

logue between him and Porson,—that neither might have conversed as Landor had exhibited them, but that “we neither of us could have talked better.” Of the other Dialogues, comprising the second, third, fourth, and fifth series, Julius Hare thought that “the most general favorite is that between General Kleber and some French officers.” Hazlitt liked best the Dialogue between Lady Jane Grey and Roger Ascham, as to whose quiet sweetness and beauty he was enthusiastic. Carlyle so much admired some special features in the “Conversations,” that he called Landor “the grand old pagan,” the sound of whose writing he said was “like the ring of Roman swords on the helmets of barbarians.” Emerson’s liking for these master-pieces of literature is not less. He says of the author: “He exercises with a grandeur of spirit the office of writer, and carries with it an air of old and unquestionable nobility. His acquaintance with the English tongue is unsurpassed. Of many of Mr. Landor’s sentences we are fain to remember what was said of those of Socrates,—that they are cubes, which will stand firm, place them how or where you will.” To see “the faces of three or four writers” Emerson says was one of his principal motives in visiting Europe, for the first time, in 1833; and these “three or four writers” were Coleridge, Wordsworth, Landor, and Carlyle.

Certainly, these books are not without defects and faults; but it would be a task as ungracious as it were needless to point them out, when the whole work is of such transcendent merit. The praise which Julius Hare bestowed on the “Conversations,”—that he “found creations in them comparable only to Sophocles or Shakspeare,”—does not seem too great; nor that of Hazlitt, that to him “it appeared that the historical figures they evoked were transfused with nothing short of the very truth and spirit of history itself.” Fresh from the reading of these books, my mind and heart all aglow with the truth and beauty of them, I could not possibly bring my pen to speak of them with any faint praise. I have read every Dialogue—classical, political, literary, and miscellaneous—with sustained delight and interest; and to all whose taste is keen for a literary treat, and who have not already enjoyed this rare one among the rarest, I say, Go at once and read Landor’s “Conversations.”

A. W. S.

3.—*The Principles of Sociology.* By HERBERT SPENCER. New York: D. Appleton & Co. pp. 704.

HERBERT SPENCER’S “Sociology” both gains and loses by being a single link in so long a chain as he has undertaken to forge. Of course

the gain is vastly greater than the loss. Too high praise cannot be given to the **intellectual courage, the persistency, the skill**, which has **mapped out a consistent philosophy of “evolution,”** and carried it on to its infinitude of details; which begins its differentiations and integrations back of the chemical elements themselves; which starts a doctrine of biology by pointing out the feeble affinities of nitrogen, and expands it by the synchronisms between particular atoms and the wavelets of light; which holds in steady grasp the largest generalizations and the last results of (it would seem) the whole circle of the sciences; which deals with the most complex phenomena of human society and morals by the same even, clear, and precise method that it would apply to a question in mathematics or the structure of a honeycomb and the organization of a bee-hive. Working, as Mr. Spencer has, under such troublesome conditions of bodily health that an hour of composition had (it is said) to be sandwiched between two of vigorous muscular exercise,—turn and turn about to keep the balance even.—there is something heroic in his achievement. One cannot but admire a certain hardihood of will and a personal force which his own philosophy seems hardly to find room for. If I were going to argue against him that the human will is free and sovereign, his own persistency would give me one of the sharpest weapons. I am going to do no such thing; but only to admire that the same fateful, unconscious, necessary evolution which puts forth the petals and fragrance of a rose should also create the mental resolution and moral fortitude that combine to make up character. And character, both in its merits and its faults, is strongly marked on every page of the ponderous essay, of which we have a single fragment here.

The barbarous but convenient compound, “Sociology” (borrowed from Comte), sufficiently explains itself. In fact, the vigorous outline sketched by the master who invented the term left to his successors not much more than the task of adjusting its details to the facts of science as they should come to be better known, and especially to an increasing knowledge of society in its earlier stages. It must be admitted, too, that the repugnance which Comte felt to speculative generalizations checked him from risking any thing on a doctrine of evolution which forty years ago was imperfectly developed,—one or two *vera causa* suggested by Darwin having put the whole subject in a new light to our generation; and also that a certain sentimental sympathy with the “primitive or fetichistic” condition of human intelligence took the place, with him, of the vastly larger range of accurate knowledge which Mr. Spencer brings to bear—even to the extent of fancying that the unsophisticated tribes of Africa might very likely be the most hopeful

