

Review: An Autobiography

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GENERAL.

HISTORY OF COLONIZATION.

‘Die Territoriale Entwicklung der Europäischen Kolonien.’ By Prof. Dr. Alexander Supan. Gotha: Justus Perthes. 1906.

In his desire to supply a marked deficiency in our historical literature, the author of this work has attacked a subject which might well daunt the most learned and industrious historian. To crowd into the space of a single volume the world-wide expansion of the territory and influence of the European races during the last four centuries, even with the proviso that the work is to be a compilation rather than a monument of original research, is a task requiring special aptitudes and methods, if the result is to be anything more than a mere dictionary of reference. The chronological rather than the regional treatment is adopted as being most suited to the object in view; and the work is divided into periods, in each of which is set out the territorial development of all the different regions of colonization. It is evident that only on some such principle can the essential unity of the whole movement of expansion be preserved. But there are two kinds of chronology—that of the chronicler and that of the historian. The use of dates depends on the point of view adopted, and a list of dates explains nothing, in the absence of a clear expression of the principles, either political and economic or geographical, which underlie the facts enumerated. The principle of orderly development, particularly in the earlier part of the book, is often so buried under a mass of details that it can be disinterred only with the utmost difficulty. Dates in large numbers are inserted which would be more in place in a detailed study of special regions, and place-names frequently occur which could hardly be marked on a world-scale map, while the insets in the text do not always supply the deficiency. In short, the excellent general maps at the end of the volume give a clearer idea of the broad features of colonial development than the text to which they are related. This superabundance of detail is less in evidence in the sections dealing with the nineteenth century. There is more criticism and less uncorrelated fact. The individuality of the author asserts itself with good results, and so we have an interesting and well-reasoned account of recent changes. The value, to the English reader, lies particularly in the standpoint of the author. The interpretation of the motives and methods of English colonial policy by a foreign critic is sometimes startling, and always gives food for thought. The whole volume will be found very useful for reference, as the author is careful to give his authorities, and has worked out the subject with great completeness. He has given in convenient shape information on neglected subjects and odd corners of the Earth which has hitherto been inaccessible to the ordinary reader. But to the geographer or historian who expects to find new points of view, the volume is likely to prove disappointing; while the want of proportion between details and general scheme detracts greatly from its value to the casual student. The dates for the maps are well chosen, and the most fruitful method of study would probably be to examine the maps first with care, and then to seek the explanation in the details of the text.

A. J. S.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

‘A Varied Life.’ By General Sir Thomas Edward Gordon. London: Murray. 1906. *Maps and Illustrations. Price 15s. net.*

The interest of Sir Thomas Gordon's autobiography commences, from the geographical point of view, with his appointment as second in command to the Kashgar Diplomatic Mission, during the course of which a flood of light streamed

across the hidden areas of Asia, about which only the scantiest information had hitherto been available. The writer's experiences were published in the 'Roof of the World,' perhaps the most striking and appropriate title ever given to a book, which title, it is interesting to learn, was suggested by the late Sir Henry Yule.

Sir Thomas Gordon was, most appropriately, appointed to meet the late Amir Abdur Rahman when His Highness visited Lord Mayo and Rawul Pindi; but of still greater interest is the account, albeit an extremely brief one, of the author's journeys in Persia, during the course of which he visited the Karun valley, Yezd, and Tabriz. As is only natural, the military aspect is repeatedly referred to, and illustrations are given of the Zil-u-Sultan's troops, which were unfortunately disbanded nearly twenty years ago, but the memory of which will perhaps encourage the Persian reformer of to-day. To conclude, Sir Thomas Gordon's career, if it does nothing more, may, at any rate, prove to our youth what a fascinating life of adventure, combined with interest, is still to be found in the gorgeous East.

P. M. S.

THE MONTHLY RECORD.

EUROPE.

The New Route to Ireland.—The new route to the south of Ireland inaugurated by the Great Western Railway Company was opened for public traffic on August 30. Since the opening of the Severn tunnel and other improvements in the Great Western route to South Wales, the most serious undertaking has been the provision of harbour facilities near Fishguard, which has long been recognized as the most favourable starting-point for the cross-channel service. The exact spot chosen for the harbour was at Goodwick, a little west of Fishguard, which lies in a sheltered bay, but has hitherto entirely lacked accommodation for shipping. Extensive blasting of the cliff, and the building of a breakwater on the one exposed quarter, have now supplied a harbour with a minimum of 20 feet of water at the quay-side. The corresponding port on the Irish side is at Rosslare on Wexford bay, which is reached by a service of turbine-propelled steamers, capable of a speed of $22\frac{1}{2}$ knots. Cork is reached in 13 hours from London, Killarney in less than 14 hours; the time taken from London to Fishguard being $5\frac{1}{2}$ hours, and from Fishguard across the channel to Rosslare, 3 hours 20 minutes. It is claimed that Fishguard will attain importance in the future in connection with the mail route to New York and the trans-oceanic services, being some 50 miles nearer to New York than Plymouth, 115 miles nearer than Liverpool, and about 175 miles nearer than Southampton.

Encroachments of the Sea on the Coast of Mecklenburg.—The Mecklenburg coast has, like other of the lands bordering the North Sea and Baltic, from time to time suffered losses from the encroachments of the sea, the last occasion on which a severe inroad occurred being in December, 1904, when, as the result of storms from the south-west and north-west, veering ultimately to the north-east, the level of the sea became abnormally raised on this coast, and considerable damage resulted. The changes thus effected were soon afterwards carefully examined by Prof. Geinitz, of Rostock, who has long been intimately acquainted with the physical features of this coast, and had, only in 1903, published a memoir on the encroachments of the