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LITERATURE.

Life of General Sir Charles Napier, &c.*

By William Napier Bruce. (John Murray.)

Mr. Bruce has done well to remind the public of a once famous name which taught, as he justly says, a noble lesson:

"Disco, puer, virtutem in me verumque laborem, Fortunam ex aliis.

He began with the beginning—his hero's birth (August 10, 1783); and chap. i., "Early Years," is not the least interesting part of a biography whose startling episodes commence with fighting Frenchmen in Spain, and terminate with fighting Lord Dalhousie ("whom we read Scots meet, Xo.) in India.

During the great campaign he saw sundry "beautiful fights." He was taken prisoner; and one word of many left him that curious jerk and twitch of the head and jaws which we all remember. He also brought back a confirmed habit (begun by corresponding with his mother) of putting down his impressions on paper with a freshness, a naïveté, and a vivacity which described the inner man; but with advancing years his pen ran into an extravagance which combined, with peculiar incontinence of tongue and passionate recklessness of assertion, produced a host of hot and rashful enemies. Mr. Bruce puts it: "His masterful spirit and irrepressible energy frightened steady-going officialism." True; but, as Mr. Bruce's book shows, the statement covers too little ground. However, Major Napier came out of the campaign a man noted for conspicuous personal gallantry and for the cup de souffle which makes the general: "Well done, my majors" (p. 16) will not be forgotten. There is no need to linger over his career in Bombay, where he advocated for American-warfare raising black troops and slave emancipation; in the Ionian Islands and Greece, where he met Byron and Trelawny, and squabbled with Sir F. Adam; over his studies, or over his taking command of the Northern District, where he was inclined to use buck-shot (which has given a sobriquet in later days) against the Chartist. The main interest of the biography begins (chap. v.) with October 1841, when Sir Charles Napier, sixty years old, and with forty-eight years of varied service which had given him much "experience in the art of killing," landed in India. He was so lacking in worldly wealth that when he took command in Poona a Bombay firm, they say, refused to advance him £500; and although he tried hard to learn Hindostani, he invariably dropped into a doze after a few minutes, and the Munsí, who stood behind him on a box, occasionally put his arm around his shoulder to wake him.

In August 1842 the Bombay Government applied for his services in Sind, Upper and Lower; and he set out with the following entry in his diary:

"Oct. 6th—Off three hours, and this is old Oliver's day—the day he won Dunbar and Worcester, and the day he died; and a very good day to die on, as good as the second or the fourth! A common ceremony, 'Strangeways.' Why are we, superstitious? Why is there a devil? It puzzles man, and so he is superstitious."

The idea of a man having time to write such utter "booh!"

But he was mad at home. He had called the high and mighty Court of Directors, then thrown in the Head of the List, "ephemeral soverignage"; had again Mr. Baber's "ignominious tyranny to the East"; and he had said of the Great Company's rupee that it was stained with blood, and, "wash it as much as you please, the cursed spot would not out."

We now have a short and very inadequate sketch (pp. 157-64) of British relations with the Arabs of the Lower Indus. The meeting Major Otram opens the drama, which ends with the catastrophe "I have slain!" and we are hurried to the affairs of "Meaen and Dubbub." Here, however, Mr. Bruce never attempts to throw light upon the dark corners of history. Otram saw, as did all India, that the conquest of Sind would be thrust upon us; and in more than one official dispatch he had justified the measure by the ill-conduct of the Amirs, which he even exaggerated. But he naturally wished to keep the work for himself. He had been long enough among the "politicians" to learn their policy—even the most honest men can justify such conduct to themselves; and when, after sundry blunders in the Sind campaign, he returned to England in 1843, he ranged himself on the general side of the Directors, whose hatred for Sir Charles Napier went hand in hand with his success. Hence a lasting breach, which only widened as the years went on.

In January 1848 Sir Charles Napier marched down from Upper Sind after blowing up Imam Garh, and the Sindis remembered the old prophecy anent the next conquest:

"Green blue (i.e. grey) springs from the North shall haste."

Their fears and hopes, precipitated matters, and on February 17 took place the "Battle of Meaen". What followed is simply popular. Of this celebrated affair there are two conflicting accounts. One is in the Conquest of Scinde, by Sir William Napier, the noble old soldier whom we all revered, admirably told, a perfect picture, but so careless of details that it caused endless chaff among the conqueror's staff at Government House, Karachi. The other—a report by Major Waddington, of the Bombay Engineers—was a sober and matter-of-fact relation, which dwelt upon the shady rather than the bright side; and there is a third yet to be written. Neither of these authorities tell us, nor can we expect it, how the mutinees who commanded the Amirs' artillery had been persuaded to fire over their enemy's head, and how the Talpur commandant of cavalry—for a consideration—drew off his men as the action began, and set the shameless example of flight when the day came to look into the disbursements of "Secret Service Money," the public will learn strange things; and, meanwhile, those of us who have lived long enough to see how history is written can regard it only as a poor romance. Yet the results of "Meaen" must not be despised. Sir Charles Napier taught the English soldier once and for ever how to fight a winning fight against barbarians—bo they Baloch or Sudan negroes. The recipe is beautifully simple: a sharp cannons to shake the enemy's mass, an advance of infantry in line or echelon, and a dash of cavalry to do the cutting up.

