

OUR TABLE.

MACAULAY'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND, FROM THE
ACCESSION OF JAMES II.*

PERHAPS no announcement has for many years created in the literary world, a greater interest and excitement than that of Macaulay's History of England. The noble intellect of this truly magnificent writer has already won for him a proud place among the great names of the old world, and expectation has therefore been high with reference to this, by far the most important achievement he has yet attempted. His success seems already to have been secured. On all hands, his work is spoken of in terms with which even the most enthusiastic of his admirers will be satisfied. The first volume only has reached us, and that so lately, that we have had time only to glance at its contents, looking at random over a page or two wherever the eye might happen to alight. We are not therefore in a position to give our own impressions of it, although we are disposed to agree with much that we have read regarding it. It is undoubtedly a most valuable addition to the standard literature of England, and will take a high rank in all historical libraries. Macaulay is a strong political partizan, and his writings are naturally imbued with the views to which he has so long adhered, and in the volume before us, we can see the bias of his mind. With a vast number of his countrymen, this will be no blemish upon his work, and those who oppose him will overlook it in consideration of the grandeur of intellect, and grasp of mind, which pervade all the productions of his pen. He says:—

"I purpose to write the history of England from the accession of King James the Second down to a time which is within the memory of men still living. I shall recount the errors which, in a few months, alienated a loyal gentry and priesthood from the house of Stuart. I shall trace the course of that revolution which terminated the long struggle between our sovereigns and their Parliaments, and bound up together the rights of the people and the title of the reigning dynasty. I shall relate how the new settlement was, during many troubled years, successfully defended against foreign and domestic enemies; how, under that settlement, the authority of law and the security of property were found to be compatible with a never before known; how, from the auspicious union of order and freedom, sprang a prosperity

of which the annals of human affairs had furnished no example; how our country, from a state of ignominious vassalage, rapidly rose to the place of umpire among European powers; how her opulence and her martial glory grew together; how, by wise and resolute good faith, was gradually established a public credit fruitful of marvels which to the statesmen of any former age would have seemed incredible; how a gigantic commerce gave birth to a maritime power, compared with which every other maritime power, ancient or modern, sinks into insignificance; how Scotland, after ages of enmity, was at length united to England, not merely by legal bonds, but by indissoluble ties of interest and affection; how, in America, the British colonies rapidly became far mightier and wealthier than the realms which Cortez and Pizarro had added to the dominions of Charles the Fifth; how, in Asia, British adventurers founded an empire not less splendid and more durable than that of Alexander.

"Nor will it be less my duty faithfully to record disasters mingled with triumphs, and great national crimes and follies far more humiliating than any disaster. It will be seen that even what we justly account our chief blessings were not without alloy. It will be seen that the system which effectually secured our liberties against the encroachments of kingly power gave birth to a new class of abuses from which absolute monarchies are exempt. It will be seen that, in consequence partly of unwise interference, and partly of unwise neglect, the increase of wealth and the extension of trade produced, together with immense good, some evils from which poor and rude societies are free. It will be seen how, in two important dependencies of the crown, wrong was followed by just retribution; how imprudence and obstinacy broke the ties which bound the North American colonies to the parent state; how Ireland, cursed by the domination of race over race, and of religion over religion, remained, indeed, a member of the empire, but a withered and distorted member, adding no strength to the body politic, and reproachfully pointed at by all who feared or envied the greatness of England."

Such is the purpose with which the work was undertaken—of the manner of its accomplishment we shall probably take occasion to speak more at length, when we have had an opportunity to form an opinion of our own upon the subject, and if it come up to our expectations, it will be good indeed.

A typographical error in the Poem, entitled "Nebuchadnezzar's Vision of the Tree," in our January number, requires correction. In the line

"Looked up and laboured but 'exhaust his head,"
for "exhaust," read "exalt."

* New York: Harper & Brother. For sale in Montreal, by R. W. Lay, St. Francois Xavier Street.—10s. per vol.