

## LITERARY.

## THE COMING RACE.

*The Coming Race.* Blackwood.

Reminding the reader sometimes of Sir Thomas More's 'Utopia' and sometimes of 'Gulliver's Travels,' this curious and interesting book deserves a place on the shelf beside those masterpieces. And it deserves to be read carefully before it is shelved. Its kindly satire, its gentle moralisings, its healthy humour, and its extensive knowledge well applied, combine to separate it from the mass of ephemeral publications, and give evidence of literary skill very rarely to be met with in books written for the circulating libraries. Its literary skill and the wisdom that speaks through it are, indeed, so great, that it is hard to believe that we have here the work of a novice. George Eliot might claim it as one of her most finished productions.

It has only a slender thread of story, and that thread is used merely for stringing together the opinions and speculations about ordinary life and thought, past, present, and future, which the author chooses to put forward in a somewhat fantastic shape. He tells how, having tumbled through a crevice in a new shaft of a mine, he fell into an underground world, peopled by a race which, partly by reason of the greater difficulties it has had to overcome, has acquired a higher civilisation than any dwellers on the surface of the earth have reached, and which, when the time has come for it to take possession of the outer world, must necessarily drive from it its present inhabitants, just as English colonists, even if they try to do otherwise, are exterminating Red Indians in America and Maories in New Zealand. This race, known as the Ana, is said to comprise many branches, of various civilisation and with varying physical advancement in proportion to their growth in civilisation. The tribe among whom the traveller found himself is one of a group styled the Vril-ya, or "civilised nations," vril being the civilising force by which they have been developed. Vril is a conglomeration of physical forces, or rather that primary and fundamental force which our modern physicists are now trying to apprehend and trace through its ramifications in heat, light, electricity, magnetism, and the like. The author of 'The Coming Race' speculates in the direction marked out by the hypotheses of Mr Grove and Professor Tyndall, when he represents that the vril over which his Vril-ya have obtained complete power is a subtle essence that can be applied at will in causing under ground a light brighter than that of the sun, and an instrument available for every use to which its possessors care to put it. It helps them to fly, when flying is more convenient than walking. They can employ it in causing prolonged sleep in any one who is ill, so that the mind may have perfect repose while the body, undisturbed by mental influences, is brought back into a healthy state. Condensing it in a Vril-staff, which each competent Ana carries about with him, they can employ it in killing all noxious animals or in attacking one another; and the fact that a single man could, at pleasure, destroy a whole army, though no armour he could put on would save him from being himself destroyed in an instant if he were guilty of wrong-doing, has had the effect of abolishing war, as a game too silly to be played at.

Those are a few illustrations, put down at random, of the special uses for which, in this volume, vril is described as being available in the hands of the Vril-ya. Its general use is that, being a terrible power for evil and good alike, its possessors have learned by experience to employ it only in good ways, and have thus attained a very high stage of civilisation. That civilisation is fully and very smartly described by the author of 'The Coming Race.' He describes the houses and cities of the Ana, and the exquisite refinements that are there displayed; he explains their language, which, of course, is an expansion of the system existing—or imagined by modern philologists—in the primitive Aryan form of

speech; he defines all their social, religious, and political observances and customs, and in all takes occasion to make clear the sort of reformation that he would like to see effected upon earth, while at the same time he mildly ridicules many of our existing institutions. Nearly all his speculations are very sensible, and the Utopia that he sketches is a very good Utopia. Here is a specimen, which we extract because it shows, better than any description of ours could do, how gracefully and shrewdly the author combines theory with satire, and expresses both with admirable compactness of phrase and vigour of delineation. It reads like a passage out of the 'Utopia,' translated by a better hand than Bishop Burnet's:

