

# The Science of Life.

## Chapter I.

### An Outline of the History of Biology.

*Foundations—Aristotle—The Dormant Period—Legendary Biology—  
The Scientific Renaissance—The Encyclopædists—From Buffon to  
Darwin: A. Morphological Analysis; B. Physiological Analysis—  
After Darwin—Summary.*

Although the inquisitive mood is probably instinctive in man, it does not seem likely that the early conditions of human life can have favoured the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. It was doubtless in practical lore that the science of life had its beginnings. The gardener and the shepherd, the herb-gatherer and the huntsman, were the pioneers of the biologist, and they may teach him still. Foundations.

If we use the term Biology, in its widest sense of Life-lore, to include all the results of the scientific study of living creatures, we must admit that it had its foundations in antiquity. But if we restrict the word, as is often done, to the study of the general vital phenomena common to plants and animals, then it is very modern. A long period of descriptive work and detailed analysis was necessary before there could be much progress with the general problems of biology (in the stricter sense), which have to do with the nature and origin, continuance and evolution, of organic life. Even the word Biology is not older than the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Of the period before Aristotle it is perhaps enough to say that it reminds one of childhood—the useful, the dangerous, the strange bulked largely in men's minds;