NEW PUBLICATIONS.

ANCIENT AND MEDIAEVAL ANTICIPATIONS OF DARWINISM.

FROM THE GREEKS TO DARWIN.—An outline of the Development of the Evolution Idea. By Henry Fairfield Osborn, Sc. D. Da Costa Professor in Columbia College, Curator in the American Museum of Natural History. 12p. x., 259. Macmillan & Co. (Columbia University Biological Series).

This is a welcome book in the field to which it belongs. But the history of ancient theories of evolution will not be complete until the notions of the Oriental thinkers on the subject have been set forth in as clear light as possible. To these Professor Osborn merely alludes, when he says of the Greek philosophers that "whatever they may have drawn from the vague, abstract notions of development and transformation of Asiatic philosophers, they certainly recast into comparatively modern evolutionism." Between those who say that the Greeks borrowed everything from the older culture of other races and those who say that they borrowed nothing, there ought to be some middle ground where the truth rests. It is impossible in modern philosophy to describe the history of thought in any nation without occasionally stepping outside of the boundaries of that nation to pick up suggestions from abroad. Hume, rather than any German metaphysician, furnishes the key to Kant, and without Locke it is vain to hope to comprehend the French movement which culminated in the Encyclopædia and the Revolution. The same thing must have been true in a measure of the civilized world during the seventh and sixth centuries before the Christian era. In modern essays—conflicting as they are—upon the speculation of those times, the most obvious feature is the general uniformity, in spite of specific differences, which existed everywhere. The theory that all things sprang from unity and must return to unity—the crude and vague counterpart of modern philosophical ideas about the homogeneity out of which the coherent heterogeneity of the world gradually emerges—was all but universal in ancient times, and it was particularly prominent near the close of the sixth century before Christ. It has been pointed out that the contact and conflict of various races for a century or so previous to that date were enough to produce an international philosophy. Even the comparatively isolated population of India felt the general movement, and the later Vedic religion is described by some critics as echoing in its speculations thoughts about the original unity and the derivative, multiplex world as well as the contradictions which such a doctrine necessarily produced in a philosophical system. The rise of Buddhism in the sixth century serves to fix the date in a general way for the shaping of these ideas in India; since, as one learned investigator has argued, Buddhism was historically impossible before they had been worked out. The overthrow of the Babylonian Empire in the eighth century and of the native Egyptian polity a few generations later serve also to show when completely separate and independent systems could no longer exist—if they ever had existed—in those countries. The period of the Persian war fixes a like boundary between the old and the new in Greece. The "All-One" philosophy belongs to this period of international conflict and political turmoil, when the map of the whole civilized world was subjected for a long series of years to frequent revisal, and when the chaotic state of human affairs pertinently suggested the study of world-ends and of world-beginnings.

Now, this doctrine of unity and variety lies at the bottom of all the speculations of the early Greek thinkers, so far as they are revealed in the meagre record that was transmitted by their successors. Thales said that water was the unity out of which the whole variety of living things had arisen, and this idea, put less definitely and more mythically, was known to the Egyptians, though they, knowing little of the sea and much about Nilotic mud, leaped over to a later Greek doctrine. There are two ancient witnesses, Diodorus and Philo the Jew, to the fact that the so-called "Sacred Book" of the Egyptians attributed the origin of all things to slime. In effect, this was the idea of Empedocles, whose verses told how the first types of life on the uncultivated land sprang from the mingling of earth and water. Whether the Agrigentine philosopher owed his dictum directly to Egypt or not, his words attest the early spread of the theory. They seem to indicate that in its earliest form the hypothesis was not hidden by the mythical garb in which it was afterward wrapped. Both he and the Egyptians must have been aware that even in their simple analysis this primordial slime was not one thing, but two things. The process of evaporation suggested, particularly to the Egyptians, another element, heat or fire; and they also observed the effect of the fourth, air. The effort to show that there was on the Egyptian monuments anything like an expression of the idea that the whole world was produced by the combination of a definite number of elements has been a failure. But it has been pointed out that four divinities are sometimes mentioned together, who as representatives of certain natural phenomena would adapt themselves to the four elements, thus: Ra, as fire or light; Su, air; Seb, earth; Osiris, water. But as matters stand, these correspondences are scarcely more emphatic than those in the imprecation of Agamemnon over the truce with Troy, when he called Zeus and the sun, the rivers, the earth and the gods beneath, as witnesses. For there is here something very near the Egyptian combination, even though the antique opinion that there was in Agamemnon's words an intentional allusion to the four elements, be rejected as untenable. If we remember that the last creative period of Egyptian priestly philosophy was coincident with the activity of Thales, Anaximander and Heraclitus—that is, the seventh and sixth centuries before Christ—we shall see that it is at least plausible to credit the thought of the Nile in those ages with turning the old formula of the monuments to a new purpose. At all events, there is manifest room for a dispute between Empedocles and the Egyptians about the slime theory. And this is not so remote from modern speculation as might be supposed. Diogenes of Apollonia worked out the notion, and to these old Greeks was directly due the notorious "Ur-Schleim," of Lorenzo Oken, which Professor Osborn seems to consider, at least dubitatively, the first hint of the protoplasm, that now figures extensively in treatises on the science of life, if nowhere else. Again, if the theory of the four elements can ever be described with certainty on Egyptian monuments, there will be a link between them and the theories of Anaxagoras. When Empedocles described Nature's first attempt at creating living creatures as resulting in monsters, he merely revived, consciously or not, the Babylonian chaos with its crowd of misshapen beings. In fixing upon his two principles of love and hate—attraction and repulsion—he was certainly anticipated in half of his theory at least by that Assyrian poet who wrote: "There was a time when the arch above had not received the name of sky, when the earth below was still without a name. An immeasurable abyss was father, chaos was mother. Darkness without light and an unceasing storm existed. The first begotten were the great gods, the gods Quarrel and Discord."

