

# THE READER.

7 MARCH, 1863.

"intends," his preface tells us, "by the supernatural operation of those higher and more recondite laws of God, with which either denominate their effects miraculous, or, shutting our eyes, firmly deny their existence altogether." He professes, therefore, to produce a history of the development of these laws, but the curiously expressed definition of his theme may at once be seen to cover two subjects totally different in their nature, which he nevertheless confounds and perpetually interchanges under the vague name of spiritualism. At times the object of his book seems to be to establish a thesis which men of greater acquirements than Mr. Howitt have treated and still treat with all the powers of their heart and intellect. To show that God takes part in the concerns of the world, that He is not very far from any one of us, has, as Mr. Howitt asserts, been the labour of men like Luther and Bunyan, and of all the great theological teachers in past ages, or in modern days. In this sense, no doubt, the greatest men the world has seen have been spiritualists; but while at times Mr. Howitt seems to aim at nothing more than to use the expression of a certain school exhibiting God in history, the habitual tendency of his writings is to produce a totally different result. The real, though possibly unconscious, end of his labours is to establish, not the existence of a spiritual element in man, but the truth of the claims put forth by that last form of materialism which has, quaintly enough, dubbed itself "spiritualism." From this unconscious confusion flow the strangest consequences. Mr. Howitt hails as friends persons who would vehemently denounce and entirely disbelieve the doctrines he propounds. He calls up Bacon, Locke, Hallam among the dead, and the Bishop of London, Mr. Kingsley, and Mr. Maurice among the living, as witnesses to the truth of his creed. On the other hand, he uses precisely the arguments of the men whom he most bitterly derides and attacks. His denunciations of Douglas, of Middleton, and of Paley are vehement, and are intended to be overpowering; yet he himself obviously shares the fundamental doctrine of those teachers, that miracles are the test of revelation, and sees in Luther's comparative indifference to the evidence afforded by miracles nothing but a proof that the great Reformer had a weak side. While, therefore, it is just to confess that Mr. Howitt does understand something more by spiritualism than table-rapping, no substantial injustice is done him by treating his work as a defence of modern spirit-rappers.

The book itself, whatever its design, is absolutely chaotic. It has neither plan nor arrangement. Chapter follows chapter without any discernible link of connexion. Whole pages read sometimes like the feeblest of ecclesiastical histories, sometimes like the weakest of replies to Dr. Colenso or to the Essayists. The "History" might, perhaps, be most fairly described as an ill-written and bulky appendix to Mrs. Crowe's "Night Side of Nature." Charity has suggested to us an explanation of the apparent anomaly, that a man of Mr. Howitt's acquirements should write two volumes utterly deficient in merit. We are inclined to believe that Mr. Howitt acts as an amanuensis to one of his tables—that eccentric piece of furniture, for instance, which would for a whole week do nothing else than run about the house. He himself dilates on the fact that many works ostensibly written by human authors have been, in fact, the compositions of dictating spirits. Internal evidence confirms our surmise; there is something "peaky" if the expression may be allowed, about the whole style in which the History of the Supernatural is composed. Little imagination is needed to hear the knocks by which each sentence was rapped forth. What, however, converts conjecture into certainty is, that it is easy to trace in the author of the work a mental characteristic which, Mr. Howitt assures us,

is commonly found among spirits. "Modern spiritualism," he writes, "has shown how eager and ambitious departed spirits are to

eagerly ambition must be a ruling passion with Mr. Howitt's table. Unluckily this particular spirit has a weakness, occasionally found amongst theorists clothed in flesh and blood. Eager to defend his speculations, he is a little careless in making out his facts. We speak with submission, but in theology Mr. Howitt, or Mr. Howitt's table, are, in our opinion, not very safe guides. Their combined acquaintance with the Old and New Testament is somewhat creditable, for it rises a little above the standard required of young men about to take their degrees and their family livings; but our annalists of the miraculous, if not totally unacquainted with the more prominent facts of the New Testament, indulge occasionally in speculations which would assuredly startle an orthodox examiner, and which come rather strangely from the mouths of those who censure with extreme bitterness the supposed heterodoxy of the Bishop of Natal. An impartial critic, for example, finds it hard to admit that every text in which the word "knock" is used, has a reference to spirit-rapping; and men who, without being avowed champions of orthodoxy, do not like to treat sacred subjects with levity, find it impossible either to follow or to describe the strange inferences drawn, either by the table or its amanuensis, from the circumstances of Christ's Transfiguration. An age, however, which applauds Dr. Cumming may tolerate Mr. Howitt; but if it be conceded that theology is the appropriate field for fancy and vagary, ordinary history at least ought to be studied in the spirit of reason and common sense. Yet even here the table strikes us as out of its reckoning. To believe Livy's stories, to place undoubting reliance upon every tale collected by all the most unreliable authorities of antiquity, may possibly be an exercise of that indiscriminating faith which Mr. Howitt seems to consider the sum total of virtue; but to assert that "the history of Diodorus Siculus is the history of Thucydides as far as Thucydides goes, viz., through the Peloponnesian wars, Diodorus evidently basing himself upon him in the narrative of that period—and the miraculous portions are common to both"—is to betray a large amount of ignorance, and not a small amount of disingenuousness. For Thucydides does not "go through the Peloponnesian wars," and the greatest of Greek histories has no miraculous portions. Not only does Thucydides scarcely touch upon any event which in Mr. Howitt's sense is miraculous, but the references he does make to prophecies are all calculated to show the futility of prophetic pretensions.

