

OUR LIBRARY TABLE.

DICTIONARY OF NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY. Edited by Leslie Stephen. Vol. XIII. Craik-Damer. Vol. XIV. Damon-D'Eyncourt. New York: Macmillan. Toronto: Williamson. 1888.

Names of interest and importance are not wanting from these volumes. If we had no more than those of Cranmer and Cromwell in Vol. XIII., we should have material for thought and study; and we believe that judicious readers will be satisfied with the treatment which they have received in the Dictionary. There can be no doubt that, of late years, Cranmer has been hardly dealt with. After being exalted to the skies as a martyr, he has been almost kicked into the gutter as a poltroon, or gibbeted as a rogue. Writers have approached the consideration of his character and his life, not as calm historians, but as partisans of particular religious doctrines. Cranmer had, if any man had, *les fautes de ses qualités*. How great these qualities were is now often forgotten, and also how naturally his faults connected themselves with them. Mr. Gardiner, in the article before us, has shown not only fairness and good sense, but a real knowledge of human nature, a knowledge which enables him to enter here and there a caveat or protest in arrest of the hard judgment which is ready to be pronounced upon a man like Cranmer. With regard to his recantation of his teaching on transubstantiation, he points out that there seems to be no ground for the opinion that he was induced to make it by the promise of a pardon. The following remarks on the subject are excellent: "Protestants and Roman Catholics alike have sanctioned these successive recantations as acts of insincerity prompted by the hope that they would buy his pardon. They may, however, have proceeded from real perplexity of mind. Royal supremacy over the Church had been the fundamental doctrine with Cranmer hitherto, but if Royalty chose again to acknowledge the Pope's authority, what became of the very basis of the Reformation? Cranmer perhaps might have reconciled himself to the new state of things . . . had he not written against transubstantiation, a doctrine which he clearly disbelieved even in the days of Henry VIII., when it was still reputed orthodox. It was on this subject that he was most persistently pressed to recant, and it was on this subject that, while submitting to the Pope in other things, he would fain have appealed to a general council. The appeal, however, was hopeless, considering that the matter had already been settled at Trent five years before, and it was clear that with papal authority he must admit papal doctrine. He affected to be convinced by arguments that he could not very well answer (it is not easy to answer in prison, with fire and faggots in the background), and he seemed a hopeful penitent." This is well and fairly done, and the rest is as good. We are reminded, as we read the closing scene, of the beautiful lines in Tennyson's *Queen Mary*. The principal article in the volume is that on Oliver Cromwell, the great Protector. One can hardly say that, much as Carlyle has done for Oliver, the public verdict is as yet unanimous. Nearly four and a half closely-printed columns are filled with the titles of the books devoted to the period of the Commonwealth and its central figure. On the whole, we think that the summing up of the facts of Oliver's history and of the estimates of his character is remarkably well done. "Of Cromwell's character," says Mr. Firth, the author of the principal articles on this part of English history, "contemporaries took widely different views. To royalists like Clarendon, he was simply 'a brave, bad man'; and it was much if they admitted, as he did, that the usurper had some of the virtues which have caused the memory of men in all ages to be celebrated. To staunch republicans like Ludlow, Cromwell was an apostate, who had throughout aimed at sovereignty and sought it from the most selfish personal motives. . . . Baxter expresses a very popular view in his sketch of Cromwell's career. 'Cromwell,' says Baxter, 'meant honestly in the main, and was pious and conscionable in the main course of his life till prosperity and success corrupted him. Then his general religious zeal gave way to ambition, which increased as successes increased. When his successes had broken down all considerable opposition, then was he in face of his strongest temptations, which conquered him when he had conquered others.' A study of Cromwell's letters," Mr. Firth goes on, "leads irresistibly to the conclusion that he was honest and conscientious throughout. . . . He took up arms for both civil and religious liberty, but the latter grew increasingly important to him, and as a ruler he avowedly subordinated 'the civil liberty and interest of the nation' 'to the more peculiar interest of God.'" On this question we substantially agree with Mr. Firth, making, however, one addition to his remarks, namely, that, in his later contest with the Parliament and the nation, Cromwell had not the same clear faith in himself as in his earlier struggles against the king; and the doubts by which he was beset and the dangers to which he was exposed do seem to have produced a certain deterioration of character in one who, to the last, was substantially a man following after righteousness. We had marked for notice the articles on the "admirable Crichton," George Eliot—an excellent and judicious notice of a difficult subject; George Cruikshank, the caricaturist; Cudworth, the philosopher; Cumberland, the dramatist; and a very good little account of the once famous Dr. Cumming. But we must pause with a brief reference to an excellent article on J. W. Croker. Every one who read the recently published *Memoirs, Diaries, and Correspondence of Croker* must have seen that he was fully restored to the place of honour from which Macaulay and others had endeavoured to oust him. We are glad to see the excellent rehabilitation here accomplished by the hand of Sir Theodore Martin. The friends and admirers of Croker need have no further anxiety as to his future reputation. We draw particular attention to the remarks on Croker's review of Macaulay's history.