These suggestions are made only tentatively to show that there ought to be a chapter in the history of evolution preceding that devoted to the Greeks. It is possible, too, that, when all the evidence is in, the notions of the ancient Asiatics will be found to have been not vague and abstract, but that they are condemned mainly because their modern interpreters have been too often absurd people with grievous tendencies toward making a mystery where no mystery exists. In any case, with both Greeks and Orientals, and with European thinkers down to the present century, the idea of evolution was speculative rather than experimental. The facts were not at hand to demonstrate it. In this form it was held by the early writers of the Church, particularly by Augustine, who was severe upon those who denied the conclusions of science upon the authority of the Scriptures. Professor Osborn shows that the theory of special creation is comparatively late in its origin, and that the views of Darwin and Wallace would have seemed far less surprising to churchmen in previous centuries than they did to those who attacked them in the present one. The lines of descent from Greek philosophy through Aristotle, the Schoolmen, and the Arabs are clearly made out by the author. Most persons interested in the subject will, perhaps, long for a fuller treatment of the opinions of some writers who link the Greek past to the Darwinian present. Professor Osborn himself says that study of the Arabians would probably bring to light many evidences of their knowledge of the gradual development of life. The "Self-Taught Philosopher," a romance of which he gives a brief abstract under the title of the "Nature-Man," is an example of the minuteness with which its author, Ibn Tophail, and probably other Arabians of learning and observation, recited the facts which they drew from nature.

SOME NEW NOVELS.

AMERICAN, FRENCH AND ENGLISH.

HIS VANISHED STAR. By Charles Egbert Craddock. (Houghton Mifflin & Co.)

HIGHLAND COUSINS. A Novel. By William Black. Illustrated. (Harper Brothers.)

CATHERINE DE' MEDICI. By Honoré de Balzac. Translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley. (Roberts Brothers.)

A novel, no less than a piece of architecture, a play, a painting or a statue, is dependent for its large effect upon the sense of form, of proportion, of composition, as the painters say, which animates it. It reveals this quality when the central idea, whatever it may be, is developed consistently, coherently, logically, in a manner to achieve some desired end. Miss Murfree's last Tennessee Mountain novel, "His Vanished Star," ignores this fundamental art principle, leaving one to infer either that she lacks the constructive literary sense, or that she does not appreciate it at its full value. In its opening pages her book promises admirably. There are the materials for a dramatic story in the conflicting interests of the projector of the hotel for tourists and invalids and of the resolute, fierce-eyed mountaineer who sees his home endangered by the improvements that are proposed to be made. It appears also as if several of the other characters who are introduced in the opening scene were destined to play not unimportant parts in the drama, especially the silent stranger, whose manner foreboded danger to Keniston, and Cap'n Lucy's daughter, Julia, in whom was reproduced, with "a certain supple, feline effect," the "panther-like, dangerous intimation that informed the old man's every gesture."

The promise of the opening pages is not, however, borne out by the sequel. The author's grasp of her subject is feeble. She soon yields to the temptation to wander off among the moonshiners, who are rugged and picturesque in their way, but who have practically nothing to do with the main theme of the story, which is unceremoniously left to work itself out as best it may. As with the plot, so with the illogical character-studies. Old Cap'n Lucy turns out to be lamb-like, rather than panther-like, and his feline daughter, of whom great things were naturally expected, is found to be little more than a lay figure. The clew to the character of the mysterious and threatening stranger of the opening scene is also discovered to have been misleading, so far, at least, as Williston was concerned. Although he was the chief of the moonshiners who were making whiskey in the abandoned mine near by, events proved that Williston was mistaken in fearing that he would have him to fight as well as Cap'n Lucy. The book contains some shrewd and clever characterizations, an occasional effective passage descriptive of nature—although the number of these is less than in the author's earlier novels—and a few dramatic incidents that are painted with breadth and vigor. Its interest, however, is essentially episodical, and as a whole it is distinctly disappointing.

