

RECENT LITERATURE.

I.

WILKES, SHERIDAN, FOX.*

This is a book of a kind that we should like to see extensively imitated. It is not a work of very high pretensions, as far as we can judge the author's purpose. And it is none the worse for that. The writer's aim appears to have been merely to set before the public, in a concise and readable form, the life stories of three of England's great men, with some observations on their characters and services to the nation, and the events which surrounded them and shaped their career. Taking them one by one he describes briefly but minutely, with no stint of reference to authorities, their entrance into public life, and the adventures and mishaps that met them as they pursued their different paths. A work of this kind necessarily contains little that is new, but it possesses the counter-advantage of setting forth in attractive colours some of the most remarkable events of history. And when this is done as Mr. Rae does it, with thorough fairness and impartiality, the author confers a real benefit upon the reading public, which it should not be slow to acknowledge. Perhaps the most remarkable feature in the book is Mr. Rae's defence of Wilkes. And yet "defence" is hardly the correct term. For all he attempts to do, while admitting the author of No. 45 to have been anything but a paragon, is to prove by facts and by the evidence of contemporaries, that the character of Wilkes, as given by the school histories, and even by greater authorities, is neither correctly nor carefully drawn. To use his own words: "It may be, as has been asserted, that Wilkes is the Cleon of the eighteenth century; but if so, he is not the Cleon of Mitford, but the Cleon of Grote." He points out how the generally received opinion of Wilkes, both from the physical and the moral point of view, is erroneous. He is spoken of as a man with an inhuman squint and demoniac grin; an idea which is only due to Hogarth's caricature. Earl Russell says of him: "No man can now consider Wilkes as anything but a profligate spendthrift, without opinions or principles, religious or political; whose impudence far exceeded his talents, and who always meant licence when he cried liberty." But Earl Russell adduces no evidence in support of his statement. Mr. Rae, on the other hand, cites the testimony of a number of witnesses as going to prove that Wilkes was by no means so black as he is painted. Certain it is that to Wilkes the English people owe much of the liberty that makes them the envy of less fortunate nations. To him was due the abolition of the iniquitous General Warrant system, the license of printing, and the reports of proceedings in Parliament, both in the press and in "Hansard." Such are in brief the advantages that Mr. Rae contends Wilkes procured, by much self-denial and sacrifice, for his grateful fellow-subjects and an all too unappreciative posterity. The following is the author's peroration:—

"Wilkes anticipated that 'the faithful historian's page and posterity would do him justice.' Hitherto the historian's page has contained many scandalous and exaggerated stories about his career, and many gross aspersions on his character. Chroniclers of his doings have not veiled their disappointment at being unable to record that his end was to rot in a jail or swing from a gibbet. They evidently think it unseemly that Wilkes should have departed this life amidst the affection of attached friends and the unfeigned regret of old enemies whose rancour had been transmuted into respect. Hence they have deemed it their duty to calumniate his memory, attenuate whatever was most honourable in his conduct, underrate or deny his personal share in upholding a glorious cause. Instead of being treated with common justice, he has been treated as a scapegoat. Posterity has been taught to consider him as nothing but a charlatan, with as much propriety as posterity was taught, in the middle ages, to regard Virgil as nothing but a magician. His last wish was that his tombstone should be inscribed with the words, 'A Friend to Liberty.' Many whose remains have been carried in state to Westminster Abbey, and repose there under splendid monuments, have had false and less-merited epitaphs. Granting it to be true, as his traducers allege, that in professing attachment to liberty he was acting a part, it is undeniable that his part was a most useful one, and that his performance has proved his country's gain. In consideration of the value of the result, an enlightened posterity may well refrain from applying a microscope to his motives, and a magnifying glass to his faults; and fittingly render to his actual achievements a tribute of gratitude and approval."

II.

THE DOCTRINE OF EVOLUTION.†

The various theories relating to the evolution of species are now matter of such very general interest that any work which tends to elucidate and unravel the tangled skein of doctrines and arguments on this subject is pretty safe to attract the attention not only of those peculiarly interested in the question, but also that of the reader who would wish to keep himself informed as to the progress of science and speculative philosophy. The list of works on this topic is already, per-

haps, sufficiently large, and constant additions are being made thereto. But the number of really comprehensive treatises—treatises which give a fair idea of the *locus standi* of the controversy—is comparatively small, perhaps for the reason that such works, partaking somewhat of the nature of a *précis*, are felt to be more in place within the paper covers of a magazine than between the boards of an independent volume. Dr. Winchell, however, has ventured the experiment of collecting the chief points of the discussion in a neat little volume, which we feel sure will prove an acquisition to disputants on either, or perhaps more correctly on every, side, as there are so many combatants in the field. In his book he gives a comprehensive view of the state of the argument, and although he avows himself a supporter of the doctrine of evolution, it must be admitted that his account is in no way disfigured by the intrusion of personal feeling. His essay is a complete handbook to the doctrine of evolution, especially as considered in its theistic bearings. The *pros* and *cons* are given without undue prominence being accorded to either. Indeed so careful has the author been not to commit himself, further than the admission in the preface, to the teachings of any party, that had the preface been omitted it would have been difficult to assign him a side in the controversy. Perhaps the only fault which can be found with this little work is the superabundant use of technical terms. In a work professedly intended to be "popular," this is an undeniable mistake. "Inherent aptency," and "primordial causation," are not expressions that every reader can be expected to fathom. In this respect Dr. Winchell differs from Mr. Geikie, whose work is noticed below. The latter explains every technical expression, the former taking it for granted that his reader understands technicalities, and accordingly uses them freely. But, notwithstanding this slight drawback, Dr. Winchell has succeeded in making a most useful and instructive book on one of the leading questions of the day.

