

system, and the useful chapters dealing with general aspects of the economic relationships of birds have been added to and expanded. On the whole, it is surprising in how many cases an analysis of the food stuffs taken over a long period tells in favour of birds usually condemned as unmitigated pests, even although the statistics here given reckon against the bird much in the food content which can be of no agricultural value. The statistical methods adopted in such investigations still fall far short of scientific precision and leave the final judgment to personal interpretation with wide margins, but until better methods are evolved, Dr. Collinge's book will remain the standard British work on the subject.

(2) For the average naturalist this third volume completes the most attractive and useful of the lesser books on British birds. As a practical guide to species it is less essential than its forerunners, since it deals mainly with rare and casual visitors. It is illustrated by many fine coloured drawings reduced from Lord Lilford's standard work. But it breaks new ground by introducing several chapters dealing with general aspects of British bird life, including a lengthy and excellent account of migration, and descriptions, family by family, of characteristic migratory and other habits. The sixteen 'sub species' added to the British list since the earlier volumes appeared are here described, as well as two species since recorded for the first time from Great Britain.

(3) The appeal of Mr. Thorburn's work rests largely upon the beautiful and accurate coloured plates, the finest of their kind, which make identification of species a pleasure and a matter of comparative simplicity. Since, except for a number of rare and closely related species, all the British birds appear in these 192 plates, descriptive matter has been reduced to a minimum, and the text is confined to short accounts of range and characteristic habits.

(1) *Civilisation or Civilisations: an Essay in the Spenglerian Philosophy of History.* By E. H. Goddard and P. A. Gibbons. Pp. xvi+231. (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1926.) 7s. 6d. net.

(2) *Sunrise in the West: a Modern Interpretation of Past and Present.* By Adrian Stokes. Pp. xvi+168. (London: Kegan Paul and Co., Ltd., n.d.) 7s. 6d. net.

(1) In a preface to "Civilisation or Civilisations," Dr. F. C. S. Schiller, with a characteristic and mildly cynical humour, discusses the reasons for teaching history and briefly expounds the philosophy of that subject as an attempt to formulate a 'law.' The book itself is intended to familiarise English readers with the ideas of Spengler's book, "Der Untergang des Abendlandes," in which the belief in progress was challenged. Holding that civilisation does not show any steady arithmetical progression, Spengler propounds a 'law of civilisations' to account for their rise and fall. Human achievements are divided into nine groups or eras, each constituting a distinct civilisation capable of

high achievement in art, in science, in thought, in religion, and in social organisation. Each of these passes through a course of progress covering about 1400 years, after which the society ceases to be artistic, social, or scientific in any but the crudest sense. Western civilisation, beginning about A.D. 900, is expected to come to an end about A.D. 2300. It will be seen that this theory of history involves a return to the schematisation of progress, and indeed the authors will have nothing to do with the archæologist who traces cultural phenomena back to their origins or with the diffusionist and his migrations of culture from an original centre in Egypt. Either school may perhaps be content to await the verdict of the facts—when we know them.

(2) "Sunrise in the West" is essentially modern in outlook and in language—both to the plain man a little obscure. The culture of the west is reviewed as a progress in the relation to one another of the 'poetry' and 'prose' of human expression. Our present position is a stage before the apotheosis of western civilisation, and the flame of the Western Spirit is a 'blue vision' which the author himself characterises as "an unsatisfactory expression, no doubt!"

*The Riddle of the Tsangpo Gorges.* By Capt. F. Kingdon Ward. Pp. xv+328+16 plates. (London: Edward Arnold and Co., 1926.) 21s. net.

THE Tsangpo River, the main source of the Brahmaputra, flows placidly, from west to east, across Tibet until it reaches the eastern end of the Himalayan range, and vanishes into a terrific gorge. The bottom of the gorge is 9680 feet above sea-level, and the peaks that hem it in on each side rise to more than 21,000 feet. The river emerges from the mountains some 35 miles away, and is then flowing south and west at an elevation of less than 2000 feet. There was, therefore, a chance that the gorge might conceal the most stupendous waterfall. Part of the gorge was explored by Bailey and Morshead in 1913, and most of the remainder by Captain Kingdon Ward and Lord Cawdor in 1924. No large falls were found, and it is now clear that none exists.

The main purpose, however, of Captain Kingdon Ward's expedition was not the exploration of the gorge, but the collection of plants and seeds. In this corner of Tibet the climate varies from tropical to arctic, and from humid to arid, within a range of a few miles, and the flora varies with the climate. It is a wild garden stocked with countless species and varieties of flowers and flowering shrubs; hillsides blazing with rhododendrons; fields of lilies; meadows with primulas; giant snowpeaks above, and below the abyss, echoing with the thunder of the hidden river.

The book is very modestly written, and the dangers and difficulties that were faced and surmounted in the gorge are mostly left to the reader's imagination. It is probable that they will not be fully realised until some other explorer attempts to follow in the footsteps of Captain Kingdon Ward