

The traditional accounts, both in prose and verse, give an excellent example of the growth and development of 'folk-history' from a given nucleus of fact. One regrets the omission of the original texts of the ballads translated, as they are not all easily accessible to the student in this country. Mr. Michell's conjecture that the popular story borrowed an incident from the Njal Saga cannot be accepted. Norwegian peasants were hardly in the habit of reading Icelandic paper manuscripts, and the printed Njal Saga cannot have circulated widely till long after the folk-tale of Sinclair's fall had assumed its regular and accepted forms. This little book may be commended to students of James VI's reign and to all Englishmen that visit Romsdal. It were to be wished that other consuls-general would use their excellent opportunities for historic research as Mr. Michell has done. One hopes that he may deal more fully at some future date with the relations between Denmark and Scotland as dealt with in the Danish archives; there is probably still much of interest to be gleaned in such quarters by a man gifted, as he is, with the requisite love of research and skill in dealing with evidence.

F. YORK POWELL.

The Life of Admiral Robert Fairfax. By CLEMENTS R. MARKHAM.
(London: Macmillan, 1885.)

ROBERT FAIRFAX was born in 1666, and after four years' training in the merchant service entered the navy in 1688. During the twenty years he spent in the navy he took part in most of the important battles and expeditions of the reigns of William III and Anne. He fought under Torrington at the defeat of Beachy Head, and under Peterborough at the capture of Barcelona. He sailed in Rooke's expedition to Copenhagen in 1700, and was one of the leaders of the storming party when that admiral took Gibraltar. Mr. Markham prints an interesting letter to his wife which Fairfax wrote on that occasion, to be delivered in the event of his death (p. 179). In 1708 he was gazetted vice-admiral, but immediately deprived of his promotion by a job. Prince George of Denmark, then lord high admiral, exerted himself on behalf of Fairfax, whom he also appointed one of his council at the admiralty, but the prince died a few months later, and Fairfax, receiving no redress, gave up the sea and retired to Yorkshire. In 1713 he represented York in parliament; he was also mayor of that city during the rebellion of 1715, and died in 1725. His correspondence, which forms the greater part of Mr. Markham's book, gives an interesting picture of the life of a naval officer in the seventeenth century, but otherwise contributes very little to our knowledge of the period. The story of his life suffers rather from the editor's attempt to combine with it a general sketch of the naval history of the period. The chapter on 'The Navy of the Revolution' is, no doubt, necessary to explain the maritime career of Robert Fairfax, just as the chapter on 'York in the Days of Queen Anne' is to explain his political experiences; and both chapters are valuable in themselves. But why tell again the well-worn story of the battle of La Hogue? 'Although the hero of this narrative was absent on more distant service and could take no personal part in this glorious action, still it seems

necessary in any story relating to the navy of the time of William and Mary to give some account of the battle of La Hogue' (p. 115). This is a confusion of the functions of a biographer with those of an historian. Mr. Markham's book also contains documents relating to other members of the Fairfax family. One of these is Brian Fairfax's account of himself and his family (pp. 139-146). Brian Fairfax was for fifteen years one of the equeries of Charles II, and bears witness like so many others to the charms of his conversation. 'It was the greatest pleasure imaginable to hear his pleasant discourse, being certainly the most facetious and best-natured man in the world. And if he had not been born a king, had certainly deserved to be one.' It is a pity, however, that the editor has allowed contractions such as 'Sir Tho. Wid.' and 'Sir Th. ff.' to remain to deform his pages and perplex his readers. Five letters of Sir William Fairfax of Steeton relating to the civil war in the north of England are given in the first chapter, one of them a letter written from Marston Moor the morning after the battle. There are also several letters from Sir William's daughter, Lady Lister, to her mother during the protectorate. Three of these letters, however, Mr. Markham has certainly misdated. The letter on page 26 which is attributed to the year 1656 belongs to the year 1657. This is proved by the allusions to Sindercombe's trial, to the approaching marriage of Frances Cromwell, and to the breaking off of the match between Lord Chesterfield and Mary Fairfax. The two letters on pages 28 and 80 belong to the year 1658, and not to 1656. The mention of the earl of Warwick's death, and the references to the high court of justice which tried Slingsby and Hewitt, prove this. And the two governors of Jamaica alluded to must have been Brayne and Doyley, and not, as stated in a footnote, Sedgwick and Fortescue.

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History of China. By DEMETRIUS CHARLES BOULGER. 3 vols.
(London: W. H. Allen & Co.)

THE method adopted by Mr. Boulger in writing his 'History of China' may be gathered from the fact that his first volume includes a period of something like four thousand years; the third volume, on the contrary, relates only to the events of the last eighty-four years.

And in thus rapidly passing by the occurrences of the remote past, and dwelling on present, or immediately recent, events, he has acted wisely. There is so little in common between ourselves and the Chinese, or rather their civilisation and ours, that few people in the present day would care to wade through the record of events which constitute the ancient history of their country, except for special purposes.

The early period of their annals is concerned principally with records relating to internecine contests that arose between the princes of the several states that composed the empire, if empire it may be called. This part of the history, comprising (in a strictly historical sense) something like five hundred and sixty years, is interesting as it includes the time during which Confucius lived and wrote his works, the foundation on which the *literati* of the country have built up their surprising influence.

Those works, so dry and uninteresting to us, are a type of the Chinese