going to press.

R. L.

#### PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE AND DEATH.

*The Nature of Man: Studies in Optimistic Philosophy.*

By E. Metchnikoff. English Translation edited by P. Chalmers Mitchell, M.A., D.Sc. Pp. xviii+309. (London: W. Heinemann; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903.) Price 12s. 6d.

PROF. METCHNIKOFF'S work is already known to many; it has been widely read in previous editions, and, now that it is offered in an English version, will become still more widely known. The great merits of the work have already been appreciated. The author is an acknowledged master of his subject, and no more fruitful source of valuable ideas could be imagined than a mind which combined with philosophical breadth and acumen an accurate and far-reaching knowledge of every grade of organism. One sees from the apt choice and effective use of examples how thoroughly the author has his materials at command.

If we might characterise with a word the central problem of the book, ethical would seem the term most appropriate. The key-words are harmony and disharmony; we ask sometimes, Why should we be moral? Prof. Metchnikoff's question is rather, Why do we need morality? The answer lies in the existence of disharmonies. The first part of the work deals with these disharmonies as a matter of scientific discovery; they are shown to exist in the structure of

organisms throughout the vast scale of nature; not least do we find in man disharmonies of digestion, of reproduction, and of self-preservation; the whole discussion forms a chapter of extreme interest and importance. The second part reviews the attempts of religion and philosophy to account for or alleviate these disharmonies. The polemic is severe; religion especially is arraigned for failing in its own efforts and hindering those of science; belief in immortality is an illusion with which we soothe a mind conscious that it has been cheated of its due. Old age and death form the topic of greatest interest to the author. The principle underlying the third and closing section of the work is that no natural process should be productive of pain; death as the natural end of life should therefore be normally accompanied by a desire for the end; desire depends on physical conditions, and this harmony can only be produced if life is so far prolonged that the desire to live wanes with the physical strength. This, our author thinks, is a harmony which science can in time secure for us; the details must be left for the reader to discover; at any rate, he will find a topic of great interest excellently treated.

Prof. Metchnikoff's reputation in the scientific world is unique; he comes before us here as something more than a man of science, rather as a prophet, one might almost say, as a high priest. Faith, disillusioned, is to leave its old temples and take sanctuary in laboratories. If progress dictates this course, no prejudice should hinder it. Meanwhile the opposition of the second and third parts of this book affords an interesting view of the prospects. Take, for example, the contrast of the philosophic question and the scientific answer. The question propounded is, Can I hope for immortality? Science replies that the proper term of life is, say, 150 years. The spirit cries out to be saved from the prospect of annihilation; science replies that if you live properly you will some day want to die! Clearly one question is asked, but the answer is the answer of another and a different problem. The materialistic bias of a scientific position, accepted uncritically, seems to have left the refuted philosophy and the triumphant science in a kind of asymptotic relation. At the best it would seem that the theory cannot remove the mental disharmony which the realisation of finitude coexisting with the purpose to live must always produce. It is only in the more limited sphere that science succeeds in being optimistic, and the optimism of this book is conditioned upon our ability to regard the spiritual as a subordinate aspect of the material, a point that the disciple may delight to accept but the unbeliever desires to have demonstrated.

The translation of this book seems to have been carefully done, with only an occasional divergence from accuracy. Why have we three distinct spellings of Buddha (p. 120)? *cp.* Bhuddism (p. 120), and Bouddha (p. 148). Meringitis (p. 132) requires correction, while the sentence "so there were only Tourgéneff . . . and me" (p. 121) might be improved in its grammar.

G. S. B.