First Glances at New Books

THEORETICAL BIOLOGY—J. von Uexhüll—Translated by D. L. MacKinnon—*Harcourt, Brace.* Interesting as evidence that the strong trend in present-day German philosophy away from materialism and mechanism is affecting German science also. Long known for his vitalistic predilections, in this book von Uexhüll undertakes to recast biological thought in a mould conformable to Kantian metaphysics. "In the world of the biologist there are only appearances, which react on one another through the medium of the subject." A particularly significant contention by the author is that the genes of modern genetics are the "super-mechanical factors" needed as a scientific basis for such a reconstructed biology.—*Wm. E. Ritter.*

Science News-Letter, December 4, 1926

CIVILIZATION OR CIVILIZATIONS—E. H. Goddard and P. A. Gibbons—*Boni and Liveright.* ($2.50). The mathematics of Einstein begat a vast literature of interpretation during the past decade; we may now expect the metaphysics of Spengler to do much the same sort of thing. This book will be very serviceable to those who lack either the time or the patience to wade through the massive, and frequently turbid, Spengler. It has the advantage for the English-reading student that it treats of both halves of Spengler's work, whereof only the first has thus far been put into English.

Science News-Letter, December 4, 1926

EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE—*J. G.* Frewin—Part I—*Oxford University Press.* An experimental manual covering elementary physics, chemistry and physics of the air. It is of Scottish origin and seems to be so delightfully simple and practical that students might be interested.

Science News-Letter, December 4, 1926

FLATLAND—A Square—(Rev. Edwin A. Abbott)—*Little, Brown.* ($1.50). This is a new edition of the classic and "romance of many dimensions" of forty years ago. Satire, fiction, geometry and what have you.

Science News-Letter, December 4, 1926

BEHAVIORISM—John B. Watson—*Norton.* ($3). The faith and works of John B. Watson set down in succinct and mainly non-technical language. Appropriately, a considerable part of the discussion consists of concise descriptions of experiments.

Science News-Letter, December 4, 1926

SCIENCE AND LIFE—Frederick Soddy—*Dutton.* ($4). Professor Soddy is decidedly different from most professors of chemistry. He is concerned also with the sociological influences and theological implications of his science. He is rather radical in his views and quite critical and refreshingly frank. As a Nobel prizeman he speaks with authority in the chapters on radium, and the constitution of matter, and his *obiter dicta* on education, labor, war, civil service and the Carnegie trust will be read with respectful interest. This is a new edition of his Aberdeen Addresses first published in 1920, but the book needs revision to cut out the local and temporal matter from the part of permanent and general interest.

Science News-Letter, December 4, 1926

AMATEUR TELESCOPE MAKING—Edited by Albert G. Ingalls—*Scientific American Publishing Co.* ($2). Clear, concise and complete directions to the layman for making a reflecting telescope that will not only permit him to see the glories of the heavens but to do work of scientific value.

Science News-Letter, December 4, 1926

THE BIOLOGY OF THE PROTOZTA—Gary N. Calkins—*Lea & Febiger.* ($7.50). Condensed but complete, doing justice to the physiology of the protozta as well as to their taxonomy and morphology, rich with accurate illustrations, this book is immediately recognizable as a classic and a necessity for even the smallest working library in zoology or hygiene.

Science News-Letter, December 4, 1926

A MAGICIAN OF SCIENCE, The Boys' Life of Steinmetz—John Winthrop Hammond—*Century.* ($1.75). The biography of the great Lightning-Maker adapted into a book for boys.

Science News-Letter, December 4, 1926

MEASUREMENT OF INTELLIGENCE BY DRAWINGS—Florence L. Goodenough—*World Book Company.* ($1.80). "Draw a man" was the task set young children by this psychologist, and after studying 4,000 human portraits she has evolved a quick method of rating intelligence of children from four to ten years old by this test.

Science News-Letter, December 4, 1926

PROBLEMS OF HUMAN REPRODUCTION—Paul Popenoe—*William & Wilkins.* ($2.50). Contains within its 200 pages an amazingly wide range of information on the scientific principles involved, expressed in clear but not colloquial language and including the most recent discoveries.

Science News-Letter, December 4, 1926

An Unsolved Cipher

The cipher, or cryptogram, has been used almost since the discovery of writing to convey information secretly to the initiated who hold the clue, and the decipherment of such messages has been a fascinating pastime for puzzle lovers for the same length of time. The cipher is constructed by substituting one letter of the alphabet for another consistently throughout the message. The decipherment is usually accomplished by such hints as the relative frequency of occurrence of the commoner consonants and, especially, of the vowels.

The following historic cryptogram was composed by Sir Christopher Wrenn and presented to the Royal Society when Sir Christopher was over eighty years old. It describes three instruments proper for discovering longitude at sea—a pressing nautical problem in his daq. It is presumed that each of the paragraphs of letters is the description of a separate instrument, nothing more is known of its meaning. Sir Christopher died before he revealed its secret, and no solution of it has been published, so far as is known. It may possibly be in Latin. But experts in the art claim that no cryptogram can be constructed which cannot be solved. Are present-day scientists more astute than were their eighteenth century colleagues?

SIR CHRISTOPHER WRENN'S CIPHER

O Z V C V A Y I N I X D N C
V O C W E D C N M A L N A B
E C I R T E W N G R A M H H C
C A W.

Z E I Y E I N O I E B I V T X
E S C I O C P S D E D M N A
N H S E F P R P I W H D R
A E H H X C I F.

E Z K A V E B I M O X R F C
S L C E E D H W M G N N I
V E O M R E W W E R R C S H
E P C I P.

Science News-Letter, December 4, 1926

Platypaleontology

The Ornithorhynchus went over the hill
To view the remains of a Pterodactyl;
"A queer bird was Pterry,
"A funny one, very!"
Said the Ornithorhynchus, a-scratching his bill.

—*Anonymous.*

Science News-Letter, December 4, 1926

The common housefly is a hairy creature, with sticky pads on its feet.