

THE MEMOIRS OF DEAN HOLE.*

THIS handsome volume, printed in large type, on heavy paper, with wide margins, and accompanied by an excellent portrait of the author, appeals to the optimist and the reader of leisure. Judging from the genial lineaments of the Dean and the pleasant character of his style and thought we should infer that he had seen but little of the dark side of life, certainly not from his own experiences. And such has been the fact, so far as he allows us to gain an insight of his circumstances. Enjoying a handsome private fortune, a follower of the chase in his own ample demesnes, and for many years holding a very comfortable position in the Church which gave him ease and honor, he has always been able to say with the Psalmist, "I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters." Such a man has at least been relieved from a practical knowledge of the greatest of all tests of faith—the pecuniary worry which has tried so many souls and has produced more skeptics and suicides than any other cause; but his exhortations must, therefore, have adequate force chiefly with those who have enjoyed the same "ease in Zion."

This collection of anecdotes, strung together by a thin thread of personal reminiscences, is exactly what we should expect from such a source. It contains nothing very deep nor original, and the occasional moralizing scattered through these pages while orthodox and inoffensive, is somewhat insipid, about of the caliber of what one often hears from smug preachers who read elegantly rounded periods of unctuous rhetoric from costly pulpits to opulent audiences.

The anecdotes are classified under specific heads, such as Archers, Artists, Gamblers, Hunters, Cricketers, Shooters, Workingmen, Ecclesiastics, Gardeners, and the like. While vigorously denouncing immorality or over-indulgence in sport, it is evident that the Dean has himself been a very earnest athletic Christian, and has contrived to enjoy life thoroughly without neglecting his professional duties or violating his principles. Between times he has also found leisure to imitate Dioclesian, and cultivate a pleasant taste for horticulture.

* THE MEMOIRS OF DEAN HOLE. LONDON: Edward Arnold; New York: Macmillan & Co, 1892. 8vo, pp. 377.

The anecdotes are not especially remarkable with here and there a notable exception, altho considerable ground is covered under the different heads, sometimes rather thinly. An interesting example of how intelligent minds may differ on the same subject is shown by the author's opinion of Jenny Lind. The author of the admirable recently published collection entitled "Gossip of the Century," places a very low estimate on the vocal powers of that celebrated singer, treating her, in fact, with decided contempt. Dean Hole, on the other hand, says, and we agree with him, as to Jenny Lind:

"I have heard the great singers and ornamental performers of my time . . . and if I were asked to place those in order who have won the largest approbation, my arrangement would be—Jenny Lind, Sims Reeves. . . . Malibran, Grisi and Marie. The Swedish nightingale out-sang them all."

Jenny Lind was, undoubtedly, one of the greatest singers of this or any age; the world was not at fault in the estimate it placed on her genius. But it is exactly such contradictions, on the part of writers apparently equally qualified to judge, which confound the author who in a later time undertakes to prepare the records of a period. Some of the pleasantest pages of this volume are those devoted to Dean Hole's sunny recollections of his university days at Oxford.

The chapters on "Ecclesiastica" are as pleasantly told, but impress one less favorably because they are steeped with a "mutual admiration" style of sentiment which relates chiefly to high dignitaries in the Church, and represents a degree of ecclesiastical luxury, worldly comfort and professional arrogance which to some appears hardly consistent with the life of those religious teachers who assume to follow in the steps of the humble carpenter's son of Nazareth.

One of the author's observations challenges attention, and some will undoubtedly dissent from his opinion, which is yet worthy of consideration, as he is evidently an expert. He says:

"Concerning gardens, I subpoena my memories to give evidence, and my verdict is that sixty years ago the gardens of England were more pleasingly, because more naturally, arranged than now."

We think that some of our prominent landscape gardeners would protest against such a verdict regarding a branch of artistic effort which has received much intelligent attention in recent years.