

greater share of popular attention.<sup>1</sup> His mental labours have preserved an individual character, shutting them out during his life from common contact, and limiting their fertilising power, like that of an oasis in the desert, to a narrow circle of casual visitors. Minds like Newton and Faraday, full of new life, but modestly content with deepening and strengthening their secluded vigour, refrained from boastful publicity or ostentatious parade, working for all ages rather than for a special school or a passing generation. It is the individualism of the English character, the self-reliant strength of natural genius, which comes out most strongly in its great examples of scientific work. In characters of smaller breadth, in intellects of lesser power, these tendencies show themselves in ways which we cannot always admire or commend: in the emulation for place and position, in the competing for

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<sup>1</sup> This explains the remarkable richness of English literature in biographies, containing copious collections of correspondence, and the almost total absence of such literature in France, which, on the other side, is rich in memoirs, written by statesmen and authors themselves. As the students of nature have usually little time for autobiography, we possess of the long list of great names in modern French science hardly any personal records such as are so plentiful in English literature. What we miss in many of these elaborate and frequently gossiping narratives is a just appreciation of the position of the subject of the biography in the history of science, literature, and thought, a definition of the exact place and importance which belongs to him and his work. This is what is given in such a masterly and condensed form in the better *éloges* of

Fontenelle, of Cuvier, of Arago, and other secretaries of the French Academies. In Germany biographical literature is less developed than in this country, and memoirs are almost absent—those of Varnhagen von Ense and of Perthes, among literary men, being remarkable and rare exceptions. Similarly the great correspondence carried on by Goethe through nearly sixty years is a unique monument of his genius and his influence, comparable only to that of Voltaire during the last century. R. Haym in his biographies of Hegel, Wm. von Humboldt, and Herder, which combine the biographical with the historical and critical elements, has done a great work, and these books are invaluable contributions to the history of thought. Justi's 'Winckelmann' is of equal importance; but Dilthey's 'Schleiermacher' is unfortunately unfinished.