

answers that have been given to the great ontological problem "What am I?":—

"In this search for information about myself from eminent thinkers of different types, I seem to have learnt one lesson, that all science and philosophy, and every form of human speech, is about objects capable of being perceived by the speaker and the hearer; and that when our thought pretends to deal with the Subject, it is really only dealing with an Object under a false name. The only proposition about the subject, namely, 'I am,' cannot be used in the same sense by any two of us, and, therefore, it can never become science at all."

Prof. Campbell has succeeded in presenting to us a most vivid picture of Maxwell's character. The view which he gives will be fresh, and partly strange, to many even of those who knew Maxwell well. It is no reproach to him to say that, in our opinion, he has by no means exhausted the different aspects of his subject. So many-sided was Maxwell's character, that it would have required the united efforts of several biographers to do it the fullest justice.

In the second part of the book will be found a good account by Mr. Garnett, of Maxwell's scientific work. Of this nothing further need be said, for an excellent summary has already been given in the pages of NATURE by Prof. Tait (vol. xxi. p. 317).

It may be questioned whether the literary merit of many of the pieces of occasional poetry in the third part will be sufficient to secure for them the interest of the general reader; but many will greet with pleasure the reappearance of old friends among the serio-comic verses. We are glad to find among them our favourite, "To the Committee of the Cayley Portrait Fund"; finer compliment to a mathematician surely never was penned. Among those hitherto unpublished may be mentioned the Paradoxical Ode to Hermann Stoffkraft, beginning as follows:—

My soul's an amphicheiral knot,
Upon a liquid vortex wrought
By Intellect, in the Unseen residing.
And thine doth like a convict sit,
With marlinspike untwisting it,
Only to find its knottiness abiding;
Since all the tools for its untying
In four-dimensioned space are lying,
Wherein thy fancy intersperses
Long avenues of universes,
While Klein and Clifford fill the void
With one finite, unbounded homaloid,¹
And think the Infinite is now at last destroyed.

We ought to mention in conclusion that the book is beautifully illustrated; there are vignettes of Maxwell and of his father and mother; some quaint and suggestive illustrations of scenes from his early life, after originals by Mrs. Blackburn; and a variety of diagrams, several of them beautifully coloured, reproduced from originals—by Maxwell's own hand—in illustration of his researches on light and colour. G. C.

OUR BOOK SHELF

Description Physique de la République Argentine d'après des Observations Personnelles et Étrangères. Par le Dr. H. Burmeister. (Buenos Ayres, 1876-82.)

SOME account of the progress of this extensive work, in which the veteran naturalist, Dr. H. Burmeister, formerly

¹ Here the author takes a poetic licence.

of Halle, proposes to give a complete physical history of his adopted country, may not be unacceptable. Of the octavo text, which is accompanied by folio atlases, in order to give the illustrations on a large scale, we have seen four volumes, numbered 1, 2, 3, and 5. The fourth volume, which we suppose will contain the birds, is not yet issued, and the atlases in some cases do not appear to be complete.

The first volume (issued in 1876) is devoted to the history of the discovery and general geographical features of the Argentine Republic; and the second, published in the same year, to its climate and geological conformation. The third volume, of which the text was issued in 1879, has been already noticed in our columns (NATURE, vol. xxiv. p. 209). It contains an account of the Mammal-fauna both recent and extinct. We have now just received the first *livraison* of the folio atlas to this volume, containing a series of plates illustrating the whales of the Argentine coasts, a subject to which Dr. Burmeister has devoted special attention for many years. Of the fifth volume, devoted to the Lepidoptera of Buenos Ayres, we have already likewise spoken (see NATURE, vol. xx. p. 358).

It remains, therefore, for us only to wish the venerable author, who, for fifty years at least, has been a most energetic worker in many branches of zoology, health and strength to bring this important work to a conclusion.

Nomenclator Zoologicus. An Alphabetical list of all Generic names that have been employed by Naturalists for Recent and Fossil Animals, from the earliest Times to the close of the Year 1879. In two parts. I. Supplemental List. By Samuel H. Scudder. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1882.)

EVERY working naturalist must be acquainted with Agassiz's "Nomenclator Zoologicus," published at Solothurn in 1846, which is, in fact, a dictionary of generic terms used in zoology. Without its valuable aid it is almost a fruitless task to endeavour to ascertain where or by what author any particular generic term has been instituted, or whether a generic term has been already used in zoology or not. Agassiz's work, in the preparation of which he was assisted by some of the best zoologists of the day, though by no means perfect in its manner of execution or free from occasional errors, answers very well for all practical purposes for genera established prior to the date of its preparation, and affords an excellent basis to work upon. It contains upwards of 32,000 entries of names of generic terms and of names of higher groups. In 1873 Graf A. v. Marschall, of Vienna, prepared and issued for the Imperial and Royal Zoological and Botanical Society of Austria, a supplementary volume, on something of the same plan. But to Marschall's "Nomenclator" no general index was attached, and, as those who have used the volume know full well, it is neither so accurate nor so complete as the work which it purports to supplement.

A new "Nomenclator Zoologicus," carrying the subject up to the present day, and correcting the errors and omissions of its two predecessors, has therefore long been a work of paramount importance to working naturalists. The question was who would undertake the ungrateful task, which was likely to confer neither fame nor fortune on the performer, and would be, above all others, long and laborious. Mr. Samuel H. Scudder of Boston, a well-known American entomologist, in response to appeals from his friends, has consented to devote his energies to the subject, and the first portion of his work is now before us.

The present part of the new Nomenclator is of a supplemental character, as is explained by Mr. Scudder in his preface, and contains "15,369 entries of genera established previous to 1880, not recorded, or erroneously given in the nomenclators of Agassiz and Marschall."