The Atheneum, January 24, 1897

Resist the first attempt of the electro-biologist, and it seems you will be safe for life! Yield ever so little, and your case is hopeless! There is also another piece of advice which may often be found useful, and which is so peculiar that we cannot forbear quoting it, for the benefit of those who may wish to ensure the obsequies of a friend.(1) Wishing Mr. Elton’s old butler to do him a service, “had fixed him with his eyes before he began to explain his wishes. He had found out that this was the business of securing attention from inferior natures, and that it is essentially necessary with London servants. It is the only way a man without a carriage has to command attention from such.” This is indeed making a very practical use of mesmerism. We shall soon have a little handbook of “Electro-Biology for the Million.” Stare hard at the housemaid before you ask her to dust the room; quell the cook with a glance if you wish the dinner to be properly dressed; but, above all, take care to “cow the superciliousness” of your footman, if you ever expect him to open the door, or put some coals on the fire, when you desire him to do so.

But to return to the victim of the tale, poor Euphра. The tutor is dismissed rather unceremoniously, on account of the missing ring, which Arnold had entrusted to him; and Euphра, who really is attached to him, must be a victim to shame and remorse. She has also dislocated her ankle, which, however, by no means prevents her tyrant from causing her to stumble in the avenue whenever he wishes to do so (though it is incapable, on common occasions, of putting her foot to the ground). She comes to London, and Margaret (who has also the power of mesmerizing, though, of course, she uses it only for the best purposes) is left upon Euphра resisting the Count’s attention—holds her down in bed, catches her on the stairs and carries her back by force—and succeeds at last in releasing the witched woman from her painful bondage. Euphра, in a state of chairotrance, finds out the Count’s hiding-place, and describes it so accurately that Hugh is enabled to track him out and obtain the lost ring. Euphра dies from the effects of her terrible struggle against the Count’s power, and Hugh marries Margaret Elginbrod. This outline of a very absurd story does no justice to the many delightful passages and descriptions contained in the book. The characters are extremely well drawn: the pompous, stiff old Mr. Arnold; the sensible, plain-speaking Mrs. Elton, and those Lady Emily, all by sketches from the life, and affording capital contrasts to the fantastic Euphра and her mysterious master, the Bohemian. Hugh Sutherland is a pleasing, not wise young man, warm-hearted and impulsive, and therefore to be liked; Margaret is a good spirit more than a woman, and through her the opinions of David Elginbrod are promulgated for the benefit of the public,—and very excellent opinions they are.


"The Weather Book," by Admiral FitzRoy, composes the cream of his many publications since he accepted the office of Superintendent of the Meteorographical Department of the Board of Trade, and contains a considerable amount of new matter and illustrations. It conveys undoubted testimony to the author’s zeal and energy in the pursuit of his favourite topic, and is a pleasing record of his scrupulous candour in acknowledging his indebtedness to authors whose theories he adopts and endeavours to put into practice. This praise is fully due to the Admiral; but his treatment of the subject is rather rambling, and he omits to supply the facts which meteorologists most need. It is a fault in a book intended to lay the foundation of a new experimental science, that it should be mainly occupied with deductions from unproven hypothesis, instead of the careful establishment of axioms by facts. One is not surprised to find that the longer the time between the signs and the change foretold by them, the longer such altered weather will last; and, conversely, that the less distant a warning and a change, the shorter will be the continuance of the predicted weather. This is an underlying axiom of the whole of the Admiral’s superstructure of weather-wisdom; but is it true? We know of no published collection of instances grouped in a way that would satisfy a man of science desirous of forming his own opinion on the subject. If Admiral FitzRoy had taken the proper means to establish his new science of weather-wisdom, he would have bestowed at least as much labour in confirming this important hypothesis as he has devoted towards raising a superstructure of rules of forecast. The fact would have been evidence of the highest value, if he had collected the instances of marked weather-changes, say twenty in a year, at each of ten first-rate European stations, at American stations for some ten years past, and had found in the 2,000 cases so collected that a steady proportion was maintained between the duration of the warning and that of the incoming weather. Backed by this steady proportion, his hypothesis would have been accepted, provisionally, his hypothesis; but until we have such evidence, the Admiral’s axiom can claim no higher rank than the persuasion of an individual.