Mr. Howitt's ignorance and want of judgment have prevented him from writing what might, in spite of all his theories, have been a not uninteresting book, since a careful investigation, or even a circumstantial account of the best known and best established miracles of modern times—such, for example, as the cures wrought by Abbé Paris, or of the effects really produced by what may be termed the moral treatment of physical diseases through which Gussner effected cures—would open to view an almost unexplored province of human nature. But Mr. Howitt, who believes in Livy's wonders, is little likely to sift or arrange the evidence in favour of more authentic miracles. Indeed, it is not proof of any kind which has, really, we suspect, caused his belief in spiritualism. He avowedly looks on Mr. Home, Dr. Haro, Judge Edmonds, and even Joe Smith, as the proclaimers of a new gospel. There is something almost pathetic in the fervour with which he urges the moral claims of his creed. "Five-and-twenty thousand persons," he proclaims, "have been converted thereby from Paganism to Christianity;" and again and again he insists that the soul's immortality, which is a matter of belief to other men, is a matter of experimental know-

ledge to spiritualists. We cannot sneer at or deride any grounds on which human beings find it possible to rest their belief in

dispute the truth of Mr. Howitt's assertion, that modern spiritualism tends to raise the moral character of mankind. There may, indeed, be men in that strange state of mind, that if they do not believe in rapping tables or in winking virgins, they can believe in nothing. But almost all men, except either spiritualists or professional apologists for the Christian faith, find that there is a mean between believing in nothing and believing in everything; and except to those who dread unlimited scepticism, there is little either of strength or of consolation given by Mr. Home's transitions through the air or by the bloody marks on Mr. Foster's arm. Spirits who rap on tables, who raise devotees in the air, who blunder through the alphabet, who dictate bad poetry and draw indifferent sketches, may amuse men of common sense and terrify men of uncommon credulity, but since, by Mr. Howitt's avowal, they give witness to the truth of all religions, they, in fact, give witness to the truth of none, and cannot pretend to confirm faith when they turn it into sight.

THE PRAIRIE TRAVELLER: a Handbook for Overland Expeditions. By RANOLDPH B. MARCY, Capt. U.S. Army. Edited with Notes, by RICHARD BURTON, F.R.G.S., &c. *Trabner*, 1863.

THIS volume is a reprint of an American publication issued in 1859, by Captain Marcy, who has recently been promoted to the position of a general, and chief of the staff of the army of the Potomac. It is edited by Captain Burton, of celebrity as a traveller in India, Arabia, Africa, and the lands of the Mormon, and it justly claims our attention both by the weight of its parentage and its sponsorship. Captain Burton's contributions are mainly confined, we are sorry to observe, to a very few foot-notes, and to one excellent itinerary. We are sure that his more varied experience would have enabled him to add to the notes of any purely American wayfarer. Moreover, we regret that in a reprint of any American work bearing on the art of campaigning in that country, no attempt has been made to utilize the large experience which the present war must have afforded. Though an elaborate report is quoted by D. A. Johnson, Inspector General of Hospitals in the English army, no notice is taken of that most instructive statistical statement made last year by certain sanitary Commissioners to the American army, which analysed the amount and quality of disease introduced by various forms of hutting, tenting, and bivouac. The influences of different kinds of flooring, whether it was the bare earth, or straw, or mats, or boards, were conclusively traced, and an abundance of facts were collected that have a direct bearing on the subjects discussed in the "Prairie Traveller."

We are glad, indeed, to observe an amendment in the volume in its present form. The American author made the scantiest acknowledgments to an English volume, "The Art of Travel," from which many passages are plagiarised and numerous quotations copied. In the American edition, one illustration, at least, was transferred bodily to its pages. Its present editor, Captain Burton, has a more English conscience; and though the extracted passages remain unidentified, he testifies adequately, in his short preface and in his foot-notes, to the general indebtedness of the "Prairie Traveller" to the work, in question.