William Black's prodigious industry is attested by the fact that nearly thirty of his volumes are now found on the shelves of his admirers. Despite this literary activity, there is nothing desultory or inchoate about his last story, "Highland Cousins," no uncertainty as to who is the heroine of the tale, or whether it has a heroine. It is safe to say, however, that few novelists would have had the courage, not to say audacity, to attempt to enlist a reader's interest in a girl who has so few amiable qualities as Barbara Maclean possesses. From the day in which Barbara makes her entrance upon the scene in a storm such as sets off the beauty of so many of Mr. Black's heroines until, at the end of her extraordinary career, she lies in the Glasgow jail, she displays scarcely a trait that can be called lovable. She has surpassing beauty of person, unalled with any charm of mind or sweetness of character, and this draws to her side the poor schoolmaster, Allan Henderson, and holds him a willing captive, obedient to her every whim and blind to her intellectual and moral deficiencies. Her one amiable weakness is frankly and delightfully feminine—a passion for pretty clothes and ornaments for her personal adornment; and it is this passion which overmasters her at last and leads her into a temptation which she lacks the moral power to resist. Jessie Maclean, Barbara's cousin, with whom the orphan girl makes her home, is as sweet and charming as is necessary to produce the effect of contrast; and the men have a good deal of individuality and character. The heartburnings which grow out of the relations of these young people are due to the curious fact, which is without its match in recent fiction, so far as we are aware, that Peter McFadyen, the town councillor in Duntroone, is in love with Jessie, who is in love with Allan Henderson, the schoolmaster, who is in love with the bewitching Barbara, who is in love with Jack Ogilvie, the purser of the steamer that makes daily trips to the islands. When it is remembered that comparatively little of this superabundance of affection is returned, the well-nigh limitless possibilities in the way of lovers' sorrows will be appreciated. The natural scenery of the story is full of Scotch mist, the glow of the heather, and all the other color in the use of which the author is a past master. The timely chapter on golf marks the definite entrance of this game, as described by an expert, into fiction.

In her book published in 1856 entitled "Balzac, sa Vie et ses Oeuvres," Mme. L. Surville, the surviving sister of the novelist, explains that "Catherine de' Medici," immediately following "Les Chouans," was written when Balzac was under the influence of Sir Walter Scott and when he had in mind a somewhat ill-defined purpose to write a series of historical novels picturing the manners and morals of the French at various critical periods. It will be difficult, we are inclined to think, for any one familiar with the other admirable translations in this series to read "Catherine de' Medici" without commending the sound judgment which led Balzac soon after to abandon this form of literature and to devote himself to portraying the manners and morals of the people, high and low, of his own time. In this great work he showed "incomparable power," to use Henry James's not too strong phrase, making his age live in the pages of his novels of town and provincial life with unsurpassed vividness and truth. As we have seen, however, when "Catherine de' Medici" was written Balzac had not yet found his métier. Something of this indecision, this lack of clearness and definiteness of purpose, is felt throughout the book. It was a bold stroke for a young novelist who had his name to make to attempt at the outset to give a picture of the French court from the time of the death of Catherine de' Medici's husband, Henri II, in 1559, until the death of her second son, Charles IX, in 1574. The period was a stormy one, the fierce religious war between the Calvinists and the Catholics culminating in the horrors of St. Bartholomew's Eve in 1572; and the motive of the romance is found in the bitter feeling of the time and in the political intrigues by which Catherine sought to checkmate the ambition of the Guises and to make the throne safe for her sons. Balzac's attempt to rehabilitate the character of Catherine, one aspect of whose strong nature he admits was well expressed in the Tuscan motto, "odiate e aspettate," "hate and wait," does not impress one as altogether successful. One cannot escape from the sound of the creaking machinery or from the feeling that the figures are moving, not because they are of flesh and blood, but because the strings are being adroitly pulled. Balzac is so prodigal, in his youthful enthusiasm, of his resources that he fills his stage with more people than he can use effectively in the mass or portray clearly in detail. He has succeeded, however, in conveying a vivid sense of the luxury and pageantry, as well as of the frivolity and licentiousness, of the court of the Queen Mother, the influence of all of which upon the youthful character of Queen Mary Stuart, the wife of Francis II, was made apparent in later years and had a decided effect upon the course of English history. The sharp contrast which is presented by the Queen Mother and the young Queen is well shown in these pen portraits.