The uncertainty under which many of the elements of weather-wisdom now lie, is well exemplified by the opposite opinions entertained by Admiral FitzRoy and by Prof. Dove. Prof. Dove says, the advancing current of an incoming northerly wind blows along the ground, and that the storm is upon us before the instruments give any indication. Admiral FitzRoy, on the other hand, asserts that the southerly current, advances aloft, high above the earth’s head, and therefore that the barometer testifies to its existence long before the wind has changed! Here is a doubt which infects the character of exactly one of the Admiral’s forecasts, and depends on statistical conditions. If Dove be right, FitzRoy’s predictions of northerly winds are simply nonsense. Surely, a collection of facts made by a couple of clerks working for a few weeks would set this simple question, and many others like it, at rest.

The principal axioms of modern meteorodynamics (to coin a word on the basis of hydrodynamics) so far as the climate of England and North Europe is concerned:—

1. There is a steady drift of the entire body of the atmosphere, including all its currents from the west; consequently, an advent of change in the weather usually comes from the west. Hence the value of sunset over sunrise indications.—(Dove, FitzRoy and others.)

2. The principal determinant of winds are a current of warm, moist, and therefore specifically light air, coming from the south, and one of a precisely opposite character returning from the north. Their combinations and conflicts, and their modifications, due to the cause stated in the next paragraph, are capable of producing every principal condition of weather.—(Dove.)

3. The direction of every wind is modified by the well-known influence of the different pressures of the earth’s surface in different latitudes. A long-continued northerly wind becomes easterly, and a south westerly. The normal direction of the above described polar current is found to be north-east, and that of the equatorial south-west.—(Dove.)

4. The polar and equatorial currents usually flow along the earth in parallel strips that do not readily mix; and because their edges are cold or warm, the isotherms are concave in one direction, and convex in the other. (Dove.)

5. Above-head are various currents in layers, never less than two, according to aeronometer frequently three, and occasionally four.—(FitzRoy.)

We may gather from this the intricacy and complexity of the cause of indication given by the barometer. It records the sum of the pressures of the currents, and takes no notice of the order of their alternation. A south wind below with a north wind aloft, would give precisely the same barometrical results as contrary arrangements.

6. The mobility of the air surpasses in vast degree that of liquids. Its elasticity permits a mass of it to continue in movement longer than the duration of the original cause of motion. This is a most necessary consequence of the pressure of the temperature of the atmosphere, and of the increase of light ascending currents (Dove’s law).

7. The wind blows in cycloonic (retrograde) currents, not driven by pressure, but by the common occurrence of the pressure converse of these, or of anti-cycloonic (direct) currents. (Dove.)

8. Cycloonic currents are also produced when the equatorial current forms its way from the south-west against a mass of quiescent air. (Dove.)

9. Cyclones are not satisfactorily proved to maintain their character for more than four days. Usually they last one or two. When one cyclone occurs, others succeed it.—(FitzRoy.)

Alternate prevalence of polar and equatorial currents causes the weathercock to indicate to “veer” in a complete circle.—(Dove.)

10. As a matter of fact bearing upon forecasts, and taking the changes of wind that may actually occur, without reference to their cause, it appears that when change takes place, there is a probability of two to one that it will be veering, and not by backing. In other words the weathercock makes a circuit to the right and not to the left, with the same proportion.

11. If the tension of the air differs widely in adjacent districts, storms must be expected. It is found that a barometrical fall of one-tenth inch indicates that there is some stormy weather: or, when any one station, is a very serious warning.—(FitzRoy and others.)

There may be many among those who have not examined the weather-tables published daily by day in the journals, who may credit Admiral FitzRoy’s statements, but the persuasion that his forecasts are generally just, and therefore give reliable testimony to the correctness of his theories. We do not share that persuasion, though we assert that there is some truth change before it actually begins to take place in
of his stations. On the other hand, we can quote many instances of bold predictions signally unheded, those during the earlier part of this present month, of north wind and snow, being amongst them.

It is wearying to meteorologists who are truly anxious for reliable bases of ascertainment fact to be condemned to read books of hypotheses, when it would be so easy to give them what they want. Thus we are told that there is a repetition in nature, and we are also told that hundreds of wind-charts have been compiled at the Meteorographic Office. Why does not Admiral FitzRoy give us a few dozen of the most typical cases, simply to show us in a very plain way how these graphed lines, aided possibly by colours, and let us know the conditions under which they occurred?

