NEW PUBLICATIONS.

ALBEMARLE'S FIFTY YEARS OF MY LIFE.

FIFTY YEARS OF MY LIFE. By GEORGE THOMAS, EARL OF ALBEMARLE. 12mo. Pp. 420. Henry Holt & Company.

The author of this entertaining volume is well known in English circles as a brave soldier, a spirited writer, and a genial and accomplished gentleman. His previous ventures in the field of letters, including travels and biography, have added to the reputation of the family name which is somewhat noted in the naval history of Great Britain by the services of Admiral Viscount Keppel. He is now nearly eighty years of age, and the autobiographical notices here presented extend to the year 1854, when the narrative closes rather abruptly at an interesting period of his history. The work is written in a free, off-hand manner, with no pretension to literary excellence, and no offensive egotism, relating the adventures of a largely varied life and the personal anecdotes which are naturally recalled to memory by a review of the experience of many years. To the majority of readers the most attractive features will be the portraits of some of the prominent celebrities of the day, which are hit off with a rapid touch, and without the slightest attempt at character drawing or graphic embellishment. The recollections of his childhood include among many others the Duke of Grafton, whose name is still famous from the satires of Junius. "Four miles distant from Elden is Euston Park, the residence in my young days of Augustus Henry, the third, or, as he was popularly called, the 'Junius' Duke of Grafton. As I was twelve years old before he died, I had frequent opportunities of seeing so near a neighbor. Once seen he was not easily forgotten. Not that I would pretend to any personal acquaintance with this formidable individual, for he had no liking for children, and when my mother took me to lunch with the ladies at Euston, if the Duke happened to enter at one door I was always smuggled out at the other. It was while fishing sometimes for roach and dace in the stream that runs through the Park that I used to see an elderly gentleman pass by mounted on a thoroughbred horse, which he bestrode with much grace and dignity. He was of low stature and spare figure, had lank silver hair, a long nose, high cheek-bones, and a stern expression of countenance, which a picture of him at Euston forcibly recalls to me. He was usually habited in a peach-colored, single-breasted coat, extending below the knee, leather breeches and long topless boots, then only worn by bishops and butchers. On his head was a small gold-laced, three-cornered hat—this whole style of dress he might almost have worn when he was Lord of the Bedchamber to George the Third's father, Frederick, Prince of Wales." The Duke was a keen sportsman, and in fact, had more taste for hunting than for politics. He was a strict disciplinarian in the field, and never failed to show his wrath at the unlucky wretch who uttered a sound when the pack was making a cast. On such occasions his zeal as a martinet got the better of his politeness. At one time during such a crisis, an old gentleman happened to cough, when the Duke rode up to him, and taking off his gold-laced hat said to him in a voice in which civility and passion strove for the mastery, "Sir, I wish to heaven your cold was better."

