

*The Life of Sir William Petty (1623-1687), one of the first Fellows of the Royal Society, sometime Secretary to Henry Cromwell, maker of the "Down Survey" of Ireland, author of "Political Arithmetic," etc.* Chiefly derived from private documents hitherto unpublished. By Lord EDMOND FITZMAURICE. With maps and portraits. (London: John Murray. 1895. Pp. xvi, 335.)

SIR WILLIAM PETTY is a considerable name; and that in two different fields. The maker of the "Down Survey," he successfully performed a task which called both for administrative ability and for integrity, and he left behind him a record upon which, even to-day, rest the land-titles of the larger part of Ireland. The author of the essays on *Political Arithmetic*, he was one of the creators of modern statistics, and he has a place of his own in the history of economic thought. Accordingly, the biography just prepared by his descendant, Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, "chiefly derived from private documents hitherto unpublished," will be welcome to readers of very varied interests.

The book is full of information and, in particular, it gives us abundant means of arriving at a fair estimate of Petty's character. The author has restricted himself to the presentation of his manuscript material, printing no inconsiderable amount of it *in extenso*, and giving a readable account of the rest; and for such tedious work, so carefully done, he has our thanks. But one result is that the reader will profit by the book only in proportion to what he already knows of the period; and even those who have some tolerable acquaintance with the time will find themselves at a loss to explain many of the allusions with which Petty's papers are bestrewn. The note on pages 296, 301,—"the allusion is not clear,"—might stand with equal propriety at the foot of many other pages. Another result, of course, is that we are given throughout only Petty's version of the events in which he was concerned. Though we can readily understand how an impartial performance of his duties in the survey and allotment of Irish land may have raised against him a host of unscrupulous enemies, yet it would hardly be safe to suppose that "the indices and catalogues of the gross wrongs suffered between 1656 and 1686" (p. 296) are absolutely trustworthy.

Since Roscher's Essay of 1857, Petty has been commonly looked upon as one of the early opponents of the "mercantilist" policy of trade restriction. In the useful account of Petty's economic writings given in Chapter VII. Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice points out that, although Petty argued against certain proposed restrictions upon grounds which seem to imply free trade "principles," he nevertheless contrived at the very same time to declare his belief, and that in unambiguous terms, in the fundamental idea of "mercantilism"—the idea of the balance of trade. The author loyally attempts to save the economic credit of his ancestor by the reflection that "the early authors on political economy wrote

with a constant fear before their eyes of speaking too freely." But he gives another explanation that seems quite sufficient. Petty's "mind was essentially practical." He not only "would probably have preferred the relaxation of the fetters of Irish trade" — in which he had a pecuniary interest — "to any amount of proclamation of abstract truth," but his was a mind with no great gift for abstract truth. He illustrates the strength and weakness of practical men. They do much towards the removal of evils in detail, but they allow to remain, unchallenged, the very principles from which like evils are bound to spring afresh. And so there will always be room in the world for the theorist.

The character of Petty, as he himself here reveals it, is hardly an amiable one. Not only master of all the physical science of the time, but also an inventive genius; affectionate towards wife and children; gifted with a quiet humor, and a power of mimicry that entertained his companions (p. 159), and with the gift of expression that seems the common property of the men of his century; he had other qualities less likely to call forth admiration. His friend, Southwell, ventured to tell him, "there is generally imbibed such an opinion and dread of your superiority and reach over other men in the wayes of dealing that they hate what they feare" (p. 175). He was unseasonably pugnacious in the defence of what he deemed his rights, contending, as the same friend told him, "not for the vitalls, but for outward limbs and accessories, without which you can subsist with plenty and honor." Early success made him overweeningly self-confident; as when, with scant knowledge of law, he readily accepted a judgeship in the Irish Court of Admiralty (p. 248). He was notoriously close-fisted (pp. 289, 314); and even in his relations to his private friends he showed an evident want of delicacy of perception. The man who seeks to comfort his most intimate friend upon the death of his wife by reminding him that he can marry again (p. 259) is not attractive. And, besides, Petty was one of those who combine with a keen desire to benefit society an equally keen desire to feather their nests in the process; and such men are seldom liked.

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*Life of Adam Smith.* By JOHN RAE. (London and New York: Macmillan and Co. 1895. Pp. xv, 449.)

MR. RAE has made not only a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the career of Adam Smith, but, incidentally, has presented an instructive picture of educational activity during the middle of the eighteenth century. Adam Smith, after studying at Glasgow College from 1737 to 1740, under teachers of unusual power, spent six years at the familiar Oxford of Gibbon, — years of valuable study to him, although his opinion of the university as a seat of learning is hardly less disparaging than that recorded by the great historian. The following years at Glasgow and Edinburgh were filled with the various activities of an old-time professor