III.

THE GREAT ICE AGE.‡

Under this title Mr. James Geikie, of the Geological Survey of Scotland, gives in a duodecimo volume of some five hundred pages an account of the Glacial Epoch, with special reference to its changes of climate. Although his chief aim was to indicate the succession of climatal changes that obtained during that epoch, he has mainly confined his observations to one region, Scotland. By so doing he thought it would be possible to convey to the reader's mind a more vivid impression of what the Glacial Epoch really was, than he would have done had he ventured to take a wider field. In this we think Mr. Geikie did right. It is evident that he intends his book to reach others than those he calls his "fellow-hammerers," as he finds it necessary in his preface to apologize to these latter for the introduction of so much already familiar matter, on the ground that without this he would have found it impossible to make his argument intelligible to non-specialists. We must confess, however, that the non-specialists are very well cared for in the volume. Mr. Geikie displays on their behalf an amount of consideration and a patience such as the specialists are seldom willing to bestow upon the uninitiated who stand without the sanctuary. He thinks nothing of repeating explanations where he may think them desirable, or of making elucidatory references to matters already sufficiently touched upon. In addition to these helps to the non-scientific, he is lavish with explanatory sketches and charts. Specialists will doubtless chafe at the introduction of so much, to them, needless matter, but they will confess after a perusal of the work that the game was well worth the candle. The volume is profusely illustrated with views of Scotch scenery, maps, charts, and sketches of geological sections.

A general idea of the theory Mr. Geikie sustains in his work may be gathered from the following extract from the closing chapter:—

"An intensely severe climate prevailed in our hemisphere some two hundred thousand years ago. North Britain and Scandinavia were then united by a vast system of glaciers, while the ice extended down to low latitudes in England as well as on the Continent, through the intervention of the various mountain ranges. To this arctic period of sterility a more genial time succeeded; plants, such as pine trees, grew in the south of England, and animals, such as the woolly rhinoceros and the great bear, appeared. Gradually, however, the climate grew warmer, the distinction between summer and winter became less marked, and in consequence, the northern mammalia withdrew to more arctic homes. At last a kind of perpetual summer reigned, while the fauna of the country were marked by the introduction of the hippopotamus, the elephant, the lion, the tiger, and the hyena. Again a series of changes occurs, and in the reverse order to that just given, until an arctic climate has brought all life to an end. We cannot say how often such cold and warm periods were repeated, nor can we be sure in which of such warm periods the men that fashioned rude implements of stone first made their appearance. It is likely that man arrived here as early as the mammoth and the rhinoceros, and his first coming may even have preceded the glacial epoch itself. But it is certain that he entered Britain during the last interglacial period, when there were glaciers in our mountains and arctic mammalia in our valleys. He witnessed the northward migration of these animals and the advent of the southern mammalia. Then came a period of submergence, when the British Islands were well-nigh drowned in the sea. After that the last cold period began, and in what

remained of England it is not likely that palæolithic man still lingered. But the British Islands again rose from the waves; the treeless land was soon invaded by the reindeer, the arctic fox, and the lemming, and then the neolithic man entered upon the scene. So vast a lapse of time separates the men whose implements were roughly chipped from stone, from those whose implements were laboriously fashioned and polished. Gradually the climate still further improved, plants became more numerous and luxuriant, the animals of arctic regions were replaced by the ox and the sheep, while man himself slowly progressed, until he discarded stone for bronze, and ultimately discovered the mode of working iron. Thus we reach the dawn of that human history the records of which are more varied, and at the same time more easy to decipher, than the obscure relics of the non-historic ages."

THE LITERARY WORLD

Mr. Bellew, the celebrated reader and elocutionist, died on Friday last.

The fifth volume of Kinglake's "History of the Crimean War" is ready.

The English critics speak in the highest terms of Professor Vambéry's new book on Central Asia.

It is reported that a limited liability company is projected in London for the purpose of re-starting the *Star* newspaper.

Sir Frederick Pollock is editing the autobiography of the late Mr. Macready, which will be supplemented with selections from his journal.

M. Jules Claretie has been collecting the various writings of Camille Desmoulins, and, under the title of "Œuvres de Camille Desmoulins," has published a series of most interesting documents now almost forgotten.

