

PARASITISM
ORGANIC AND SOCIAL

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PREFACE.

EVERYONE remembers that the word Parasitism arose in the social world before it came into the organic,—here, indeed, agreeing with more biological ideas than naturalists always recognise.

Yet this book is of a new type. It results from the collaboration of a specialist in Natural Science with one in Economics. Hence it works out the old idea not only with modern detail and precision, but upon a higher spiral, comparing the wealth of Natural History facts with the wealth of Social ones, and thus giving a concrete instance of that practical union and unison of Biology and Sociology, which has been so long proclaimed by the philosophers but so little carried into practice. Perhaps it is in consequence of this lack of practical detail that an eminent American economist has lately committed himself to a proclamation of the "Failure of Biologic Sociology." We might almost agree with him if he had added "to begin operations."

Everyone is tired of misty phrases about "the social organism." Here, however, are the facts of life of particular lower organisms, compared with those of particular social ones. Some of them, no doubt, are ugly facts. That, however, is the fault of Nature and of Society, not of the writers; and in natural as in social things, it is often the ugly and the diseased which force themselves upon us, and which yet may yield us clues to higher truths and wider issues.

Of the details of treatment, of course, every naturalist and every economist will have his own opinion, and in so complex and concrete a subject no two workers would treat the subject in quite the same way. Our authors, as they themselves doubtless best know, have only opened the subject, not closed it. Their treatment is not exhaustive but suggestive.

A book of this kind gives a far better introduction to Elementary Biology than the primarily anatomical manuals current under that name. The science of life lies surely in the observation of life, not in the analysis of dead structure. In a word, our Science must start, not as too commonly with dissection, with Necrology, but with Life-lore, with Bionomics, and must return thither. Anatomical analysis is but a useful incident in its progress—a long and fascinating

parenthesis, which the naturalist has too often mistaken for the text. The true measure of our Biology lies not in following Cuvier, as the schools, through Huxley, still mainly do, but in reading the wealth and variety of living relations with Darwin. Hence the general reader may often become a more true biologist than the specialist, and the child who has mastered the inimitable (let us say rather the initiative) "Jungle Book" may have more of the spirit of the science than the graduate in Morphology.

Whether the reader does or does not approve of all the social comparisons, is again a matter of detail, and will not affect the essential character of the book, which I take to be meant rather to arouse discussions than to settle them; and to the student of social affairs, whether of conservative or advanced proclivities, the book may thus be commended. To the numerous worshippers of Comfort, and to the ingenious young person desirous of Getting On, it may also be warmly recommended as a suggestive manual. For others again it may add strength to the new commandment—"Thou shalt not exploit thy neighbour," though doubtless some may add—"Nor thyself for him." Thus it is that with each new step in Science the old problems are not wholly solved, yet are carried on to a new and higher level.

We may hope, finally, that not only our authors,

but other naturalists, other economists, may combine to carry out such parallel studies. There is surely ample room for like co-operation in other fields. There are many roads towards Utopia, but that of antithesis is often the shortest. So even here, from those ugly shapes of Parasitism, Organic and Social, we may descry the possibilities already nascent around us in man and in nature, of the highest as well as of the lowest ideals of Evolution. May we not, therefore, hope some day to see the antithetical title to the present one—Symbiosis, Social and Organic? Neither economist nor naturalist is ready to write such a book, yet no worker nor student but may bring his part towards this—the collaboration of collaborations.

PATRICK GEDDES.

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