The government of the tribe of Vril-ya I am treating of was apparently very complicated, really very simple. It was based upon a principle recognised in theory, though little carried out in practice, above ground—viz., that the object of all systems of philosophical thought tends to the attainment of unity, or the ascent through all intervening labyrinths to the simplicity of a single first cause or principle. Thus in politics, even republican writers have agreed that a benevolent autocracy would insure the best administration, if there were any guarantees for its continuance, or against its gradual abuse of the powers accorded to it. This singular community elected therefore a single supreme magistrate styled Tar; he held his office nominally for life, but he could seldom be induced to retain it after the first approach of old age. There was indeed in this society nothing to induce any of its members to covet the cares of office. No honours, no insignia of higher rank, were assigned to it. The supreme magistrate was not distinguished from the rest by superior habitation or revenue. On the other hand, the duties awarded to him were marvellously light and easy, requiring no preponderant degree of energy or intelligence. There being no apprehensions of war, there were no armies to maintain; being no government of force, there was no police to appoint and direct. What we call crime was utterly unknown to the Vril-ya; and there were no courts of criminal justice. The rare instances of civil disputes were referred for arbitration to friends chosen by either party, or decided by the Council of Sages, which will be described later. There were no professional lawyers; and indeed their laws were but amicable conventions, for there was no power to enforce laws against an offender who carried in his staff the power to destroy his judges. There were customs and regulations to compliance with which, for several ages, the people had tacitly habituated themselves; or if in any instance an individual felt such compliance hard, he quitted the community and went elsewhere. There was, in fact, quietly established amid this state much the same compact that is found in our private families, in which we virtually say to any independent grown-up member of the family whom we receive and entertain, "stay or go, according as our habits and regulations suit or displease you." But though there were no laws such as we call laws, no race above ground is so law-observing. Obedience to the rule adopted by the community has become as much an instinct as if it were implanted by nature. Even in every household the head of it makes a regulation for its guidance, which is never resisted nor even cavilled at by those who belong to the family. They have a proverb, the pithiness of which is much lost in this paraphrase, "No happiness without order, no order without authority, no authority without unity." The mildness of all government among them, civil or domestic, may be signalised by their idiomatic expressions for such terms as illegal or forbidden—viz., "It is requested not to do so-and-so." Poverty among the Ana is as unknown as crime; not that property is held in common, or that all are equals in the extent of their possessions or the size and luxury of their habitations; but there being no difference of rank or position between the grades of wealth or the choice of occupations, each pursues his own inclinations without creating envy or vying; some like a modest, some a more splendid kind of life; each makes himself happy in his own way. Owing to this absence of competition, and the limit placed on the population, it is difficult for a family to fall into distress; there are no hazardous speculations, no emulators striving for superior wealth and rank. No doubt in each settlement all originally had the same proportions of land dealt out to them; but some, more adventurous than others, had extended their possessions farther into the bordering wilds, or had improved into richer fertility the produce of their fields, or entered into commerce or trade. Thus, necessarily, some had grown richer than others, but none had become absolutely poor, or wanting anything which their tastes desired. If they did so, it was always in their power to migrate, or at the worst to apply, without shame and with certainty of aid, to the rich; for all the members of the community considered themselves as brothers of one affectionate and united family.

That long paragraph is a fair sample of the style and purport of the whole book. It gives a very pleasant theory of man in his highest form of civilisation. And in this ideal state of things woman is civilised no less than man. Indeed, in 'The Coming Race' women are made out to be really the better half of creation. Their physical superiority over men is shown, not only in beauty of face and proportion, but also in strength of muscle

and largeness of limb. In some respects, if not in all, they are actually cleverer as well as handsomer than men; and in all departments of thought and action they have fairplay given to them, so that they may take any position in the community that is most advantageous to it and themselves. Zee, the stalwart and learned daughter of the host who befriends the traveller, is heroine of the story, and it is by her, after he has refused to take her as a wife, that he is saved from the doom that would fall upon him by longer residence in the lower world of the Ana, and brought back to the surface of the earth.

#### MR GRANT DUFF'S SPEECHES.

*Elgin Speeches.* By Mountstuart E. Grant Duff, M.P. Edmonston and Douglas.

The reviews of home and foreign politics which the member for the Elgin Burghs has for the past ten years been in the habit of delivering as annual addresses to his constituents deserved to be collected and republished in a permanent form. No more racy and comprehensive chronicles of the political events of the year have been compiled in English, and the student of contemporary history can nowhere find, within equally brief space, so large an amount of sound and important information bearing on the period they cover. These speeches may indeed be regarded as the sequel or continuation of their author's valuable 'Studies in European Politics,' a work that has no rival in the department of letters to which it belongs. But we are sorry to find that this volume only contains an expurgated and abridged version of the original speeches, Mr Grant Duff having considered it advisable to strike out "numerous paragraphs, sentences, and phrases, in which either the matter or the form no longer pleased." The excisions that have been made have not in all cases enhanced the value of the work, and it is difficult to believe that they uniformly represent a change of opinion. In more than one instance it is to be feared that the suppression must be attributed simply to a change of position; the Under Secretary for India finding it imprudent to repeat what the independent member thought and said, especially regarding the chief under whom he is serving. At all events the reader of this volume will search in vain for the pungent paragraph in which Mr Grant Duff, in 1866, declared that what Mr Gladstone most hated was "thorough-going Liberalism, which extends to every department of thought," and he may judge for himself whether the criticism is less true now than it was then. We miss other passages, which, in our opinion, might have been allowed to remain, if the author had not been trammelled with office.