disciples of his new gospel of Positivism. Mr. Spencer shares no such sentimental delusions. In fact, the most prominent thing in his book is the logical consistency which takes each isolated fact as either proof or illustration of the central doctrine. It is not an opinion to be argued that civilized society was preceded by the savage state,—a hard matter to sentimentalists of the last generation; or even that man himself was lineally descended from the brute. It is quite time to take all that for granted. If there are any who want proof of it, let them seek it elsewhere. Mr. Spencer's business is so different from that, that he can well afford to make it his starting point. Now it is not worth while to argue whether or not the finest morality, the profoundest understanding of the causes at work in history, or the noblest future of religion and society go with the evolution theory. Our business is with what it does give us, not with what it may perhaps fail to give. It has been a weakness in some of its ablest opponents—even in so admirable a critic as James Martineau—that, taking an attitude of hostility at the outset to its fundamental principle, they have betrayed a certain reluctance to accept what it really had to give. By all means, in a matter of this sort, let us first take all we can get, and then show how much is yet lacking. As science widens its horizon of accurate vision, the business of speculative philosophy lies with the undiscovered or unadjusted remainder. If evolution, unaided, will not account for such things as moral heroism and the spiritual graces, then one of these days it must be supplemented, by the most arrant "materialist," with something else. Meanwhile, let us see how far it can logically carry us in that direction.

And for this we have a help in the clear and positive method of this book. It is so certain a thing (to Mr. Spencer) that mankind was generated from the brute, and that civilization was evolved in single, slow, necessary steps from savagery, that there is no instant's wavering in the hand that holds the clew. The one key is applied without hesitation to each one of a thousand troublesome locks. Take, for instance, the question, a good deal vexed among anthropologists, of the primitive marriage: look from the direction of developed society, and half a dozen answers are about equally plausible; assume the primitive human cattle, or the ethics of a tribe of "anthropoid apes," and a little patient perspicacity, like Mr. Spencer's, suggests at once the likeliest answer, which a swarm of testimonies will then corroborate. An accomplished reasoner and student, like Sir Henry Maine, gives us a most instructive view of "ancient law," founded on what to him seems the primary human fact of parental sovereignty: Mr. Spencer shows

that the fact belongs really to a stage of late development, and is no fact at all at the beginning, where Mr. Maine had set it.

Of the form of the book two things are to be said. First, that it is a book of science, and not of literature. The reader will be disappointed if he looks for any amenities of treatment, any compromise with his weak desire to be entertained, more than in a treatise on palæontology or calculus. In fact, he will very soon leave off being a reader of it at all, unless he is content to take it humbly in the attitude of a student,—or unless, indeed (like the present critic), he should read it from a sense of duty to the literary public. There is something almost implacable and forbidding in this austere scientific motive in dealing with so many topics of detail, susceptible in themselves of unlimited literary charm. Unless the reader should take the attitude of a student, there is even a positive loss of the impression, a diminishing of the actual instruction, as well as pleasure, which might easily be given by a little more conciliatory style. Take, for instance, the point—not so very difficult or recondite, it would appear—that there is retrogression as well as advance, in some animal tribes as well as at some periods of human society. Mr. Spencer puts it thus (p. 107):—

"Only now and then does the environing change initiate in the organism a new complication, and so produce a somewhat higher type. Hence the truth that while for immeasurable periods some types have neither advanced nor receded, and while in other types there has been further evolution, there are so many types in which retrogression has happened. I do not refer merely to such facts as that the tetrabranchiate Cephalopods, once multitudinous in their kinds and some of them very large, have now dwindled to a single medium-sized representative; or to such facts as that the highest orders of reptiles, the *Pterosauria* and *Dinosauria*, which once had many genera superior in structure and gigantic in size, have become extinct, while lower orders of reptiles have survived; or to such facts as that in many genera of mammals there once existed species larger than any of their allies existing now; but I refer more especially to the fact that among parasitic creatures we have almost innumerable kinds, which are degraded modifications of higher kinds. Of all existing species of animals, if we include parasites, the greater number have retrograded from a structure to which their remote ancestors had once advanced. Often, indeed, progression in some types involves retrogression in others. For always the more evolved type, conquering by the aid of its acquired superiority, tends to drive competing types into inferior habitats and less profitable modes of life: usually implying some disuse or decay of their higher powers."

