

The Nation

A WEEKLY JOURNAL

DEVOTED TO

POLITICS, LITERATURE, SCIENCE & ART

VOLUME LV

FROM JULY 1, 1892, TO DECEMBER 31, 1892

NEW YORK

THE EVENING POST PUBLISHING COMPANY

1892

P 0501.

The Dialogues of Plato, translated into English, with analyses and introductions. By B. Jowett, M.A. Third edition. 5 vols. Macmillan. 1892.

To this third edition of Prof. Jowett's monumental work the publishers prefix a note stating that "the additions and alterations which have been made, both in the introductions and in the text, affect at least a third of the work." This is not an over-estimate. The second edition contained 3,015 pages, the present one 3,410, or nearly one-seventh more matter. This consists of eight entirely new essays, enlargements of the old ones and of the introductions, preface, and index, new translations of the *Eryxias* and the *Second Alcibiades*, and a slight expansion of the earlier rendering throughout. These enlargements in matter are accompanied by changes not less extensive and important in the form of presentation. The whole appearance of the page is altered. The type is smaller, the margin broader, the top of each page now carries a running line descriptive of the topic beneath. The title of the dialogue has retreated to the outer corner of the page; immediately below it stand the names of the characters who are at the moment talking; and, further down, beside each paragraph, is printed a marginal summary of contents. For students, and for those who need to look up a matter rapidly, these condensed analyses are a great convenience. The insertion of them, together with the additions previously mentioned, make this edition almost a new work.

The changes in the translation are individually less striking. In 1871 Prof. Jowett was no tyro. At that time his scholarship was already solid and his method well established. In his long life with Plato he has experienced no large repentances. But being, like his master, an artist, he has never ceased to study, neatness, simplicity, adaptation to the reader, subtle textual accord. The results of many mutually correcting moods are here given in a multitude of delicate emendations. How numerous these are may be estimated from the fact that it would be hard to find half-a-dozen consecutive lines in the entire work which have altogether escaped alteration. No one will admit that all these changes are for the better; yet, bearing in mind what Prof. Jowett himself has said, that "translation is dependent for its effect on very minute touches," most readers will agree that on the whole each page, while making a closer approach to the Greek, conveys more than ever to both ear and mind the impression of a piece of masterly English.

The conveyance of this impression is the distinctive mark of Prof. Jowett's work. Commonly the translator who seeks to reproduce beauty fails because he has not the resources of his own tongue at command. For purposes of translation, scholarship is more important as regards the language into which, than as regards that out of which, the rendering is made. Defects in the latter can largely be made up at the moment from books; for the former a man must rely on himself. Prof. Jowett has the double wealth. Primarily a literary man of exceptional power, he happens also to be the first Greek scholar in England. Both Greek and English he therefore understands and reverences, and he is at the same time curiously free from the prejudices of his class. He perceives that "the tendency of modern languages is to become more correct as well as more perspicuous than the ancient." He declares that "in some respects ordinary English writing, such as the new-

paper article, is superior to Plato." Yet he has labored for a quarter of a century to domesticate Plato in the West, and at last, in these beautiful volumes, may be said to have made him as completely our countryman as ever he was that of Sophocles, Lucian, or Plotinus. Here Plato talks in all his grave and playful amplitude. Here we feel his grace, his humor, his dramatic power, his fondness for the mere act of utterance, his combination of passionate Hellenism and cosmopolitanism, his luminous insight into common things, his world-scoring morality, his suggestion everywhere of meanings deeper than he cares to express. All this Prof. Jowett has rendered. No other English translation from the Greek, except our English Bible, has brought over so fully the riches of its original.

The Grammar of Science. By Karl Pearson, M.A., Sir Thomas Gresham's Professor of Geometry. [The Contemporary Science Series.] Imported by Charles Scribner's Sons. 1892.

This title of this book hardly prepares the reader for its real nature. It is an attempt to elucidate, in an original train of thought, what amounts, generically speaking, to Kantian nominalism, and to show its applicability to contemporary scientific problems. Although the metaphysical doctrine from which it proceeds is all but exploded, and rests upon an inaccurate psychology and an uncritical logic, in our opinion, yet it must be conceded that the book is one of considerable power, and contains matter for salutary reflection for anybody who cares to think deeply.

