

The book requires no praise from us. It is enough to say that it sustains Mr. Gomme's high reputation as a folklorist, and that those who devote time to its study will be amply rewarded. It possesses an additional source of interest in its well-chosen illustrations. "The Two Scenes from the Life of St. Guthlac" bring before us with peculiar vividness the unseen world as it presented itself to some of our forefathers

#### A ZOOLOGIST AS ÆSTHETE.

*Ästhetik der Tierwelt.* By Karl Möbius. Pp. v+128; 3 plates and 195 figs. (Jena: G. Fischer, 1908.) Price 6 marks.

AS director of the great zoological museum in Berlin, the late Prof. Möbius was naturally led to consider the æsthetic value of the various forms of animal life as well as their scientific interest. From time to time he published brief essays discussing different types of animals from the æsthetic point of view, and as he found the inquiry very profitable—increasing his delight in the animal creation—he gathered his reflections together in the beautifully illustrated book before us, which bears the pleasant title "*Ästhetik der Tierwelt.*"

Certain animals cannot be seen without being greatly admired, others are regarded with complacency but without enthusiasm, others with entire indifference, and yet others with repugnance—which is often affectation. Prof. Möbius sought to discover some of the reasons for this diverse æsthetic value that animals seem to have, and his *a priori* method led him to judgments which it would be of great interest to test statistically, by collecting opinions from, say, 5000 of each of the following groups:—country children, men in the street, well-dressed women, naturalists, and artists. It is notoriously difficult, however, to get a frank expression of æsthetic emotion (especially in regard to animals), to allow for conventional prejudice and posing, for sheer uneducatedness of vision, and for entirely artificial associations which lead many people to recoil from forms of life which the artist admires. We find in this book many statements like this:—"Die Fledermäuse findet niemand schön," and the author tried to show that this universal disapprobation is justified according to certain canons of æsthetic criticism. So much the worse for these canons, it seems to us, not that we can believe in the universal disapprobation of bats.

Prof. Möbius pointed out that our æsthetic judgments as to animals rest on a complex objective and subjective basis; he went on to discuss the general qualities of a beautiful living creature—it must be a unity, it must be harmonious, it must have individuality, and so on. We regret that the illustrious author did not expand his reflections on these matters, instead of giving so much space to comparing the relative merits of crab and lobster, or analysing the alleged "*Hässlichkeit*" of hippopotamus and giraffe. It seems to us that just as we are pleased by a piece of carving, rude though it may be, which expresses the craftsman's mood, and shows him to be even a little bit of a creator, so, but in-

finitely more, are we pleased by the individuality of organisms—every one its own artist—no one of which uses its materials quite in the same way. An interesting short chapter is devoted to the æsthetic value of animals as parts of a landscape; thus what is not impressive in isolation gets its value in its natural setting. This is well illustrated by reference to the associations seen on a coral beach at low tide.

The volume attempts an analysis of beauty in animal architecture, but the treatment seems to us too dogmatic and aprioristic. We demand symmetry, it is said, yet what delights us more than a lop-sided shell from the shore? A Campanularian is not so beautiful as a Corallium, because the number of its tentacles is a distracting conundrum. A centipede makes us tired, it is said, with its monotony, "Man sieht nichts Neues, wird ermüdet und gelangweilt," whereas to many people a centipede quickly moving among the bark is in its way just as beautiful as a peacock. Spiders are not so much appreciated as butterflies, because their body has only two main parts, and the æsthetic unity is spoilt by the distractions of the abdomen when we are contemplating the cephalothorax, and *vice versa*. It is unconventional for an animal to be broader than it is long, and, therefore, to use one of the author's examples, Geryon must take a back seat when Gammarus appears. But when it comes to ranking *Peripatus* among the animals with "*langweilende Wiederholung*," and putting *Nymphon* among the unsatisfactory because it lacks sufficient central mass to rivet the eye, we cannot but disagree. We may take shelter behind the eirenic maxim, "*De gustibus non disputandum est*," but we are not afraid of the responsibility of stating a counter-thesis, with which we think most artists will agree, that no natural animals are ugly or "*hässlich*" in the sense of being out of proportion or out of harmony, or "*bad colour*." It seems to us that the only ugly animals are such as prize pigs, on which man has laid violent hands. One of the delights of animal coloration is the daring as well as the subtlety of the experiments, but is any result ever a failure in the sense that a picture or a picture-hat may be?

J. A. T.

#### FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF CHEMISTRY.

*Stoichiometry.* By Prof. Sydney Young, F.R.S.; with an Introduction to the Study of Physical Chemistry by Sir William Ramsay, K.C.B., F.R.S. Pp. lxxi+381. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908.) Price 7s. 6d. net.

THIS volume, as its unfamiliar title implies, is concerned with the fundamental principles of chemistry, and so forms logically the first of the "Text-Books of Physical Chemistry" edited by Sir William Ramsay; the introduction, which has appeared before, is appropriately reprinted in this volume. We are pleased to see that five more volumes of the series are in preparation.

Recent research on atomic and molecular weights, of which Prof. Young gives a clear and simple account, has proceeded mainly in two directions. D.