

CURRENT LITERATURE.

THE few half-notes left by Bishop Thirlwall are somewhat disappointing, because, although they justify the general reputation of the great prelate, they only nibble, as it were, at the edges of current matters in controversy. There are six of these "Notes on Contemporary Questions" in the October *Contemporary*, of which the first, fifth, and last are interesting enough, but hardly satisfying. Mr. Murray's paper on "The Etruscans" is instructive, since it touches upon a somewhat obscure subject and throws no little light upon it. The vexed question regarding the origin of the Etruscan population and the source of their art is treated intelligibly and with skill. Mr. Hall contributes an essay on the changes proposed by Continental Powers in the usages of war, especially as they would affect a maritime Power like England. He is of opinion that the set of general opinion is so strongly in favour of a modification in the maritime code that England will be compelled, sooner or later, to yield to the demand. "West Indian Superstitions," by Mr. Branch, is an entertaining sketch of the negro side of the credulous in its vulgar forms. There is nothing of the higher mythical type about them. They are, for the most part, silly and puerile, yet there is a certain interest attaching to them when they can be distinctly traced to their origin. To quote one passage only:—"Such, for example, is the belief about a parson's giving a vessel a bad passage—a superstition that has evidently sprung from the bad results of Jonah's presence in a certain vessel. An old West Indian skipper once told me that he had remarked that if you carried more than one parson at once you were all right. The old fellow thought that one acted as an antidote to the other. 'The trouble is when you have *only* one, sir,' he said to me; 'no matter how favourable the wind has been, it is sure either to go dead ahead or to fall off entirely.'" Mr. James Gairdner, of the Record Office, in "The Historical View of Miracles," treats of an absorbingly interesting subject in a common sense way. His paper is directed against Hume's celebrated essay, especially in its main thesis—the antecedent incredibility of miracles. He urges that if we were to reject everything which is *à priori* improbable, history could not be written, and the ordinary faith on which we are compelled to act in daily life would fail us. "It is the function," he says, "of history to determine the truth of miracles, as of other things, not from *à priori* considerations of any kind,

but by a genuine philosophical inquiry, in every case, into the value of the testimony. If David Hume really treated the history of England, even under the Tudors or the Stuarts, in harmony with the principle he endeavoured to establish in his famous 'Essay,' I maintain that on that very account the work would be altogether valueless; for the principle must have inevitably led him to prefer testimony which was probable in itself, to other testimony which was not so probable, without inquiry into the characters and motives of the witnesses." Mr. Innes contributes a very able paper on the European Church question. It is a defence of the Italian policy as distinguished from the German, to which the writer is strongly opposed. Believing that Count Bismarck has made a great blunder, he recommends a revision of German policy touching the Church. The general drift of the essay may be gathered from a sentence or two:—"No doubt the way to cut the German knot which has occurred to most thinkers throughout Europe is simple disjunction of Church and State. Let Prussia take the same relation to the Church of Rome as is held to it by England or by the American Republic, and what further difficulties can there be? I have had many occasions to point out that this mere severance is not an end of all strife; and that so long as Church and State exist in the world, however separately, questions will arise which will force the recognition of the one upon the other—a recognition which may be occasional merely, but which may also be systematic. But the excellence of the Italian theory, which we have seen above expounded by the Minister Vigliani, seems to me to be that it is universal—equally applicable whether the Church is established or not established, endowed or not endowed. In either case, the position that the State meddles with the Church *only to civil effects* promises important results." Canon Lightfoot concludes his review of Papias's testimony to the authenticity of the Gospels, in reply to "Supernatural Religion."

The *Fortnightly Review* is rather barren of interest this month. The opening article, by Mr. Hubert Richards, on "The Church of England and the Universities," is a good one, because it sketches in a kindly spirit the record of reform, and suggests its extension without any dash of iconoclasm. A recently published collection, in three volumes, of Wordsworth's prose works has afforded Mr. Dowden an