The object of General Marcy's volume is to afford all necessary information to those who cross the continent of America from sea to sea. He advises on the requisite arrangements before starting, he gives itineraries of all the tracks, and he discusses the best methods of meeting such difficulties as travellers are liable to meet in the prairie.

The journeys are made in caravans of sufficient size to herd and guard their animals,

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...men, well armed and ... They elect a captain, whom they obey in matters concerning their daily movements, until they generally disapprove of his conduct, when, in true republican form, they depose him by vote and appoint a successor. All the members of the party "obligate" themselves to aid each other, so as to make the individual interest the concern of the whole company, and thus, with their waggons and their numerous beasts of many species, the party starts on a journey of, perhaps, two thousand miles. They journey over a fairly grassed and watered country, along a well-marked road, but subject to all the dangers of travelling disconnected from civilized life, and liable to frequent marauding attacks of Indians, who may stampede their entire drove of cattle, and leave the emigrants with their waggons like wrecks upon the plain, until the next party may happen to pass that way and succour them.

The method of dealing with the Indians occupies a considerable portion of this volume. The rule recommended to a few men when strange Indians come down upon them, is to threaten the foremost by levelling the guns, but to abstain as long as possible from firing, which would be the prelude to an immediate attack. The safest camping-grounds are on promontories with narrow necks made by a deep stream sweeping in a bend. The river protects the travellers, and fences in their cattle. If the one open side be attacked, the guns of all the occupiers can be made to converge on the line of attack. General Marcy quotes a friend of his, evidently with no great disapprobation, who says of the Indians, "They are the most onsartainest varmint in all creation, and I reckon thar not mor'n than half human." If I war governor of these yer United States, I'll tell you what I'd do, I'd invite um all to a big feast, and make b'lieve I wanted to have a big talk; and as soon as I got um all together, I'd pitch in and scalp about half of um." The General mildly objects, on obvious grounds, to this rather strong measure, but is assured, "You may depend on it, Cap, the only way to treat Injuns is to thrash them well at first, then the balance will sorter take to you and behave themselves."

A wagon with six mules will not carry more than 2000 lbs., and it takes a full tenth part of that amount to provision a single individual for a long journey, to say nothing of the weight of their outfits. Thus in a journey of 2100 miles and 110 days, from Missouri River to California, each grown person requires 150 lbs. of flour, 25 lbs. of bacon or pork, 15 lbs. of coffee, and 25 lbs. of sugar, besides extras, and some beasts "driven on the hoof" to make up the meat component of the daily ration. The choice of waggons is, therefore, an important matter for these long and difficult journeys, where rivers have to be crossed, and an abundance of broken ground tries their strength. The wayside remedies for strained or broken waggons are simple enough, but unless they are thought of and applied at once the vehicle and its load may perish. Thus, if the wood-work of the wheel shrinks from the tire, wedges must be introduced between them. If the spokes shrink more than the felloes, the circumference of the wheel is a larger circle than that to which the spokes are a radius, consequently they shake loose. This grievance is remedied by sawing right across the felloes, and extracting thin sections of their substance at opposite ends of a diameter. The circumference is thus diminished to the desired degree, then wedges between the shrunken wood-work and the iron tire complete the job. Instances like this might be multiplied to a tedious amount, and the "Prairie Traveller" gives an undoubtedly useful if not an exhaustive compendium of them.

The daily marches are usually long, eighteen miles in the day being commonly effected. This is possible only under con-

ditions similar to those of the prairie, where the grass and water never ceases to be abundant. The distances traversed in American travel without water are considerable, compared to those engaged in by African and Australian wanderers. The severest stage of any in the numerous itineraries of General Marcy is 78½ miles. It is in New Mexico, and called the Jornada del Muerto. At present, the method of coping with its difficulties is so well understood by the drivers who traverse it, that beasts rarely suffer materially. On the other hand, stages of inferior length occurring unexpectedly elsewhere, are evidently feared by the author. This particular journey is preceded by allowing the cattle a few days' rest. In the afternoon they are carefully watered and are harnessed. They travel onwards through the whole night with no further intermission than a ten minutes' halt every two hours. At daybreak they are turned loose, and they freely graze, especially when dew is on the grass. A short stage follows, which ends at ten a.m., when the sun becomes oppressive, and the tired beasts are rested in the shade of trees if possible. At four p.m. they recommence work, and travelling gently, with frequent short halts, reach the water before the ensuing daybreak. The South African traveller would adopt this schedule with one important exception. He dreads the morning sun with tired beasts, and especially the hours between half-past nine and twelve. He would allow his animals to take their rest between nine till one, and would recommence his journey not later than two p.m. General Marcy's chapter on crossing rivers with waggons and cattle is instructive. We are glad to see he gives his authority to the plan of driving the horse into the water, when, as he swims away, the rider leaps in after him, and seizing hold of the creature's tail allows himself to be towed across. He directs the horse's course by splashing water at his face whenever he attempts to turn. Any plan is better than riding horses when they are unaccustomed to take to the water. A swimming horse is a very dangerous neighbour; one stroke of his forepaw will so wound a man that he will sink and drown. If a horse roll over in the water with his rider, a disaster surely ensues. Now a man towed across, in the way described above, has his body sufficiently distant from the horse, who, moreover, is not given to lash out backwards with the hind legs, but confines himself to violent pawings with the front.