This way of putting it is not without its uses. Perhaps it is necessary in order to impress some people. But to the average mind it seems a very unnecessarily solemn and ponderous way of saying a very simple thing. Especially, when we consider that it is not the thing to be said, but only an illustration to introduce the thing to be

said,—which is that conquered tribes, driven back into mountains or deserts, may very likely have to take up with ruder customs and more primitive ways of life than they had grown up to in more favored localities. The analogy is made of vastly more importance than the fact. The literary or the merely cultivated reader stands appalled at page after page, which fairly need an encyclopædia of the latest science as a running commentary. For instance (p. 471), to illustrate that larger organisms are made up of groups of inferior ones:—

“An undeniable illustration is furnished us by the strange order *Myxozoyetes*. The spores or germs produced by one of these forms become ciliated monads, which, after a time of active locomotion, change into shapes like those of amœbæ, move about, take in nutriment, grow, multiply by fission. Then these amœba-form individuals swarm together, begin to coalesce into groups, and these groups to coalesce with one another: making a mass sometimes barely visible, sometimes as big as the hand. This *plasmidium*, irregular, mostly reticulated, and in substance gelatinous, itself exhibits movements of its parts like those of a gigantic rhizopod,” etc.

Very curious and interesting, no doubt; but, for the reader who has not the right encyclopædia, a little blind. It recurs in the midst of a gigantic analogy, running over something more than a hundred and fifty pages, to show the rather familiar truth that “a society is an organism.” And this suggests the second quality, which is at once a merit and a fault of the book; viz., the painstaking way in which the similitude is followed up,—an enormous running commentary of natural history to illustrate each step of advance in the sociological argument. And this alike, whether the argument be intricate and subtle, needing the side-light to show it theoretically, or the easy deduction from a familiar fact. There is no perspective anywhere. It is ingenious and instructive, no doubt, to liken roads to bloodvessels, and nerves to telegraph-wires, and governing orders to the great nerve-centres which are the controlling parts of an organization. The analogy had been more briefly sketched before; it is extremely curious in some of its details as here developed; but really it seems as if fifty pages of it would have been better without the odd hundred. And so with other parts of this volume. The argument is admirable, but really it did not need the dumping of the *whole* of Mr. Spencer's commonplace-book upon its pages. As, for example (p. 202):—

“Often the interment of the deceased's ‘property’ with him is specified generally; as in the case of the Samoyeds, the Western Australians, the Damaras, the Inland Negroes, the New Zealanders. With the dead Patagonians are left ‘all their property;’ with the Nagas, ‘all the movable property;’ with the Guiana people, ‘the chief treasures which they possessed in life;’ with the Papuan of New Guinea, his

‘arms and armaments;’ with a Peruvian Inca, ‘his plate and jewels;’ with the ancient Mexican, ‘his garments, precious stones,’ etc; with the Chibcha, his gold, emeralds, and other treasures.”

And so on, to the end of the long paragraph. It needs a gazetteer as well as an encyclopædia to read it by. One begins to long for good old General Taylor's succinct generalization, of “the world and the rest of mankind.” But, as was said, the book is not literature; it is science. And science, in its later stages especially, means plodding industry—*improbis labor*. It is only because Mr. Spencer is capable of more massive work, that we are tempted to blame these book-keeping details. And if we should, he would most likely reply—as Mr. Ruskin does in respect of landscape-painting—that the effect to the eye of details accurately put together is something different from and better than any generalization, however accurate and complete.

The book consists of three parts. First, “The Data of Sociology,” which is most full and valuable on the earliest ideas of the primitive man leading to various forms of worship and superstitious beliefs. Next, “The Inductions of Sociology,” containing the detailed analogy of organic or social life, which we have commented on before. Lastly, “The Domestic Relations,” including a judicial summing up of the case on the earliest forms of the family. The last is incomplete. Some additional chapters have already appeared in the “Popular Science Monthly.” All parts, it is needless to say, are crowded with curious illustrative facts, laboriously gathered, and of undoubted verity.

J. H. A.

4.—*An Analysis of Religious Belief*. By VISCOUNT AMBERLEY. New York: D. M. Bennett. 1877. pp. 745.

THE growth of commercial relations between widely separated sections of the earth, bringing into closer intercourse the followers of the great world religions, and above all the wonderful results attained through the comparative method in the study of language, rendered the comparative method inevitable in the study of religion. Among the treasures thus opened to us by Oriental scholars are countless legends, ceremonies, and peculiarities of dogma common to the devotee on the banks of the Connecticut, the Ganges, and the Pei-Ho. These common characteristics of all religions, so striking in their resemblances, often so profound in feeling, and withal so corrective of provincialism in thought, are ably marshaled and effectively displayed in Viscount Amberley's ambitious work before us. The social stand-