Review: Beginnings of the British Empire

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may be because his lectures were delivered before Dr. Keith's remarkable theory (based on the structure of Neanderthaloid teeth) was published. These reticences do not detract from the soundness of Prof. Geikie's positive information on the geology of the Pleistocene, the duration, the effect, and the extent of the ice-ages and of the remarkable genial intervals between these episodes in the long martyrdom of man.

H. H. JOHNSTON.

BEGINNINGS OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

'Maritime Enterprise, 1485-1558.' By James A. Williamson. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1913. *Sketch-maps and Illustrations.* 14s. net.

Portugal and Spain opened the way for the expansion of Europe into other continents. England came later into the field. We associate the beginnings of the British Empire and the rise of British naval power with the reign of Elizabeth; but the foundations for the achievements of her reign were laid in her father's. In this, as in other spheres, Henry VIII. left the mark of his strong mind and will on English history. The transition from a feudal England, hankering after continental expansion, to the insular mercantile England, seeking its future on the seas, was begun in his time and his father's. Henry VII. had dreams of emulating Spain and Portugal; under Henry VIII. much was done; the merchant class rose to importance in the State; a navy was developed strong enough to protect England's shores from invasion and to give security to English trade; English explorers, as distinguished from Italians in English service, began their discoveries of "islands far away"; the first attacks on Spanish power by sea were made, and the way thus prepared for the rise of a maritime state. Mr. Williamson's account of all this, although he does not claim a large measure of originality, makes an interesting and valuable book. Commencing with the reign of Henry VII., he narrates on the parallel lines of trade and discovery the growth of our maritime enterprise down to the accession of Elizabeth. This brings within his scope as regards discovery, which is the stronger side of his work, the voyages of the Cabots—the evidence concerning which, and particularly the part played by Sebastian Cabot, he elucidates with great care—the early English voyages to Brazil, the first voyage to the Guinea coast, and the breaking of the Portuguese monopoly there, and the attempt of Willoughby and Chancellor to find a north-east passage to the East, in which Willoughby perished, while Chancellor made his way from the White sea to Moscow, and brought back an invitation to trade with Russia. On the commercial side the story is brought down to the fall of the Hanse, of which Mr. Williamson gives a valuable account. It is interesting at such a moment as this to observe the motives which lay behind these early efforts at expansion. A natural desire to see the New World which was being unveiled played a part. The hope to find a new market for English cloth, and the fascination of the East, towards which the English sought a northern route both east and west, were more important, and perhaps strongest of all was an emulation, both national and royal, of the doings of Spain and Portugal. Mr. Williamson quotes an interesting passage from a play written about 1517, which expresses very well this side of the new imperialism.

Mr. Williamson's book is well and clearly written. It is illustrated with some interesting contemporary maps and pictures. He says very little of the authorities, but his footnotes show extensive acquaintance with the original materials. The work forms a useful introductory chapter to the history of the British Empire.

E. A. B.