A chapter on saddles praises the Californian pattern as the first of all. The editor wholly repudiates his acquiescence in this laudation, and so do we. It is dangerous in a fall. The English hunting saddle affords an excellent type, whence saddles for the bush are copied with alterations in detail. Thus the stuffing is trebled in quantity, and rings for various uses are riveted into its iron tree. However, a man who really lives in the saddle, like a courier in the days of the youth of the present generation, when railroads were few and electric telegraphs not at all, does not find a sufficiency of support in its shape. He prefers a cover of buckskin: the ordinary pigskin is too smooth a material to allow of a dozing rider to keep his seat with adequate "sticktion."

A very good pack-saddle is described and pictured in the "Prairie Traveller," but we doubt its being equal to the modern Australian pattern first introduced by F. Gregory, the explorer, which was exhibited in the International, and is now deposited in the rooms of the Royal Geographical Society. The American contrivance demands that girthing with long coils of rope which the hooks in Gregory's saddle, whence the pack-bags are suspended, wholly supersede. In the latter contrivance a bag is simply suspended on either side to a couple of hooks. A mackintosh sheet and a surcingle keep everything in its place and safe from wet. Any package can be put into the bags. The cruppers and breast-plate are solid and simple.

Allusions are made to the bush sagacity of the natives, which the editor believes to be unmatchable by that of Europeans, but the editor seems to be unacquainted with the natives. In this we cordially agree with him. It seems to us that the native excels, not by the possession of gifts denied to the white man, but by the absence of what the white man has attained to. A well-educated Englishman is largely engaged with his own reflections as he walks along, and does not care to attend to trifles; a savage's whole soul is in his eyes and ears. He is thinking of nothing but twigs and stones and marks on the ground, and, therefore, many objects catch his attention which the other neglects. But whenever the mind of the white man is concentrated upon these trivialities, either by the excitement of sport or by danger, the rapidity with which he increases in skillfulness to almost the equal of the savage, shows evidence of his intrinsic superiority. In clearness of vision and sharpness of hearing the white man soon rivals the savage, though in first catching sight of new objects the roving eyes of the latter retain an advantage to the end.

General Marcy and the editor both allude to the partial inefficiency of soldiers compared with native corps, due to the limited curriculum of European discipline, which neglects instruction in the duties of campaigning. The prominent position of General Marcy in the recent war may have enabled him to carry some of his own ideas into effect; we should be exceedingly glad to hear what impressions the requirements of actual warfare have made upon his previous notions. It is indeed a question of great importance whether a widely spread knowledge of the every-day duties peculiar to camp life be not an important element of military knowledge, and if so, whether it be not possible to convey it in the regular course of instruction or drill in a manner that shall not interfere with other duties of still greater importance, and shall not be costly in money, in wear and tear of outfit, or in illness.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND SINCE THE ACCESSION OF GEORGE THE THIRD, 1760—1860. By THOMAS ERSKINE MAY, C.B. Two Volumes. Svo. Longmans. 1861—63.

MR. HALLAM and his "Constitutional History" with the period of George the Second's death, being, as he said, "unwilling to excite the prejudices of modern politics, especially those connected with personal character." In a couple of volumes, which will henceforth be as indispensable as Mr. Hallam's to every student of English constitutional history, and which to men who are not close historical students will afford most valuable assistance in the understanding of contemporary politics, Mr. Erskine May has continued the story for another hundred years, so truthfully and so delicately that no personal offence can with the least reason be taken, and no political prejudice need be aroused. The conduct of nearly every living statesman of mark has been freely canvassed by Mr. May, and whenever it was called for he has not shrunk from the expression of his own convictions; but all his statements and criticisms have been made with a courtesy and grace that cannot be too highly praised. Those who most widely differ from him will be the readiest to acknowledge the generous temper in which he has written; and those who are most familiar with the ground over which he travels will be the first to perceive the zeal and honesty with which he has worked.

Zeal and honesty could nowhere be shown more plainly than in Mr. Hallam's *History*; but, in one respect Mr. May has advantage over his predecessor. Writing five and thirty years ago, at a time when historical research, as it is now understood, was but in its infancy,—when contemporary sources of information, as contained in state papers and