When young Keppel was about seven years old, he went with the family to pass the Easter holidays with Charles James Fox. It was at the time when the great statesman's health was beginning to fail. He had taken a cold at the funeral of Lord Nelson, from which he never recovered, and seems to have had a premonition of his approaching end. "Fitt," he said, "has died in January, perhaps I may go off before June." But on the return of the holidays, his gloomy forebodings had vanished, and at the arrival of his guests his spirits rose to their highest pitch. He was suffering from symptoms of dropsy, the disease of which he died a few months later; his legs were so swollen that he could not walk, and was obliged to wheel himself about in a so-called "Merlin chair." "In many respects his personal appearance at this time differed but little from that assigned to him in the many prints and pictures still extant of him. There were still the well-formed nose and mouth, and the same manly, open, benevolent countenance. But his face had lost that swarthy appearance which in the caricatures of the day had acquired for him the name of 'Niger;' it was very pale. His eyes, though watery, twinkled with fun and good humor. The 'thick black beard of true British stuff' had become like that of Hamlet's father, 'a sable silvered.' He wore a single-breasted coat of a light gray color, with plated buttons as large as half crowns; a thick linsey-woolsey waistcoat, sage-colored breeches, dark worsted stockings, and gouty shoes coming over the ankles." At one o'clock was the children's dinner, when Fox was wheeled in for his daily basin of soup. The rest of the day was devoted to the young folk. They claimed the illustrious statesman as their exclusive property. Fox was the youngest of them all. He laughed, chaffed, and chatted the whole time. After dinner they all adjourned to the garden for a game of trap-ball. As Fox could not walk, he of course had the innings while the others bowled and "tended out." With the greatest glee he would send the ball into the bushes in order to add to his score, and wrangle in the most shameless manner whenever he was bowled out. Fox had a passion for shooting. Apropos of this taste, a droll anecdote is related. "One hot September morning he set out from Holkham fully anticipating a good day's sport at Egmere, Mr. Coke's best partridge beat. As was usual with sportsmen in those days, he started at daylight. Just as the family were sitting down to breakfast, Fox was seen staggering home. 'Not ill, I hope, Charles?' inquired his host. 'No,' was the reply, 'only a little tipsy.' Being thirsty, he had asked the tenant of Egmere for a bowl of milk, and was too easily persuaded to add thereto a certain, or rather an uncertain, quantity of rum. As a consequence he passed the rest of the day in bed instead of in the turnip-field."

Soon after Napoleon's landing from Elba, the author, then fifteen, received his commission as ensign in a British regiment. He was highly elated by the promotion, and began to look upon himself as a man. He was of course eager to take his place in the fashionable society of London. "My first gayety," he writes, "was a grand *réunion* at Lansdowne House. A less gay evening I have seldom spent. I still wanted two months of sixteen, and my fair complexion made me look still younger. In my excessive bashfulness I thought that every one whose eye I met was speculating upon what business a mere schoolboy could have in such an assembly. To complete my confusion, I encountered my mother, who, still young and handsome, did not care to see a second grown-up son in society. 'What, George!' she exclaimed; 'who would have thought of seeing you here? There, run away; you'll find plenty of cakes and tea in the next room.' I did run away, but not into the tea-room; and some years elapsed before I again dared to put in an appearance at a London 'At Home.'" Shortly after he received orders to join his regiment in Flanders. A large proportion of the officers and soldiers were boys like himself. "Desperate were now my struggles to extricate myself from leading strings. My youthful appearance caused the colonel to appoint me to the company of the oldest and steadiest officer in the regiment, Captain (afterward General) William Turnour, who took great care of me—much too great according to my then mode of thinking—made an inventory of my 'kit,' sent my clothes to the wash, and even superintended the darning of my stockings. All these acts of real kindness were repaid with ingratitude by me, and obtained for him in the regiment the nickname of 'Keppel's dry nurse.'" The eventful impending battle was greeted with an outrageous pun by the sprig of a soldier, for which he should have been cashiered on the spot. "Ascending the rising ground on which the village of Mont St. Jean is situated, the colonel pointed to a spire in the distance. 'That,' said he, 'is Waterloo.' I had never heard the name before, and could not resist giving utterance to a pun, so execrable, that were it not for the time, place, and occasion in which it was perpetrated, I should not dare to repeat it. Pointing to our drenched clothes, I said, 'We have plenty of "water" now, we shall have plenty of something in "loo," (*lieu*) of water to-morrow.'" By the morning of the 18th, his boyish spirits were a little tamed down. "If I were asked what my sensations in the dreary interval between daylight and the firing of the first cannon-shot on this eventful morning, I should say that all I can now remember on the subject is, that my mind was constantly recurring to the account my father had given me of his interview with Henry Pearce, otherwise the Game Chicken, just before his great battle with Mendoza, for the championship of England. 'Well, Pearce,' asked my father, 'how do you feel?' 'Why, my lord,' was the answer, 'I wish it was *fit* (fought).' Without presuming to imply any resemblance to the Game Chicken, I had thus much in common with that great man—I wished the fight was *fit*."