Followed, March 24, 1840, the action at "Dubbub," the tail of the storm, and this virtually ended the war. On April 8 the general was back at Hyderabad, "having in sixteen days with 6,000 men defeated more than 26,000 in battle, captured two great fortresses, and marched two hundred miles under a perfect "Scindian" sun." From Outram's predictions of guerrilla warfare for ten years, the conqueror made in very few months the country much safer than any part of British India. In 1844, when I was levelling down the canals, the rrots blessed me, crying out, "These men are worthy to rule us. Allah aid them who govern us for our good!"

Chap. vii., "The Settlement of Scinde," shows Sir Charles Napier's most successful organisation, who disliked "sticklers for abstract rights," and gave the province what it wanted—a fine strong military despotism. But in the intervals of business the governor turned fiercely upon his old unfriends, the Directors, who had not only ruined him at the whole Anglo-Indian world, but had the indescribable meanness ("that quarrel with Hogge") to attempt a reduction of the prize-money he had earned so well. This made him venal, and the loot that he took in the Trukki Campaign (January-March 1845) came to interrupt these ignoble disputes; and the "Shaytanib Khair" (Satun's Brother), despite all his croakers, civil and military, followed up his Khan and the hill-robbers to their hold, and took it without striking a blow. This episode was remarkable for originating the Land Transport Corps and the Baggage Corps, lasting boons to the Anglo-Indian Army, by which the genius of the votaries of the present day comes to look into disorder, efficiency from extreme inefficiency.

I have no intention of following Sir C. Napier's career as Commander-in-chief of India, which was fated to fail, and which wrung from him the bitter cry, "All is vanity!" But his unfair treatment and the recall of Lord Ellenborough, the idol of the army, sealed the fate of the Directors, and virtually abolished the "Honourable East India Company." He returned to England in March.
1861, and died — in his bed — on August 29, feeling, and justly feeling, that he was an illustrious man. The reader will find, also, this well told in McBrace's volume: the reviewer has no room for it. Nor, with the fear of the editor before my eyes, will I quote certain Nepticurnes marked for quotation, especially in p. 69, 114, 176, 242, 266, 320, 351, 349 (very severe on the Directors), and 378.

R. F. Burton.

Miscellanea, Prose and Verse. By William Maginn. Edited by W. Montague. (Sampson Low.)

The once famous "Dogst" has become nothing more than a name to the present generation; and it is to be feared that this collection of some of his most brilliant work will not be sufficient to elevate him to that place in English literature which he once bids fair to attain. Why, with all that learning and wit that literary facility in prose and verse, that gift of acquiring languages, and the rest of it, which made him appear as a prodigy in the eyes of his contemporaries, he has fallen into such neglect has often been, and will often again be, a subject for a homily. But all that can be written about his careless habits and love of the bottle, however edifying, is not sufficient to account for the fact that a man of such varied powers as "bright, broken, Maginn," should be so soon forgotten after his death. Many men who committed greater excesses (like Byron), or who had less self-control (like Coleridge), have made their immortality.

It is easy to say that if he had been more steady he might have produced more lasting work; but in this book of Miscellanea, full as it is of intellectual vigour, there is little to support such a theory. On the contrary, the most notable qualities of his work, the flashing wit, the Swiftian and Babelasian humour, the suddenness and audacity of his allusions, the swiftness of his arrows of scorn and abuse, are just those which would not have been fostered by a quiet and regular life. If he had spared devotion and lived laborious days, he might have annotated Shakespeare, edited Greek plays, or added another to the forgotten translations of Homer; but we should never have had the "Maxims of Oldebery" or the song of "The Irishman and the Lady." The world, doubtless, would not have been much poorer if deprived of these and other specimens of his fresher and wilder humour; but it was his freshness and his wildness that gave him his "flavour," and, without that, though he might have done a large amount of useful and scholarly work, he would have gained so conspicuous a place in his generation, and the shadows of oblivion might have settled upon him without the "special wonder" of poetry.

Maginn was essentially a "Man of the Time" — a typical literary man in the days when a certain amount of scholarship and a capacity for hard drinking were necessary qualifications for the profession. "Man being reasonable must get drunk," was evidently part of Maginn's creed. We must not, of course, take the "Maxims of Oldebery" too seriously; but the thirty-fourth embodies principles upon which he at least acted, if he did not hold them. It is admirable after its fashion, though too long to quote. Maxim forty-one is more practicable size, and has the merit for a gentleman possessing of being in all probability entirely sincere.

