

## NEW BOOKS

THE SYSTEM OF NATURE, being the Gifford Lectures delivered before the University of St. Andrews in 1915 and 1916. By J. Arthur Thomson, M.A., LL.D., Professor of Natural History in the University of Aberdeen. Two volumes: London; Williams and Norgate, 1920.

It is not too much to say that these lectures are among the most important contributions to the philosophy of biology which have been made in the English language during the last quarter of a century. One of their peculiar merits is that the author is a master in practical zoology,—a so-called “expert”—as well as an original and philosophical thinker. The mere titles of the lectures are an indication of the wide survey of animate existence which Professor Thomson takes. They are: The unfathomed universe and the aim of science; The realm of organisms contrasted with the domain of the inorganic; The criteria of livingness; Organism and Mechanism; The uniqueness of life; Animal behaviour; The problem of body and mind; The fact of beauty; The issues of life; Adaptiveness and purposiveness; The concept of evolution; Great steps in organic evolution; Originative factors in evolution,—variation; Directive factors in evolution,—selection; The individual and the race,—heredity; Evolution of mind and mind in evolution; Nature crowned in man; Disharmonies and other shadows; The control of life,—lessons in evolution; The *Vis Medicatrix Naturae*.

Professor Thomson's survey is critical without being pessimistic, picturesque without being jejune, fascinating and poetical without being misleading or fanciful, profound without being unintelligible. These lectures are a great deal more than expositions of modern zoology. They are a text-book of the methods and results of learned and deep thinking in the realm of the living.

The partial and unsympathetic review in *Nature* for Dec. 16, 1920, gives the reader no notion of the literary delights awaiting him in these two volumes; no notion of the wise, sane, just and modern treatment accorded to all problems attacked and all schools of thought investigated. We have far more than a re-statement of the controversy known as vitalism versus mechanism. Professor Thomson throughout his dissertations lays interesting stress upon consciousness as a cause and on the usefulness of the conceptions of physiological or functional inertia and momentum in living beings expressed both through their physical and through their psychic activities.

D. F. H.

**A HISTORY OF ENGLISH-CANADIAN LITERATURE TO THE CONFEDERATION.** By Ray Palmer Baker, Ph.D., Professor of English in the Renssailer Polytechnic Institute. v.—200 pp. Harvard University Press, 1920.

It is not an easy task to give vitality to the subject of this book, and it is probable that it will make a successful appeal to but a small public even in Canada. Truth to tell, he who digs into the pre-Confederation literature of our present Dominion must expect to gather but "small potatoes and few to a hill". Were all such literature blotted out, the English-speaking world so rich in the store of many centuries would scarcely be sensible of a loss. Yet, though of little absolute value, it played a genuine and not unimportant part in preparation for that which now already to some extent gives adequate expression to the thought and emotion of the Canadian people. Dr. Baker covers his ground with considerable thoroughness. He endeavours, moreover, to keep a sense of proportion in his appreciation of the authors whose work he discusses, though his dictum that Bailey's statement that day

Darted his horizontal ray  
To stain the distant hills

"ranks with the finest verse of the eighteenth century" is somewhat amazing.

A full account is given of Joseph Howe's contributions to and influence upon the thought and taste of his day. The chapter upon Thomas Chandler Haliburton is one of the best in the book. The genuine, though curious and one-sided, talent of Heavysege is described sympathetically, and it will be well if interest is re-awakened in his powerful and imaginative verse. To the present writer it seems difficult to recognize in the work of early Canadian poets the "schools" of Goldsmith, Byron, and Burns which figure in Dr. Baker's classification.

E. R.