

Selections.

Modern English Literature: its Blemishes and Defects.

By HENRY H. BREEN, Esq., F.S.A. Longmans.

We cannot say we should fancy Mr. Breen's self-imposed task. Both its moral and its intellectual effects upon the inquirer himself must have been, to say the least, unpleasant. To read the words of our leading writers with the attention solely and keenly directed to their defects of style must be an occupation scarcely one degree better than that of a reader in a printing office. And fault-finding may be necessary, but it is not an improving employment. However (if Mr. Breen will allow us to use the word to which he has a great objection), Mr. Breen has no doubt made out his case, although confining himself solely to the fact, without attempting any explanation of it. He certainly proves that inaccurate English and a slipshod style are the characteristics of Sir Archibald Alison and the older Disraeli, and are to be found in most of our leading writers, even in such as Hallam.

He points out also the contrast between the French and ourselves in this respect. There are indications in the book, whenever he diverges into speculation, that he has probably done wisely in abstaining from any philosophising—to which there is in the subject very great temptation—upon the source of the difference in the idiosyncrasies of the two nations.

Mr. Breen diverges once into theology. He tells us, with some affectation of being wiser than his neighbors, that whereas all Romanists hold Councils to be infallible, there are great and allowed differences among them whether the Popes are so. That such differences on that particular point were allowed, is certainly true. If Mr. Breen will make inquiry, he will, we apprehend, find himself to be considerably mistaken in affirming them to be allowed still. We should recommend him to inquire into the history of the Abbe Guetteis, or of the council so called, which affirmed the Immaculate Conception, or into the present state of opinion in the Gallican Church.

We have also to suggest to our exact critic, that Bishop Thirlwall's dispute to which he refers in p. 147, with Sir Benjamin, not with Bishop, Hall—rather different persons—and in Breenian language, does Mr. Breen really believe that Bishop Thirlwall is two hundred years old, and then had a passage of arms with good old Bishop Hall? And again, that "apochryphal" is not quite correctly, and that correct spelling is rather more elementary than grammar, and a sin against it proportionably more flagrant.

A few specimens of Mr. Breen's game may amuse our readers:—

"No one," says the most grave and accurate Hallam, "as yet had exhibited the structure of human kidneys, Vesalius having only examined them in dogs."

But the elder Disraeli and Sir A. Alison are the great offenders. The former tells us of one of his celebrities, that "hence he considered marriage with a modern political economist as very dangerous." Malthus, we confess, was not a promising character for a husband. And again, that "unseen powers were seen to mingle with the tide of sublunary affairs."

The latter—besides innumerable specimens of twaddle—is occasionally guilty of simple nonsense, e. g., he informs us that "the increase of the horned cattle of South America is the most extraordinary instance of multiplication which is recorded in the annals of mankind!" And again, that "the heroic Spanish gunners at Saragossa had no defence but bags of earth, which the citizens replaced as fast as they were shattered by the enemy's shot, joined to their own unconquerable courage."

Our extracts shall be ended by an inscription to the memory of Lord George Bentinck, adopted by the committee connected with the *Not* testimonial to the Protectionist leader.—"To the memory of Lord George Frederick Cavendish Bentinck, &c., "whose ardent patriotism and uncompromising honesty were only equalled by the persevering zeal and extraordinary talents, which called forth the grateful homage of those who, in erecting this memorial, pay a heartfelt tribute to exertions which promaturely brought to the grave one who might long have lived the pride of his native country." Mr. Breen, however, shows that he never read Aristotle's "Rhetoric," when he adds the remark, that "this is a style unknown to any system of rhetoric, ancient or modern. He may find it duly labelled and analysed in the third book of this ancient philosopher.

A chapter on Plagiarisms at the end of the book is the most interesting portion. Mr. Breen has hunted up with praiseworthy diligence the original sources of

several well known sayings, as, e. g., the great *idea Napoleonienne*, that "from the sublime to the ridiculous is but a step," which is to be found in Longinus.—Even here, however, Mr. Breen is rather too harsh sometimes. For instance, the idea is not so recondite in Tennyson's line—"You could scarce see the grass for flowers"—as that he must be supposed to have borrowed it, because it occurs in rather different words, and with a totally different turn in the idea, in the old dramatist Peole—"Ye may no see, for peeping flowers, the grasse."

On a True Parthenogenesis in Moths and Bees; a Contribution to the History of Reproduction in Animals. By CARL THEODOR ERNST VON SIEBOLD. Translated by WILLIAM S. DALLAS, F. L. S., & Van Voorst.

This is a purely naturalist's book, unlikely, at least in its present form, to attract the attention of any but professed naturalists; yet the results announced in it are so curious that it seems worth while to introduce them in a cursory way to the general reader. They belong to the most deeply hidden secrets of Nature, and are drawn from the very inmost penetralia of her temple. Tracking up the stream of existence to its source, the patient observer detects the act of vitalisation, and lay his dissecting needle on the earliest germ of life. The particular object of his investigation in the present instance we will endeavor to explain as briefly as possible.

That all life has a tendency to reproduction is an obvious phenomenon; that the fact of reproduction depends upon a sexual union is scarcely less obvious. It holds good in vegetable, no less than in animal, existence. The anther must scatter its pollen on the stigma before the ovary can produce a fertile seed. Frequently, indeed, the sexes are united by nature within the same flower; sometimes, as in monœcious plants, they occupy different flowers upon the same trunk, sometimes, as in diœcious plants, they are wholly separate; but in all cases a union must take place before reproduction can ensue. Such is at least the general law of the vegetable kingdom. That it is also the general law of the animal kingdom is sufficiently plain. The remarkable fact which Siebold conceives himself to have established is, that within the insect class there are numerous exceptions to this law, and those exceptions not irregular and abnormal, but definite and permanent.

