

MISCELLANEOUS.

BOOK REVIEWS.

THE LIVING PAST: A SKETCH OF WESTERN PROGRESS. By *F. S. Marvin*.
(Third edition.) Oxford: Clarendon Press. Pp. xvi, 296.

This is a short and exceedingly well-written sketch of general history from the earliest time down to quite modern times. "The clue which this little book follows is no new discovery. It first came clearly into view with Kant and the philosophers of the eighteenth century. Take Kant's theory of universal history as the growth of a world-community, reconciling the freedom of individuals and of individual states with the accomplishment of a common aim for mankind as a whole. Add to this the rising power of science as a collective and binding force which the century since Kant has made supreme. You have then one strong clear clue which, with the necessary qualifications, seems to offer in the field of history something of the guidance and system which Newtonian gravitation gave to celestial mechanics in the seventeenth century. The growth of a common humanity: this is the primary object to keep in view. But it will prove vague and inconclusive, unless we add to it a content in the growth of organized knowledge, applied to social ends" (p. iv). We have here a slight indication that the purpose and method of general history is greatly indebted to the work of Comte. We know that one of the greatest workers at general history in modern times, Paul Tannery, was a follower of Comte; and this book owes much to the inspiration of Comte's philosophy, although this fact is certainly not forced into the foreground.

"It is essential, before we speak of any definite results, to realize what is implied by this term 'philosopher' when used of Thales and the early thinkers of Greece. In later ages and often in our own day the word 'philosophy' is carefully defined to exclude precisely those parts of the thinking of the early Greeks which proved to be of most permanent value; and this definition, when carried back into the period when 'philosophy' was understood in a larger sense, has led to the presentation of a singularly mutilated picture of early Greek thought in most of the so-called 'histories of philosophy.' The crude speculations about the origin and nature of things in general, interesting as they are as evidence of the new spirit of free inquiry, and not without occasional flashes of brilliant insight, were necessarily premature and bound to be superseded by fuller knowledge. These are presented to us as the main results of the thinking of Thales or Pythagoras, while their solid achievements in the history of thought are passed over as belonging to another apartment called 'science.' The early thinker knew no such distinction, and we are bound also to treat his work as a whole—'science' and 'philosophy'—and to consider it as an integral part of the development which was going on simultaneously in all parts of the Greek domain, commerce, art, philosophy, and politics" (p. 57).

An even more obvious defect of the vicious system of dividing knowledge into water-tight compartments is illustrated by the popular view, which has been imposed on us by generations of our teachers, that "history" is simply "political history." "What popular history of Greece gives any account of the work of Archimedes, or even mentions Hipparchus? Some of the most

approved histories of England allude to Newton only as 'master of the mint.' It is high time, especially in England, for a determined effort to see and to present the facts more nearly in their true proportions and, above all, as a whole" (p. 5). Again: "It is a curious commentary on the popular view of history, that, while any schoolboy could tell you that the two years Newton refers to [1665 and 1666] were the dates of the Plague and the Fire, purely local accidents, not one person in ten thousand, children or adults, would connect them with two of the most profound and far-reaching events in the history of the world, the invention of the infinitesimal calculus and of the law of gravitation" (p. 179). Further, referring to the fact that Hegel, Beethoven, Wordsworth, and Turner were born at about the same time and are "all of the first importance in forming the modern spirit from that mass of eager, expectant life which filled the latter part of the eighteenth century," Mr. Marvin remarks that "the genius of each was proudly, even fiercely independent, and yet each combines with the others in that mysterious unity of texture of which we are aware in subsequent thought and feeling, and cannot understand without all its diverse elements" (p. 223).

"History," says Mr. Marvin on page 5, "is the account of man's achievements, and in particular of the achievements of the Western leading branch of the human family which now dominates the globe." On page 31 we read: "Many causes, largely geographical, combined to make the Mediterranean countries the scene of the most rapid advance in civilization. With our eye therefore on the sequel, we concentrate our attention at this stage mainly on the two great river-valley civilizations, in Egypt and Mesopotamia, which were nearest to the Eastern Mediterranean. From these, together with the kindred culture of the Ægean, centering in Crete, the 'classical' world arose. In thus limiting our view we are in no sense belittling the achievements of other races in other regions. In many points, more perhaps than we are yet aware of, the Further East contributed to Mediterranean culture: in some ways we have still to learn and to assimilate its spirit. But the Mediterranean current has conquered and pervades the world, and those who will follow its progress must keep their eyes fixed on the main stream, and treat all others either by way of supplement or of comparison" (cf. also pp. 266-267).

The chapters in this book are: The Childhood of the Race; The Early Empires; The Greeks; The Romans; The Middle Ages; The Renaissance and the New World; The Rise of Modern Science; The Industrial Revolution; The Revolution, Social and Political; Progress After Revolution; and "Looking Forward." A very welcome feature of this edition is that there are illustrative time-charts, showing side by side the chief events in the world of action and the world of thought. Perhaps the most interesting part will be found to be the passages on the Egyptians and Babylonians (pp. 33, 40-42); on the Greeks (pp. 55, 57, 58-60, 65); on the Renaissance (pp. 141, 144-145); on the passion for inquiry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (pp. 169-172); on the rise and progress of astronomy (pp. 173-180); and on Descartes and his mathematical successors (pp. 180-189). ϕ

As we are going to press the sad news reaches us of the death of Mr. Philip E. B. Jourdain, our associate editor in London. Mr. Jourdain died at his home in Hampshire, England, October 2.