

Lord Avebury's Life and Influence.

The Life-work of Lord Avebury (Sir John Lubbock), 1834-1913. Comprising Essays by Sir Bernard Mallet, Sir Arthur Keith, Dr. A. Smith Woodward, Prof. J. Arthur Thomson, H. St. J. K. Donisthorpe, Dr. A. C. Seward, Sir Michael E. Sadler. Edited by his daughter, the Hon. Mrs. Adrian Grant Duff. Pp. vii+261. (London: Watts and Co., 1924.) 6s. net.

THE book under notice contains a short memoir of the late Lord Avebury, and a series of appreciations of his very numerous activities by seven experts. Lord Avebury was an interesting personality, and he covered so many and so varied interests that it requires a symposium to estimate the value of the work he did.

The first of these experts is Sir Bernard Mallet, who dwells upon the political and economic work Sir John Lubbock did whilst he was a member of Parliament. When he was first invited to become a candidate he summed up the objects he wished to achieve as follows: "(1) To promote the study of science both in secondary and primary schools, (2) to quicken the repayment of the National Debt, and (3) to secure some additional holidays and to shorten the hours of labour in shops." It is remarkable how by quiet and steady persistence he in time achieved those reforms which he set out to accomplish. His name will ever be associated with bank holidays. Sir Bernard sums up his power as a politician as follows:

Sir John Lubbock's whole attitude towards economic questions was characterised by the same sound judgment and common sense. He was, as I have mentioned, in full sympathy with the best economic opinion of his day on fiscal policy, Free Trade, municipal trading, and so on; and in his various addresses and articles on such questions his touch is so sure and confident that a reader might almost imagine that his views had been adopted wholesale from text-books. His scientific habit of mind, no doubt, combined with his practical experience of business, gave him more than ordinary facility in such matters: but he had furthermore the power observable in men of executive capacity of arriving rapidly and without any apparent process of thought at conclusions which, once formed, were apt to remain unquestioned in his mind. This probably accounts for his remarkable clearness in exposition.

Lord Avebury's remarkable achievements in anthropology are dealt with by Sir Arthur Keith. In the middle of the last century, from the late 'forties to the 'sixties, a small company of Englishmen with whom Lubbock was associated—he was quite a boy, for he entered his father's bank in 1849 at the age of 15—entirely revolutionised the idea of the history of man. Constant contact with Charles Darwin, a neighbour of

his in Kent, had widened his outlook and that of his fellow-workers; and perhaps the most distinguished of the many distinguished pieces of work that Lord Avebury accomplished was in his "Prehistoric Times" and "The Origin of Civilisation"; both of these passed through repeated editions and are still classics. The words of Sir Arthur Keith are eminently true when he writes: "Let us have done, once and for all, with the prevalent notion that his books on the pre-history of man are the mere accomplishments of a clever compiler. He was an original thinker of a high order."

As a geologist Lord Avebury was chiefly interested in prehistoric man, and his geological publications were not highly specialised in other fields, but his knowledge of geology gave a good background to many of his widely read books. "The Scenery of Switzerland," for example, was much more than a mere compendium or abstract of the works of the Swiss geologists whom he quoted. He wrote from first-hand personal knowledge, and he always had an eminently readable style, so that this book has added greatly to the pleasure of the numerous frequenters of "the playground of Europe."

A very brilliant study of Lord Avebury's work as a zoologist is written by Prof. J. Arthur Thomson. Although his published monograph on the Collembola and Thysanura, an obscure group of insects, is still a standard work of reference, his chief fame rests on his amazing investigations into the behaviour of animals. He was, indeed, as Prof. Thomson says, "the pioneer of the experimental study of animal behaviour." His observations on the colour-sense of bees, the homing of ants and bees, and the behaviour of wasps started a new chapter in the history of experimental zoology. There is a special chapter dealing with his fascinating studies on ants by Mr. Donisthorpe.

Lord Avebury's researches in botany are dealt with by Prof. Seward, who recounts the ceaseless work which he did on the interrelation of insects and plants, the methods of pollination, the form of leaves, buds, and stipules, and last of all on seedlings. His love of beauty and his great gift of exposition are evidenced in all his writings, but nowhere more so than in his writings on the plants he loved so well.

Lord Avebury's business training doubtless enabled him to apportion his time so that no one minute was wasted. How one man could have got through so much, how he could have made so many researches and so faithfully investigated Nature in so many phases is difficult to understand. Doubtless he had many helpers. But this total output, as recorded and appreciated in this book on his life work, is literally amazing, especially when one remembers that he was actively engaged as a successful banker during most of his life.