Many animals admit of an imperfect parthenogenesis. The females of insects and even birds will lay eggs, though isolated from the males; but these eggs never reach maturity. Being unfecundated, they shrivel up and perish. This, therefore, is no true parthenogenesis since there is really no *genesis* at all.

Again, a singular habit has been observed in the family of the *Aphides*. In their case—

A sexual generation, represented by separate males and females, is followed by a series of generations, only including a single form, which proceed from each other in manifold repetition without any previous copulation, until after about seven to eleven such generations, a generation of males and females again makes its appearance.

The *aphides* of these intermediate generations are, however, so differently organised from the true females that they are even viviparous instead of oviparous. They are rather foster-nurses than virgin mothers. This case cannot, therefore, be cited as one of true parthenogenesis. It has, indeed, received a special though not very appropriate name of his own, and is known as the *Alternation of Generations*.

But in some moths, in the silkworm, and in the honey bee, M. Siebold has satisfied himself that there is a true parthenogenesis. He is convinced not only that the isolated female can lay eggs (which is no new fact), but also that these eggs are hatched and give birth to living animals which are in all respects true representatives of their species. The most interesting result of this discovery—and to this our remarks shall be limited—is the complete explanation it suggests of the curious and difficult phenomena of the interior of the beehive.

It is no exception to the rule of insect life that a queen should govern. Throughout the insect kingdom the Salic law is reversed. The female is generally the more perfect and highly organised individual. Within the beehive the queen is the only ripe and perfect female. The drones are males, the worker-bees are immature and undeveloped females, capable of laying eggs, but incapable of revising the fertilising seed. Their eggs, however, can be hatched, but only into the male or male form of life. From the eggs of a worker drone only are produced. The virgin queen, of course, shares with them this power of laying drone

eggs; when she has been fecundated, she possesses the additional power of laying other eggs, which, according to the food bestowed upon them, turning out either workers or queens—imperfect or perfect females. And, what is more singular, she exercises this power at will. The worker-bees prepare the comb for her, furnishing it with the due proportion of worker cells, drone cells, and royal cells. The queen, moves over it depositing in each drone cell an unfecundated egg, in the royal and worker cells fecundated eggs, the size of the cell determining in either case her instinctive action. Sometimes a singular phenomenon occurs. A good pair of wings are, it seems, essential to a queen's marriage:—

The drone's, as long as they remain in the hive, are always extremely sluggish insects, which are not even roused from their quiescence and phlegm by the proximity of a queen desirous of copulation; on the other hand, when a warm, still, and clear day has allured them out into the open air, the sexual and copulative impulse is awakened in the highest degree in these otherwise so sluggish drones. They rove through the genial air high over their hives with a loud humming to attract the attention of a queen; who would be impelled to take her wedding flight by the same favourable weather. At any rate, very few of the many thousand drones attain the longed-for happiness of being selected and accepted by a queen for a husband, it being well known that the number of female bees is very small in proportion to the great number of male individuals. But by means of this disproportion, the few female bees, on taking their wedding flight, are always sure of attaining their object, as from the number of drones roving through the air with the same intent, it will not be difficult for a queen to make choice of an agreeable consort.

If, therefore, it happens that a queen is so unfortunate as to be born with crippled wings, she is unable to procure the opportunity of impregnation, and can lay none but drone eggs. This she proceeds to do, filling all the cells indiscriminately with the same kind of egg. The drone-larvæ are, however, much too large for the worker cell, and, accordingly, on their appearance, the workers, with patient complaisance, proceed to alter and enlarge these narrow cells to suit the unexpected dimensions of their occupants. The result is a misshapen comb, known in Germany by the name of *Bucksbrut*, or crooked brood.

Some curious reader may ask the question—How can these things be ascertained? What eye can pierce, or what hand can lift, the veil which Nature throws over these mysterious processes? He must seek the answer in the book itself. He will there find in full and convincing detail the ingenious experiments by which these results have been obtained and tested. We can but indicate a few of them. One is furnished by the introduction of a new variety of bee. The German bee is black, the Italian streaked with bright yellow. A German queen, fertilised by an Italian drone, produces only black drones, but black and yellow workers; thus showing, in accordance with the theory, that the drone breed is exclusively maternal, while the workers exhibit also the paternal *edg*ment. Many more experiments are due to the bee hive invented by M. Dzierzon, the Pastor of Carls-market, in Silesia, the originator of the theory, which M. Siebold undertakes to demonstrate scientifically:—

He hits upon the happy idea of causing the bees to build their combs of transverse sticks placed loosely behind one another in the upper space of the beehive, by which he was enabled as often as he pleased to examine the whole of the combs in a hive one after the other, the interior of the hive being rendered accessible by taking away a moveable back or front wall, as by this arrangement each individual comb, clinging from beneath to the loose transverse stick, can be taken out with this, examined on both sides, and again suspended in its place without injury.

It is obvious how much insight into the goings on of the hive such a contrivance would afford in the hands of a practical observer. But besides these empirical tests, the theory rests securely on the firm basis of anatomical dissection and microscopical investigation. The combination of evidence does not allow us to doubt that we have caught a glimpse of a process in the manifold operations of the Creator, hitherto unknown to human science.

INCIDENTS OF THE REBELLION IN INDIA.

The following proclamation, copies of which had been seized in Calcutta, appears to supply the most authentic and suggestive sketch of the design struck off by the copartnership of Mussulman and Hindoo conspirators. From the conclusion it purports to be issued in the name of the rebel king of Delhi, but it bears