After an extensive tour of service at home and abroad, the author became aid-de-camp to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, Marquis Wellesley, and subsequently entered upon the duty of waiting upon the Duke of Sussex in Kensington Palace. A pleasant anecdote is related at this time of an illustrious personage. "One of my occupations of a morning, while waiting for the Duke, was to watch from the window the movements of a bright, pretty little girl, seven years of age. She was in the habit of watering the plants immediately under the window. It was amusing to see how impartially she divided the contents of the watering-pot between the flowers and her own little feet. Her simple but becoming dress contrasted favorably with the gorgeous apparel now worn by the little damsels of the rising generation—a large straw hat and a suit of white cotton; a colored *fichu* round the neck was the only ornament she wore. The young lady I am describing was the Princess Victoria, our present gracious Sovereign, whom God preserve." In the course of his official duties, he accompanied the Duke of Sussex to the celebrated seat of Mr. Coke at Holkham. For three months, the great Norfolk agriculturist kept open house for his friends. The shooting commenced early in November, and continued without intermission through the season. The gamekeeper was an important character. Of these worthies, some racy anecdotes are related.

There was old Joe Hibbert, who had been a prize-fighter in his youth. On one occasion, Sir John Shelley, who was celebrated for his neat sparring, challenged Hibbert to a set-to with the gloves, and some of the young men mischievously promised Joe a good tip if he would administer a little punishment to Sir John. Joe put on the gloves, but soon drew them off again; and turning round upon his backers, exclaimed, "Not for twice the money would I strike a gentleman!"

One of Joe's colleagues, but of a different sex, was Polly Fishbourne, keeper of the Church Lodge, who, when I last heard of her, was still alive. She must be about my own age. She had large, black eyes, red cheeks, and white teeth, her hair was cropped like a man's, and she wore a man's hat. The rest of her attire was feminine. She was irreproachable in character, and, indeed, somewhat of a prude. Polly was the terror of poachers, with whom she had frequent encounters, would give and take hard knocks; but generally succeeded in capturing her opponents and making them answer for their misdeeds at Petty Sessions.

A Norfolk farmer one poacher once offered Polly a shilling a piece for a hundred pheasant's eggs. She nodded her head. Soon after she brought Mr. Coke a five-pound note. "There, Squire," said she, "is the price of one hundred of your guinea-fowl eggs." Of course the Squire made Polly keep the five-pound note.

One time that I was staying at Holkham, a bull killed a laboring man in the adjoining marshes. The savage brute was standing over his victim, and a crowd were assembling at the gate, when Polly appeared at the opposite side. There was a cry, "Get out of the way, Polly, or the bull will kill you." "Not he," was the reply; "he knows better." She was right. The moment he saw her he backed astern to the remotest corner of her inclosure. It turned out that the animal had once attempted to run at her, but she lodged a charge of small shot in his muzzle.

Two young gentlemen once paid a visit to Holkham in the Summer time. The dinner hour was half past three, but the guests were not forthcoming. It was eight in the evening before they put in an appearance, and then looked uncommonly sheepish. At daybreak they decamped without beat of drum. It transpired that they had expressed a wish to see the church, and applied to the keeper of the Church Lodge. In their way thither, one of them attempted to rob Polly of a kiss. Luckily for them they were guests at the Hall, or she would have treated them as she used to treat the poachers. She resorted to a milder punishment: while they were in the belfry, adjuring the surrounding scenery, Polly turned the key upon them.

The whole volume shows that Lord Albemarle is not over-scrupulous in his tastes, especially in his judgment of the materials to select for the contents of his narrative. His object is evidently to entertain his readers without seeking any higher aim. He records many incidents of a trivial character which serve the purpose of amusement. His tone is colloquial, unaffected, sometimes approaching vulgarity, but always evincing the ease of a man of the world, rather than the formality of a professed author. Indeed he so little affects starch and ruffled shirts that he is often content to make his appearance in dressing gown and slippers.

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