The face of the one was grave and gloomy, and somewhat terrible, by reason of the livid tones which transform the skin of Italian women to yellow ivory by daylight, though it recovers its dazzling brilliancy under candlelight, the face of the other was fair and fresh and gay. At sixteen Mary Stuart's skin had that exquisite blond whiteness which made her beauty so celebrated. Her fresh and piquant face, with its pure lines, shone with the roguish mischief of childhood, expressed in the regular eyebrows, the vivacious eyes and the archness of the pretty mouth. Already she displayed those feline graces which nothing, not even captivity, not the sight of her dreadful scaffold, could lessen. The two queens—one at the dawn, the other in the midsummer of life—presented at this moment the utmost contrast. Catherine was an imposing queen, an impenetrable widow, without other passion than that of power. Mary was a light-hearted, careless bird, making playthings of her triple crowns. One foreboded great evils—foreseeing the assassination of the Guises as the only means of suppressing enemies who were resolved to rise above the Throne and the Parliament, foreseeing also the bloodshed of a long and bitter struggle; while the other little anticipated her own judicial murder.

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REAL ESTATE.

BUSINESS AT THE EXCHANGES.

Although a great variety of property in all parts of the city was offered at auction yesterday, the result was not satisfactory, and the most important properties were either bid in or withdrawn. William Kennelly offered at the Trinity Salesrooms, for the executors of Emily P. Woolsey, No. 8 Lexington-ave. The property, which is a four-story and basement brownstone dwelling on a lot 26x75, forms the southwest corner of Twenty-second-st. It was knocked down to G. Fountain for $40,700, and, owing to some misunderstanding, he refused to complete the sale with the buyer. The same auctioneer offered a leasehold interest in No. 5 Washington Square North, being a five-story and basement brick dwelling, on a lot 27.8x159. It sold to Robert W. De Forest for $14,500.

The other sales were all by order of the court, and sold mostly to parties interested. Bryan L. Kennelly offered under foreclosure Nos. 150 and 152 East Twenty-seventh-st., two six-story brick flathouses, on lots each 25x98.9. They brought $35,000 from the plaintiff. The same auctioneer offered No. 202 West End-ave., north of Seventy-fourth-st., a three-story brick dwelling on a lot 20x70, and it sold for $20,500 to the plaintiff. William Kennelly offered in partition Nos. 123 and 125 East Fifty-second-st., two three-story stone-front dwellings and lots each 21x100.5, and they were sold to the heirs at $12,000 apiece. The same auctioneer offered under foreclosure Nos. 80 and 82 Charles-st., east of Bleecker-st., two five-story brown-stone flathouses, on a plot 50x85, which sold for $67,725 to P. G. Decker. He also offered under foreclosure Nos. 137 to 145 West Seventy-fourth-st., five four-story brownstone dwellings, Nos. 137 and 139 being on lots each 22x102.2, and the others on lots 20x102.2 each. They were sold separately at a grand total of $162,150 to Charles S. Kendall. He offered No. 137 West One-hundred-and-Twenty-third-st., a three-story brownstone dwelling, lot 19x100.11. It was sold to B. J. Tenney for $13,600. No. 408 East Sixty-fourth-st., sold also under foreclosure by the same auctioneer, is a five-story brick dwelling on a lot 25x100, for $9,000 to the plaintiff. He offered, also under foreclosure, all the right, title and interest in a plot in Grand-ave., east side, south of Ella-st., 25x175, which was adjourned to November 7.

D. P. Ingraham & Co., sold in partition, No. 171 Mercer-st., south of Houston, a four-story brick store on a full lot. It brought from Frederick Sourbeck, $47,900. The same auctioneers offered in the same suit, a plot of lots on the south side of East Sixty-first-st., 200 feet east of First-ave., 100x100.5, and it sold to A. Jordan for $10,600; also No. 414 to 426 East Sixtieth-st., 250 feet east of First-ave., one and two story brick dwellings, and plot 100.2x59x135x187, to L. Toplitz, for $18,100.

James L. Wells offered by order of the executor, No. 621 East One-hundred-and-fifty-fifth-st., 200 feet east of Courtlandt-ave., a three-story frame dwelling on a full lot, and sold it to Mrs. Watts, at $5,650. The same auctioneer sold in partition the northeast corner of Samuel-st. and Oestdorp-ave., a plot 64x98, with a two-story frame dwelling on it, for $2,125, to Margaret Hackett.

Hall J. How & Co., sold under foreclosure, No. 1,130 Madison-ave., being the northwest corner of Eighty-fourth-st., a four-story stone dwelling, on a lot 22x70, to the plaintiff at $19,250.

R. V. Harnett & Co. sold under foreclosure No. 20 West One-hundred-and-fifth-st., east of Manhattan-ave., a four-story brownstone dwelling on a lot 16.8x100.11, for $9,400, to the plaintiff.

All the offerings