"Never boast a second time with the man with whom you have seen mischieve in his cup. I have seen that a great deal of life has passed myself upon the assertion that no man ever says or does that brutal thing when drunk which he would not also say and do when sober if he were sober.

The following extract from maxims seventeenth is meant for a humorous exaggeration, but Maginn doubtless felt that it was an exaggeration of the truth:

A man has no conception of the true sentimental sadness of the poetic mind unless he has been blind-drunk once and again, mixing tears with toddy, and the heigho with the hiccup.

His contempt for sober men was only equalled by his hatred of Whigs — in one case as the other he was an unfinishing partisan. In this again, he was typical of his time, carrying the strongest political animosities even into the fields of literature. His review of Addison's Plays was something which made the world think he was too much blinded by party hate to see anything but the ridiculous and contemptible in Shelley and Keats. If he had lived he would probably have changed his mind; for he had too much literary sympathy to have remained for ever deaf to the note of any true genius. It had been the same with regard to another poet. In his "Lament for Lord Byron" he confesses:

"In thy vigour of manhood
Small praise from my tongue
Had thy fame or thy talents
Or incumbent grace;
For that Church, and that State, and
That monarch I loved,
Which too oft thy last encore
Or rash laughter mov'd.

A man so strongly biased in his generation cannot expect that posterity will attach much value to his critical or his political work, though they may remember him for his literary gifts. In his lifetime; but if we deduce these there is little left of Maginn but the jester, and the fame of the jester is notoriously short-lived. The fact is that all Maginn's brightest gifts were ephemeral in their nature; and it is only because they were so strong of their kind that his name still lives, and deserves to live for at least some time longer. Out of the present volumes one smaller book might be made, every line of which could be read again and again with pleasure by those who love good jests and have some knowledge of the society in which Maginn were born. And beneath these jests there is no lack of wisdom to be found by those who can sift the grain from the chaff. Nevertheless it is doubtful whether Maginn could be regarded as a "wasted genius"; for if he had really anything serious to say which would have been of much interest to humanity at large, surely here or there some note of it would have been apparent in his current work. But we look in vain for any such sign. Jokes immortal and excellent, paradoxes many and first-rate, metaphors of much wit and ingenuity, we find indeed; but all these were humourous reflections in the current with which he and his name were swept away. His translations show more stability; and if we take his Homerio ballads and put them beside his translation from Vidaqco we must admit an unusually wide range of literary sympathy. But the light of these is reflected; and though it is impossible to deny him originality or imagination, both of these required a stimulus from some other mind to set them in action. It was not when alone with his own thoughts, but when he was parodying Coleridge or Shelley, that he was in most danger of "dropping into poetry."

Nevertheless, one does not need to be told that Maginn was a very remarkable man, and had once a great reputation. His opinion of his contemporaries is amply justified by this collection of his prose and verse. Few so vigorous and spirited has seldom been written, verses so various and facile are very rare. Every line of both is alive. To enjoy much of it we have perhaps to surrender some of our more modern preconceptions and to adopt Maginn's. It requires some little effort to feel at home in his jovial company, and view things through the spectacles of "The slashing, slashing, smashing" Lauding, thrashing, slashing, slanging;" but those who can do so will find it well worth the trouble.

Little praise can be given to the manner in which these Miscellanea have been "edited," for there have not been edited at all. They have been printed without arrangement, without notes, without a record of the journals and magazines in which they appeared, and without the dates of their appearance; and they are prefaced by a meagre and commonplace memoir. If Maginn were worth any trouble he was worth more than this.

Cosmo Monkhouse.

The Parnell Movement: with a Sketch of Irish Parties from 1843. By T. P. O'Connor. (Kegan Paul, Trench & Co.)

While Parnellism is without fanatics it underlies a moralism, and produces a moralism. How it comes about is, why it produces it, and wherein it differs from O'Connellism, and Young Irelandism, and Fenianism, and the case of Isaac Butt, is not so clear even to that Philistine intellect which assumes itself to be competent in Irish matters. Mr. O'Connor, therefore, has done a very timely work in tracing the growth of the movement and connecting it with previous movements of a similar kind. He calls his book "an indictment of the Act of Union;" but as a clear and very readable account of Irish affairs from the point where Sir C. G. Duffy left them in his Four Years of Irish History, it is a good deal more than a political manifesto. To the question: Is it impartial? I reply by another: Is it impartial to fairly marshal facts and then to draw your own conclusions? To show, for instance, that, just before and during the famine, corn and cattle were exported from a starving nation — that is a sample of Mr. O'Connor's impartiality; and it is impartiality of the right sort. Absolutely im-