As regards, and worthy character of the "Weather Book," one merit has certainly been promoted by the very discursiveness of his character: it is the enlargement of the vocabulary of meteorologic science. The movements and mutual relations of the atmospheric elements are so peculiar and new to our experience, that a great command of words is required to express them. Commander Maury's remarkable power of language has done good service in introducing and qualifying this new science to the public mind. He has done it also through his own quota of available words. Thus his talk is of the atmosphere-current upon another, and of their mutual compression and resistance. He also writes of the potential of powerful masses of air, including under that phrase the entire range of meteorological conditions, such as direction and force of wind current; tension; heat, latent and active; and weather, condensed or in vapour.

What we depend upon most in our English weather in the present state of the theory, we gladly testify to our belief in their value, when any extraordinary storm is impending, and we are also willing to believe that a probability of fair weather may be predicted. In addition to this, we are convinced that a mere statement of existing dangerous weather telegraphed to the ports is of great advantage, and that it is not only necessary, but not necessarily overspread the whole of a large district; on the contrary, areas of calm will be interspersed among those fairness-currents. It is obviously right that ports which happen to be temporarily benefited by these areas of calm should be made acquainted with the precariousness of their position.

**Ragged Life in Egypt.** By L. M. Whately, (Gecley, Jackson & Halliday.)

As the characteristic heroism of the Spartans was most fully shared by the women of that race, so the women of England are in no way inferior to the members of the same nation which forms the blood in Anglo-Saxon veins. The author of "Ragged Life in Egypt" need not apologize for having extended her energies beyond her own immediate circle. Whatever success may have been her fortune, her work has frequently to keep their children ill-dressed and unwashed; and sometimes they go so far as to daub the forehead of a pretty or highly-valued child with soil, in the idea that this diverts the "Evil Eye." So that although the effort was made in the first instance to reclaim the ragged and apparently destitute, yet, they could not be looked upon in the same light as the poor and wretched creatures and "mothers" in this which they dread. So that at any event was obtained over their parents, and short as was the time during which our author pursued her task of religious education, yet she has induced her children to believe that all the water has been cast on the dry floor, and after many days we may find it with joy.

Her plan was to pursue, as far as possible, the system to which she had been accustomed in England in the instruction of her scholars, — inculcating habits of order and regularity whilst instructing them in needlework and such like employments; and these were varied with the importation of a version of "school songs" from the very best religious mothers of Europe which have been put in practice in this country. Whether such a system can root there, "does not seem very apparent; but the intentions are of the best, and there is cause for thankfulness for even the smallest step towards better things." When she availed herself of the assistance of the "story-teller" in reading parts of the Bible to her audience, the author says—"We often wondered what was the effect of so much of the Scripture being read, the reader himself, but had never had any opportunity of finding out." We end as we began—with ignorance.

**Gongora: an Historical and Critical Essay on the Times of Philip III. and IV. of Spain.** With Translations. By Edward Burton. 2 vols. (Murray.)

Born at Cordova, of parents whose lineage was ancient and noble, and educated at Salamanca, Lewis de Gongora y Argote, a feature of Spain's brief day of literary vigour; and his writings were studied by all who wish to form acquaintance with the age and actions of Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Quevedo, and Calderon. With a student and tributary, Gongora was caught and chronicled the social temper of his time, that now and in some cases through, their defects, of which the chief is of the one man generally mentioned, the other's dis-credit, just as it is a subject on which illiberal criticism has laid undue stress, —his works have long been raised above the contempt justly covers the Purists, and have come to be highly esteemed, not more for their pleasantness and polish than for the insight which his inquirers may gain from them into the tone and manners of Spanish life under Philip the Third and Fourth. Mr. Churton has well discharged the functions of translator; though the Introductory Essay prefixed to his translations is in some respects too minute and diffuse for general readers. Of the Spaniard's various works, his "Historical Poems" and "Sacred Poems" are the most marked by the alternate stillness and verbosity of the inferior writers with whom he has been too generally connected in repete. But even in these the fervour of devotion and the spirit of a patriotic Spaniard make themselves felt through the cumbrous affectations of an abominable style. In the "Ode on the Armaida," the blood of Spanish youth boils up against Elizabeth, till the poet exclaims—

**O hateful Queen, so hard of heart and hand, Wanton by turns cruel, fierce and kind.**

With reason in thy heart's recess, and own,
The love that Truth remits to broken throne alone.

This last line, full of Wordsworth's often-quoted words—

**Oh, reader, had your mind**

That store which silent thought can bring.

Far better than the "Historical" and "Sacred" pieces, because in the absence of anxiety to achieve great results they touch lightly on familiar subjects, and consequently, for the greater part, are clear of affectation,