

Preface

This little book bears a big title—The Science of Life—which is synonymous with Biology. Such a title would be unjustifiable did not the position of the book in the Victorian Era Series show that it is intended simply as a historical sketch of the evolution of the science, especially in Darwinian and post-Darwinian days. It is an attempt to illustrate the growth of Biology from an embryonic state of insignificance to a position which is central among the sciences, and full of influence even on the art of life. By reference to particular problems, and occasionally by reference to particular men, I have tried to illustrate impartially what may be called the modern biological attitude.

In most of the chapters I have begun the story before the Victorian Era; it did not seem possible to understand the historical position without so doing.

Although I have for many years burrowed not a little in the literature of Biology, even this inadequate sketch would have been impossible without the help of various historical surveys which have appeared from time to time, notably the