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VIGNETTES FROM NATURE.

BY GRANT ALLEN.

AUTHOR OF "THE EVOLUTIONIST AT LARGE."

PREFATORY NOTE.

These little essays have no pretension to be any more than popular expositions of current evolutionary thought, occasionally their author's, oftener still other people's; but they may perhaps do a little good in spreading more widely a knowledge of those great biological and cosmical doctrines which are now revolutionizing the European mind, and which owe their origin to the epoch-making works of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer.

G. A.

I

FALLOW DEER.

UNDER the great horse-chestnut trees in Woolney Park the broad circle of shade is now pleasant enough to attract the does and fawns of the fallow deer, who lie in pretty groups upon the grass, or stray about, browsing, beneath the heavy boughs thick with scented blossom. To-day I have brought out a few scraps of bread in my pocket, and the fawns are tame enough to come and eat it from my hand on the open; for they have less fear of man here than in any other place I know of, except perhaps in the Magdalen grounds at Oxford. They will even allow a favorite acquaintance to stroke and fondle their pretty heads. No doubt the long domestication of their ancestors has made them naturally prone to strike up a friendship with human companions, just as is the case with kittens and puppies; and at Woolney they have always lived

very near the great house itself, where children and visitors have long been wont to pet and caress them. There are, indeed, few more interesting relics of the past in England than these stray herds of dumb creatures, remnants of the native woodland tribes which once spread over the whole well-timbered country, and which now carry us back in mind past the days of Robin Hood and of William the Red to the old forestine life of the Celtic and Euskarian aborigines. For though some good authorities will have it that the fallow deer date back no earlier in this country than the days of the Romans, who are said to have introduced them for their pleasure grounds, I myself can hardly doubt that they are a part of our old indigenous fauna, which now survives only in a few enclosed preserves. The wild white cattle at Chillingham, the red deer on the Scotch moors, and these pretty does and fawns in Woolney Park, all trace back their ancestry,

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