A public library has been established by the Viceroy of Egypt at Cairo. In it have been gathered all the most ancient manuscripts of the Koran that could be found, including "the true one," dating from the year A.D. 720.

M. Carlo Morbio, of Milan, has recently printed for private circulation "Alessandro Manzoni ed i suoi Autografi." M. Morbio is the fortunate possessor of about fifty autograph letters of the great Italian poet, all unpublished.

Mr. Browning's new poem is expected to be out in October. It will be on an entirely new subject. Mr. Tennyson is writing some new "Idylls of the King." One is said to be finished. The new idylls will probably precede "Vivien."

The Great work of Ludwig Lange on Roman antiquities has reached its third volume in Berlin. It is greatly praised by the classical critics. If the rest of the work is worthy of the first three volumes it will be the best history of Rome in existence.

Miss Kingsley, daughter of the Canon, is credited with the authorship of a book of travels, "South and West," on which the London *Times* comments most favourably. "Bright and pleasant sketches, rich with the true light of the sunny South," murmurs the "Thunderer."

At the recent annual meeting of the trustees of Shakespeare's Birthplace and Museum, Stratford-on-Avon, it was stated that the building had been visited during the present year by 19,250 persons—a strong proof of the interest that is maintained in the birthplace of the great poet.

Madame George Sand is said to be preparing for the press a memoir of the young and unfortunate Louis XVII., chiefly drawn from the personal recollections of her grandmother, Madame Aurèle Dupin de Francueil, granddaughter of King Augustus II. of Poland, and nearly related to King Charles X. and Louis XVIII. The memoir is to contain also historical documents and traditions, carefully preserved in the family of the great French novelist.

The newspapers published in the German language, passing through the post-office of the empire, now amount to 3,895. Among them 45 appear more than seven times in the course of the week, 80 are issued seven times, 469 six times, 3,299 less than six times; 3,393 are published in the Empire, 213 abroad, especially in Switzerland, 36 in America. Foreign newspapers circulating in Germany are—French, 779; English, 586; Italian, 145; Dutch, 25; Russian, 57; Swedish, 65, &c.

The *Revue des Deux Mondes* has a history not devoid of interest. Founded in 1829, it has outlived every one of its many rivals and antagonists. The honorarium to writers is 200 francs for the sheet of sixteen pages (little enough), but M. Octave Feuillet receives (exceptionally) 500 francs per sheet. The *Revue* has 18,000 subscribers at 90 francs, equal to 900,000 francs yearly. The expenses are under 400,000 francs. The property is held in shares of 1,000 francs each. In the last years of the Empire the dividend reached the extraordinary figure of 2,000 francs a share.

The *Galaxy* for the coming month contains several papers of more than usual interest; witness those on "Voltaire as a Lover," "Poland and the Poles," "Henri Rochefort," by Junius Henri Browne; "The Voice as a Source of Income," by Olive Logan, and the continuation of General Custer's "Life on the Plains." Besides these there is the usual amount and quality of fiction and poetry. The worst feature of this number is a foolish paper on typographical errors, in which the compiler has apparently laboured to introduce all the stalest items and mistakes of the kind that have annually made their appearance for the last score of years in the funny columns of the country press.

Fac-similes of Irish national MSS. are at present being selected and edited by Mr. Gilbert, of the Public Record Office of Ireland. The first part of the collection, which will be one of profound interest to Irish scholars, is nearly completed. We learn from a report just issued that among the documents, fac-similes of which have been prepared, is a Latin psalter styled, "Cathach," or the "Fighter." It is ascribed to the hand of St. Columba, who made Iona famous, and receives its name from the antique metal casket in which it is preserved. Columba lived in the sixth century. The legend is that, while sojourning with St. Finnen, in Ulster, he borrowed that worthy's psalter, and "copied it furtively in his church, with the aid of miraculous light in the night-time." Finnen claimed the copy as his property; but Columba did not recognize his right, and Diarmid, Monarch of Ireland, was appealed to. His Majesty decided "that as to every cow belongs her calf, so to every book belongs its copy." Columba did not see the force of this analogical reasoning, and kept the treasure. As the story goes, the dispute led to a sanguinary battle, and was one of the causes which induced Columba to leave Ireland for Iona.

* Wilkes, Sheridan, Fox: The Opposition under George the Third. By W. F. Rae. Cloth, 12mo. Pp. 432. New York: Appleton & Co. Montreal: Dawson Bros.

† The Doctrine of Evolution: Its Data, Its Principles, Its Speculations and Its Theistic Bearings. By Alexander Winchell, LL.D., Chancellor of Syracuse University. Author of "Sketches of Creation," etc., etc. Cloth, 12mo., pp. 144. New York: Harper & Bros. Montreal: Dawson Bros.

‡ The Great Ice Age, And Its Relations To The Antiquity Of Man. By James Geikie, F.R.S.E., F.G.S. Cloth, 12mo. Illustrated. New York: Appleton & Co. Montreal: Dawson Bros.