"The object of the present work," says the author, "is to insist that science is in reality a classification and analysis of the contents of the mind." This suggests that investigation consists in first collecting one's facts, and then locking one's laboratory door and retiring to one's study to work out one's theories; whereas, in truth, it involves experimentation alternately with things and with the diagrams of things. The realist will hold that this alternation is helpful, because the reason within us and the reason in nature are essentially at one; while the conceptualist will wish to separate his facts and theories as much as possible. He holds that any uniformity or law of nature is, as Prof. Pearson says, a mere "product of the perceptive faculty." Newton's great work was "not so much the discovery as the creation of the law of gravitation"; and the force of gravity, because it is a concept, not a percept, has no reality. "The mind of man," he tells us, "in the process of classifying phenomena and formulating natural law, introduces the element of reason into nature; and the logic man finds in the universe is but the reflection of his own reasoning faculty." This is (as we think) very false; but it is the definite position, broadly taken, of a vigorous thinker.

It is hardly necessary to say that the nodus of the whole argument lies in an attempt to show that "the reality of a thing depends upon the possibility of its occurring as a group of immediate sense-impressions." But the author hardly seems aware that this statement will be regarded by most psychologists as involving an analysis of consciousness now quite out of date. In the first place, it is not possible, as here implied, for the same sense-impression to occur twice. It is an individual event which happens once only. When a sensation had today is said to be identical with one had yesterday, what is true is, that two sensations are recognized to be alike; and this likeness resides

not in those sensations, nor in any others, but in the irresistibility of an act of generalization. Thus, generality is essentially involved in that whereon the reality of a thing is said to depend; and that consideration is fatal to nominalism. Besides, there is no such thing as an "immediate" sense-impression: the only things immediately given are total states of feeling, of which sense-impressions are mere elements; and to say that they are elements is a metaphorical expression, meaning, not that they are in the immediate feeling in its immediateness, but that the act of reflective judgment is irresistible which perceives them there. Here, as before, therefore, a product of analytic thought is detected as essential to that whereon the reality of a thing depends; and, as before, nominalism is refuted. Moreover, in both these cases, and in all others, that which is most essential to reality is the irresistibility of something; and this sense of resistance is a direct presentation of externality—what Hamilton called an immediate perception. Let the subjectivism out of which nominalism springs be modified by the recognition not merely of immediate feeling, but also of this sense of reaction, and further of the generalizing movement, and it will become a harmless doctrine enough—a mere aspect of realism.

In his application of his nominalism to problems of science, Prof. Pearson has adhered to the spirit of the 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft' with surprising fidelity. He has said things which Kant did not say, but which are so completely in his line of thought that we almost seem to be reading the old master himself. Many of his observations are interesting; others seem quite untenable. Thus, he adheres to Laplace's doctrine of indirect probabilities in its least acceptable form, relying here upon Mr. F. Y. Edgeworth's cobwebs. In a still weaker fashion, he allows himself to be confused by such a writer as Dr. Ernst Mach, in regard to the relativity of motion. The conclusion to which his nominalism leads him is that motion is wholly relative. If this were proved, the truth of Euclid's postulate concerning parallels would be an easy corollary; but, unfortunately, as far as rotation is concerned, the proposition is in flat conflict with the accepted laws of mechanics, as Foucault's pendulum-experiment will remind us.

Ethnology in Folklore. By George Lawrence Gomme, F.S.A. D. Appleton & Co. 1892. 12mo, pp. vii., 203.

THE scientific bias, communicated a few years ago to folklore studies by Mr. Lang and Mr. Frazer in the attempt to connect them with anthropology, has resulted in stimulating renewed attention to, and vastly increasing the interest of, superstitions and customs which formerly possessed little attraction for any but the antiquary. Since the scholars just mentioned have shown the great light which modern folklore throws upon the question of classic mythology, many investigators have used this means for the elucidation of hitherto unsolved problems of ethnology as well. A vast mass of folklore has been gathered from every country in Europe and the East; and the time has come to sift this mass, and, if possible, to see whether the comparative method of investigation can show that folklore is a science and a valuable auxiliary to the other sciences. As we have said, many scholars have drawn upon various classes of folklore as illustrative of problems in mythology, as Sir George Cox, who made free use of modern popular tales in

THIS PAGE LEFT BLANK INTENTIONALLY