

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE.

A MINISTRY OF HEALTH, and other Addresses. BY DR. RICHARDSON. New York : D. Appleton & Co. ; Toronto : Hart & Rawlinson.

There is a considerable amount of food for thought in this work, although, to get over the disagreeable part of our task at once, we cannot praise the mode in which Dr. Richardson has laid his ideas before the public.

Our great scientific inquirers have carried the beauty and purity of English style into fields of research hitherto abandoned to crude and pedantic pens,—and this has been pushed so far that some modern essays of this class fail to impress a casual reader with the magnitude of the thoughts enunciated, on account of the transparent clearness of the language in which they are couched. Dr. Richardson appears to think in some of his pages that to have caught a certain easy-going air of picturesqueness, is to establish his claim to rank among our grand masters. Self depreciation is often a merit among leaders of thought,—it sits with an uneasy air on men whom we should never think of bragging about, and it has this appearance when displayed by our author. Lastly, his expressions often offend against the rules of construction, as in the case of the contorted sentence "See the learned professional what aid he calls!" The change in the natural sequence of the words, and the dropping of the word "man" give no additional force to the thought, which in itself is so hackneyed that good taste demands its introduction in the simplest and most retiring form possible. Occasionally he uses curious expressions, such as "*incanted* visions," for visions produced by incantations,—which simply provokes the mind to think of "*decanted* spirits" and spoils the solemnity of his period.

Passing on to more important matters we are glad to be able to agree with Dr. Richardson on many of his views as to the science of health. He is an earnest pleader for a Minister of Health, with a proper department under him and a position independent of political ins and outs. Without accepting all the details, his idea is undoubtedly a good one. Another suggestion of his appears to us to strike the right nail on the head. It is, and always will be, a moot point how far Government encouragement and patronage can benefit science. Certainly payment by results will not do. The wishes of Government as to what the result should be would leak out, and men would work for that result and not for the simple truth. Can any one doubt that if the rewards of science were exclusively in the hands of a State Church, the views of that church (say as to the question of development) would materially influence the bulk of current scientific research? Our "*Descents of Man*" and "*Antiquities of Man*" would be replaced to a great extent by an enlarged series of *Bridgewater Treatises*.

Nor will endowment do. You cannot endow research. You may give a man a thousand pounds a year to investigate such and such a phenomenon, but you cannot make him do it to any effect if his heart is not in it. He may be very conscientious and potter about his laboratory for the full term you pay him for, but the thousand pounds will have gone in smoke, and science be none the richer.

What then can Government do? It can do what individual energy and private means are unable to accomplish. It can perform the Herculean task of collecting those materials upon which genius is to work. At present the sanitary reformer has to drudge