

our prisoner of war. He has told in his works of his recent of the Peak of Teneriffe (which just enabled him to deny not having taken Africa in his course of travel), and of what he saw and felt among the vast rolling rivers, and grassy plains, and tropical forests, and overwhelming mountains of South America. He explored Mexico, landing on its Pacific side, after having crossed the Andes; and then, by way of Cuba, visited the United States, and lived two months in Philadelphia in 1804. The world had never seen such scientific wealth as Humboldt brought to Havre in his collections in every branch of natural history, illustrated by such a commentary as he was now qualified to give. He planned an encyclopaedic work which should convey in detail all his discoveries and classified knowledge; and the issue of this work was one of the mistakes of his life which cost him most uneasiness. After twelve years of constant labour he had issued only four fifths of this prodigious series of works; and it has never been completed, though portions have dropped out even within a few years. Before those twelve years were over—that is, before 1817—he had been overtaken in research and forestalled in publication by men whom he had himself, by his example, inspired and trained. In the next year he broke off from this slavery, and visited Italy. He was in England in 1826. He was then regarded as an elderly man, being fifty-seven years old, and notorious for a quarter of a century.

He fixed his abode at Berlin, and immediately became a royal favourite, and consequently a politician. He was made a Councillor of State, and tried his hand at diplomacy. But those are not the things by which he will be remembered; and nobody cares to dwell on that part of his life, except those who would fain have Englishmen see that the foreign method of rewarding scientific or literary service by political office seems never to answer well in practice. When Alexander came to England with the King of Prussia, on occasion of the baptism of the Prince of Wales, his appearance in the royal suite gave a sort of jar to English associations about the dignity of office. It was felt that that splendid brow wore the true crown; and many a cheek flushed when the sage played the courtier, and had to consult the royal pleasure about his engagements with our scientific men as a lacquey asks leave to go out. It is certain, however, that Humboldt took kindly to that sort of necessity. He was a courtier all over. We see it in his overpraise of all savans whom he names, and by his dexterous omission of such names as the Court or learned classes of Berlin did not wish to hear of. We see it in his cumbrous style, which is more like a network to catch suffrages than a natural expression of what the writer was thinking about. Those who knew him in his last days saw it in the contrast between his written and spoken comments on his contemporaries. After hearing one of his dramatic descriptions of sittings in the scientific Academies of the European capitals, with satirical presentments of the great men there, his elaborate compliments to the same persons, incessantly issued in one form or another, have been found very curious reading. There was no envy or jealousy in this—only an irresistible provocation to amuse himself and others, through his insight into human nature. He was thoroughly generous in the recognition and aid of ability; or rather, as he was high above all competition, regarding Science as his home, he looked upon all within that enclosure as his children. It was with a true paternal earnestness and indulgence that he strove for their welfare. Almost every man of science in Germany who has found his place has been conducted to it by Humboldt; and this, not only by a good use of his influence at Court, but by business-like endeavour in other directions.

The hindrance imposed on his scientific researches by his political position was very evident on occasion of his last long journey. By the express desire of the Czar he travelled to Siberia, in company with Ehrenberg and Gustav Rose, in 1829, and explored Central Asia to the very frontier of China. Yet this journey, which, if he had set out from Paris, he would have thought worthy to absorb some years, was hurried over in nine months, as he happened to set forth

from the Court of Berlin. He did great things for the time—instituting observatories, improving the Russian methods of mining, kindling intelligence wherever he went, and bringing home knowledge, more great and various than perhaps any living man but himself has gained in so short a time. After his return he spent the rest of his life, with intervals of travel, in maturing the generalisations by which he has done his chief service of all, that of indicating the laws of the distribution of the forms of existence, and especially of biological existence. He also compiled his "Kosmos" from the substance of sixty one lectures which he delivered in Berlin in 1827-8. His frame wore wonderfully, and there was no sign of decay of external sense or interior faculty while younger men were dropping into the grave, completely worn out. He was the last of the contemporaries of Goethe; and as the tidings came of the death of each—philosopher, poet, statesman, or soldier—Humboldt raised his head higher, seemed to feel younger, and, as it were, proud of having out-lived so many. If silent, he was kindly and gentle; if talkative, he would startle his hearers with a story or scene from a Siberian steppe or a Peruvian river side—fresh and accurate as if witnessed last year. He forgot no names or dates, any more than facts of a more interesting kind. In the street, he was known to every resident of Berlin and Potsdam, and was pointed out to all strangers as he walked, slowly and firmly, with his massive head bent a little forward, and his hand at his back holding a pamphlet. He was fond of the society of young men to the last, and was often found present at their scientific processes and meetings for experiment, and nobody present was more unpretending and gay. He has been charged with putting down all talk but his own; but this was the natural mistake of the empty-minded, who were not qualified either to listen or talk in his presence. There was no better listener than Humboldt in the presence of one who had anything worth hearing to say on any subject whatever.

It is a great thing for Germany that, at the period when the national intellect seemed in danger of evaporating in dreams and vapours of metaphysics, Humboldt arose to connect the abstract faculty of that national mind with the material on which it ought to be employed. The rise of so great a naturalist and initiator of physical philosophy at the very crisis of the intellectual fortunes of Germany is a blessing of yet unappreciated value; unappreciated because it is only the completion of any revolution which can reveal the whole prior need of it. If Alexander Humboldt suffered, more or less, from the infection of the national uncertainty of thought and obscurity of expression, he conferred infinitely more than he lost by giving a grasp of reality to the finest minds of his country, and opening a broad new avenue into the realm of nature to be trodden by all people of all times.

#### BIBLICAL DISCOVERIES—ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS AND INSCRIPTIONS.

Professor Tischendorf, who had been sent by the Russian Government on a journey of scientific exploration, in a letter from Cairo, dated the 15th of March, states to the Minister of Saxony, Herr Falkenstein, that he has succeeded in making some valuable discoveries relative to the Bible. The most important of these discoveries is a manuscript of the Holy Scriptures from the fourth century, consequently, as old as the famous manuscripts of the Vatican, which hitherto, in all commentaries, maintained the first rank. This it will have to share in future with the newly-discovered manuscript, if Herr Tischendorf be not mistaken. In 346 beautifully fine parchment leaves, of such size that only two can have been cut out of one skin, it contains also the greatest part of the Prophets, the Psalms, the Book of Job, the Book of Jesus Sirach, the Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, and several of the apocryphal books of the Old Testament; but then the whole of the New Testament is complete. Another discovery of Professor Tischendorf's is described as a com-