

Better, on the whole, a wrong or premature synthesis than no synthesis at all. It is a curious fact that some of the most potent theories, theories that have most stimulated thought and research, have been found in the long run, after a period of vogue, to be very largely wrong. One might instance Weismann's brilliant theory of the germ-plasm, which exercised an extraordinarily powerful and lasting influence on biological thought.

The present volume of essays by Prof. Julian Huxley is a more heterogeneous collection than his previous book entitled "Essays of a Biologist," and some of the shorter articles and reviews might well have been omitted. There remain, however, many papers of real value, of interest both to the general public and, particularly in one case, to the professional biologist. Prof. Huxley's gifts as a popular exponent of biological science are undoubted; he is always lucid and interesting, and links up his themes with human life and literature in such a way as to appeal to any cultivated reader.

The first half-dozen articles deal with the problems of heredity and sex in the light of modern genetics. It seems to us that Prof. Huxley states the gene theory in too confident terms. The paper on "Chromosomes, Mendelism and Mutation" is a triumph of lucid exposition, but it will give the ordinary reader the impression that the problems of heredity are all solved. But this is far from being the case. Other articles deal with "The Control of the Life-Cycle," "The Meaning of Death," "Birth Control," "Evolution and Purpose," and there is a sympathetic and penetrating study of the author's grandfather and his attitude towards religion. Apart from a number of re-published reviews, the rest of the volume is taken up by two papers, hitherto unpublished, on "The Frog and Biology" and "The Tadpole: a Study in Developmental Physiology," the latter based upon an address delivered at the British Association meeting in Liverpool. The paper on the frog gives an interesting and well-illustrated account of the action of internal secretions upon metamorphosis and colour-change; the other, some 85 pages in length, is a very valuable sketch and well merits attention from the professional biologist—it is rather too 'strong meat' for the ordinary reader. We have here a good summary and a thoughtful discussion of the modern work by Spemann, Harrison, and others, on this classical object. One is interested to see that the quite fundamental ideas of Wilhelm Roux on the importance of function are at last being given the attention they deserve.

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Our Bookshelf.

- (1) *A View of Sierra Leone.* By F. W. H. Migeod. Pp. xii + 351 + 8 plates. (London: Kegan Paul and Co., Ltd., 1926.) 31s. 6d. net.
- (2) *Sierra Leone: its History and Tradition.* By Capt. F. W. Butt-Thompson. Pp. 275 + 11 plates. (London: H. F. and G. Witherby, 1926.) 15s. net.

(1) MR. MIGEOD has given us the results of a visit to Sierra Leone of six months' duration in 1925. His book falls into two parts: the first, a descriptive narrative dealing with the colony, its people, and something of their history; the second, an analytical account of the Mende, their physical anthropology, social organisation, secret societies, religious beliefs, games, songs, and folklore. Their language is dealt with in an appendix. Sierra Leone, being one of those parts of Africa outside the northern radius which has been longest in contact with European civilisation, presents many difficulties to the student of culture, which are by no means mitigated by the presence of the Creole and Mohammedan elements. Mr. Migeod, an anthropologist with a conscience which sets a high standard, is keenly conscious of these difficulties, and they must be held responsible for much in the first part of the book which the reader may regard as scrappy and incomplete.

(2) Mr. Migeod devotes his opening chapters to the identification of places mentioned by early geographers which, there is reasonable probability to conclude, were situated in this part of Africa. Capt. Butt-Thompson writes of an area much more restricted than that covered by Mr. Migeod. Instead of the Sierra Leone of to-day with its three 'Provinces' and thirteen 'Districts,' he deals only with the history of the colony comprised in the peninsula on which Freetown stands. Nor is he concerned with the chronicles of the earliest voyagers. His history begins in the sixteenth century with the movements of peoples down to the river and the conquests of the Temne kings, which are recorded in or may be deduced from the reports of Ogilby, Fletcher, and others.

Capt. Butt-Thompson writes with a wealth of detail, and much of his material, gathered by members of his own family, has not previously been published. Much is derived from oral tradition. Travellers, colonists, missionaries, and administrators are all passed under review, and their achievements, both good and bad, recorded with commendable impartiality. Capt. Butt-Thompson's book will serve as a valuable guide to those who wish to understand the conditions out of which have grown the many and serious problems with which the administration is confronted to-day.

The Analysis of Pigments, Paints, and Varnishes. (Oil and Colour Chemistry Monographs.) By Dr. J. J. Fox and T. H. Bowles. Pp. 179. (London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1927.) 16s. net.

THIS is a book which can be heartily recommended to all who are concerned with the chemical examination of the materials in question. It is, in