But although they have not, on the whole, been improved in the editing, the 'Elgin Speeches' acquire additional value and interest by being brought together in one volume. In an introduction, which is apparently intended as a substitute for the usual annual address to his constituents, Mr Grant Duff lays down three conditions, which he considers it imperative to fulfil, in order that this country may continue to enjoy the blessings of peace, and be free to develop her material and intellectual resources. The second of these conditions is "that the national mind should inform itself more distinctly of the facts of foreign politics, of the actualities of the world. The old Greek saying, 'all things are in a state of flux, nought remains fixed,' is truer of nothing than it is of the political state system, or want of system, in which we are living. We should take far more care than we do, as a nation, to keep ourselves informed, not only of what is passing, but of the tendencies which are beginning to manifest themselves in all the countries with which we have relations." This is precisely the kind of service that this volume is most specially calculated to render. Mr Grant Duff's sympathies are cosmopolitan. To use the phrase applied to Cobden by M. Drouyn de Lhuys, he is "an international man." Whatever promises to forward the cause of human culture receives his earnest and enthusiastic support. He is singularly free from prejudice, and hates

nothing but ignorance, superstition, and bigotry; yet, although he hates these with the most perfect hatred, he can still feel compassion for the victims of intellectual privation and vice.

In what direction can progress most readily be made, is the question with which he is constantly occupied, and to bring our institutions and life into conformity with the best thought of the time, is his conception of the aim and object of the Liberal party. "The enemy" to be contended against is "the spirit of routine—the spirit of blind aversion to the light—the spirit for which the Liberals beyond the Rhine have devised so good a name, calling it the Ungeist (the negation of intellect)." But, although Mr Duff's point of view is abstract, he presents the problems of politics in a highly concrete and interesting shape. The originators or leaders of the various movements are brought before us, and made to explain their own designs and projects. He is as rich in anecdote and epigram as Plutarch, and makes as effective use of them, for every story he tells and every pithy sentence he repeats throw light upon some important political question or character. His instinct is seldom at fault, and he trusts much to it; but it is not infallible. He thought the Southern States of America would secure their independence and break away from the Union, and he believed with Heine and the majority of the more advanced German Liberals, that Germany would be revolutionised before it was united. He held with those who said, "Through Freedom to Unity," as against those who said, "Through Unity to Freedom;" but "the hours and the destinies were against us." "Perhaps," he adds, "that is too absolute an admission. The play is not yet played out."

The only portion of this book that is new, with the exception of a few explanatory notes, is the "Introduction," to which we have already referred. Besides urging us to improve our information in regard to foreign politics; to "approach troublesome international questions with a sincere and anxious desire for a pacific settlement of them;" and to "aim at living in the community of nations as well-bred people live in society," Mr Grant Duff indicates the direction from which the next great European troubles are likely to spring:

What civilisation is to prevail in the lower valley of the Danube—on the shores of the Black Sea—in the peninsula of the Balkan? That is the question of questions in the European politics of the next thirty years. Round that will gather a vast web of hopes and fears, intrigues and alliances. . . . England has the strongest indirect interest in the right, and, if possible, peaceful settlement of the great controversy in which Austria and Russia are the chief litigants, and in which the Ottoman Power, the Poles, and the whole of Germany are so deeply concerned.

Mr Grant Duff will not dogmatise nor prophesy regarding the settlement of this controversy. "I will do enough," he says, "if I point out that henceforward, and for many a day to come, the great European drama will be acted to the east, and not to the west, of Berlin and Vienna." Three principal settlements of this question have been suggested: (1) The maintenance of the *status quo*—Russia, the German Empire, Austria, and Turkey apprehensive of and preparing for a struggle—"You may judge if it is indefinitely maintainable;" (2) "The gradual formation of a United States of the Danube, under the presidency of the House of Hapsburg—a United States of the Danube in which Magyars, Roumans, Croatsians, Bosnians, Servians, and Bulgarians should all live together in mutual self-respect, supported by the close alliance and the whole European influence of Germany;" (3) "The Pan-Slavist idea, involving the destruction of Austria and the Ottoman Power, as well as the aggregation of the minor Slavonic populations of Europe around the nucleus of Russia, with Constantinople and Moscow for their capitals." There are a host of minor questions involved in this vast political lawsuit, but the real question that should be considered is simply this: "Whether, on the whole, is it best for humanity that the civilisation of Petersburg and Moscow, or of Berlin and Vienna, should prevail in South-Eastern Europe? Or, in other words, whether it is natural and desirable that the ambition of Russia, which must be gratified in some way or other,