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Review: Spain

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THE HEBRIDES.

'The Outer Isles.' By A. Goodrich-Freer. Westminster: Constable. 1902.

This work, which is based on visits dating from 1894 onwards, deals rather with the people than with the physical character of the Hebrides, being concerned chiefly with questions of history, folk-lore, and the like. More nearly related to geography is the information on the industries and general manner of life of the people, with whom the author mixed freely, and whom he describes with sympathetic interest. There is a chapter on the Norsemen in the Hebrides, with an account of the remains dating from the Viking period, and the Norse element still traceable in the place-names. The book will certainly help to make the islands better known to the general public, though the picture of the prevailing ignorance of the Hebrides is perhaps somewhat overdrawn by the author.

SPAIN.

'The Land of the Dons.' By Leonard Williams. London: Cassell. 1902.

This work stands on a distinctly higher level than the ephemeral productions of tourists, who, after a visit, perhaps, of a few weeks, hasten to pose as authorities on a country with which they have acquired but a surface acquaintanceship. Its author, late *Times* correspondent at Madrid, has lived in the country a number of years and been a serious student of Spain and the Spaniards, so that he is able to speak from intimate knowledge of both. By far the larger part of the book relates to the people, of whose inner life and past history Mr. Williams shows a thorough understanding. From our particular point of view it might be wished that the author had devoted more space to a descriptive account of the country as well, for the solitary chapter devoted to its surface features shows that he is quite competent to speak of the geographical aspects of Spain, while works dealing with these from a general, and not too severely scientific, point of view, have not been too common of late years. Mr. Williams' remarks on the mountain ranges of Spain and their respective characteristics are of especial interest. "To one who is familiar with the country," we are told, "these mountains bear an unmistakable individualism; so much so, that were he to be conveyed blindfold to every quarter of the country in turn, and the bandage to be stripped at intervals from his eyes, the merest glance would tell him where he was, and what sierra he was confronting." In remarking on the absence of wood over the larger part of the surface, Mr. Williams shows himself a believer in a once much more extensive forest-covering, quoting an old record which speaks of a forest even in the neighbourhood of Madrid; but he will hardly be followed by those who point to the general climatic conditions of this part of the world as evidence that the land, as a whole, must always have been poorly supplied with moisture, and therefore with forest growth. For the absence of trees, he finds a compensation in the noble freedom which characterizes a typical Spanish landscape. "You may strike a line due north or south from Avila to Burgos, or Madrid to the Sierra Morena, not a soul will ask your business, never a wall or fence arrest you." The manners and customs of the people are fully described, and the past, present, and probable future of the country is in turn discussed in the three concluding chapters. Mr. Williams shows a genuine sympathy with the Spanish people, and has an especial liking for the Basques, whom he describes as the noblest-hearted and most obliging fellows in the world, while their country is "beautiful beyond description." He writes in a terse and forcible style, and has the valuable gift of presenting a complete and vivid picture in a few pregnant sentences.