The first name of eminence which meets us in Volume XIV. is that of Daniel, the Somersetshire Poet, a name hardly known in the present generation, except by the careful students of English literature, yet one not to be forgotten. He was a contemporary of Shakespeare, seeing that he ranged from 1564 to 1619, while the mighty dramatist ranged from 1564 to 1616. It is said that he succeeded Spenser as Poet Laureate, at the death of the latter in 1599; and although there is "no official evidence for this, there is no doubt that early in James I.'s reign he was often at court, and well received by his friends there." We recommend our readers to make themselves acquainted with the article on Daniel, so that they may judge how far his works, or some of them, are still worthy of notice. The next name of eminence that we have noted, in this volume, must be allowed to stand in the first rank of men of science. It is the name of Charles Darwin, and full justice is done to his great merits by the writer, his son, Francis Darwin, the editor of the recently published *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, including an Autobiographical Chapter*. This work has so recently been reviewed in the columns of THE WEEK, that we need only say that the article before us gives an excellent summary of the larger work. Filial piety is not always to be trusted in dealing with a venerated father; but there are few words in this article which the calmest critic will wish to see erased. A great number of Davids are here enumerated and described, some of them men of great eminence and influence; but we must be contented simply to direct attention to them. We are glad to say that full justice is done to "Davison of Oriel," the author of what was, in a way, the epoch-making book on Prophecy. When we remember that Newton preceded Davison, and that Keith actually succeeded him, we may be more ready to concede to Davison the place to which he is entitled. We fancy that very few students of theology of the present day have ever heard of his book. So much the worse for those students. The late Mr. Robert Hunt does full justice to Sir Humphry Davy in an article which is as interesting as it is full of important information on the subject with which Davy principally dealt. If we had no more to remember than the "Safety Lamp," we should be forced to acknowledge that he had not lived in vain. Dear Thomas Davy is tenderly handled by the accomplished editor, Mr. Leslie Stephen. It is possible that boys still read the story of *Sandford and Merton*, and remember the endeavour of the author to bring up a young girl who should be his wife, and also the strange methods which he adopted in disciplining this young lady. We rather doubt it; but at any rate *Sandford and Merton* is still worth reading, and so is the account of its author. John Dee (1527—1608) was a mathematician who can never be forgotten by those who are addicted to the same studies. We may recommend others to pause when they come to the excellent account given of him here by Mr. Thompson Cooper. The great name of Defoe can hardly be unknown to any one who has the most superficial acquaintance with English literature, unless indeed boys have given up reading *Robinson Crusoe*. It is said that Mr. Stevenson has, in *Treasure Island*, given us a story not unworthy to be placed beside *Robinson Crusoe*. Be it so, for Mr. Stevenson is a great artist; but we shall think that the "prophets of evil," who tell us that the English race is deteriorating, are right, if Robinson Crusoe ceases to hold its place as a classic. The article before us, written by the editor in his happiest manner, will be of interest to many who have outlived the days of their delight in *Robinson Crusoe*, and the best informed of them will be astonished to learn the extent of Defoe's contributions to English literature in the shape of Political tracts, a list of which fills two columns of the Dictionary; Economical and Social tracts; Didactic writings; Narratives, real and fictitious; Historical and Biographical treatises. We cannot omit here a verse out of a *Hymn to the Pillory*, written by Defoe, after he had occupied a proud position in relation to that ancient institution—

Tell them the men that placed him here
Are scandals to the times;
Are at a loss to find his guilt,
And can't commit his crimes.

The last line is peculiarly good and strong and true. A very excellent, although comparatively short article on Dekker, the dramatist, is from the pen of Mr. Bowen, the accomplished editor of what promises to be by far the best edition of some of our Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists ever published. A very fine article by Mr. Swinburne, in the *Nineteenth Century*, last year, has drawn special attention to this writer; but Mr. Bowen's article is none the less necessary for those who would go into the details of his history. We are passing over many names, which cannot here ever be mentioned, for instance Demoivre, of the celebrated *Theorem*, and we drop upon one other, that of Delane, the famous editor of the *Times*. Every contemporary of Delane (he died in 1879 at the age of sixty-two) knows that he had raised that paper to a height of influence never attained by any of its predecessors, little likely to be attained again by itself or any of its contemporaries or successors. Let men here learn the cost of that pre-eminence. Once more we say freely and fully, this book is unique, and no library of any extent should be without it.

HOW TOM AND DOROTHY MADE AND KEPT A CHRISTIAN HOME. By Margaret Sydney. Boston: D. Lothrop Company.

A simple story, prettily told, of a young married couple's effort to keep house in Boston on an income of ten dollars a week, without debt and without sacrifice of Christian principle. Tom and Dorothy solved this difficult problem successfully, enjoying not only the happiness of a home in which peace and contentment reigned, but the still sweeter happiness of being helpful to others who came within the influence of their lives. The book was evidently written for an earnest purpose which it seems fitted to accomplish.