



DEVOTED TO TEMPERANCE, SCIENCE, EDUCATION, AND LITERATURE.

VOLUME XXI., No 15.

MONTREAL & NEW YORK, JULY 16, 1886.

30 CTS. per An. Post-Paid.

THE LATE LEOPOLD VON RANKE.

On the 21st of December last this eminent German historian entered upon his ninetieth birthday. In spite of his advanced age he was still in possession of his strong, clear intellect; and the completion about the same time of the sixth volume of Universal History, the first of which had only been begun ten years before, showed that his capacity for work was in no way diminished. But the aged scholar felt that his working days could not last much longer, for he wrote at the conclusion of the volume, "I would be happy if it would be granted me to present that period (of which he had just spoken before) from this point of view." But it was not to be. A few months more he continued to labor and then, on the 21st of May last, he passed to his long rest. The Rev. G. C. Seibert, D.D. writes the following interesting sketch of his life:—

Leopold Ranke is a son of a wealthy lawyer, who owned a fine farm in the so-called Goldene Aue, a very productive part of Germany. He was born December 21, 1795, and spent his early days on the farm of his father, surrounded by all the desirable comforts of life. He had several brothers, all of whom have become distinguished men. One was president of a celebrated college at Berlin, another, the youngest, Ernst Ranke, was formerly a plain country pastor, but was, I am sure, mostly by the brightness which his brother Leopold had given to the name Ranke, called as Professor of Theology to the University of Marburg, where, in 1852, the writer of these lines was examined by him in theology.

Leopold graduated in 1814 from the grand old college at Schulpforta, in Prussia, from which Klopstock and many other great men have gone forth. He entered the University of Leipsic as a student of classic philology and theology. But theology does not seem to have attracted him very much. Rationalism was at that time prevailing in the German churches and lecture-rooms. It was the time of theological and spiritual famine, as we call it in German. Young Leopold Ranke had preached once from the pulpit. Then he gave it up, not because he became an unbeliever, like Lessing, but because he found he had not the special calling for the pastoral office. As he had also studied philology, he was, in 1817, promoted to the rank of Doctor of Philosophy, and became then a member of the faculty of the college at Frankfort on the Oder. I would here remark that in Germany there is at least one college in every town, while large cities have four, five, or six. Every citizen can, therefore, give to his son a good education, which he could not do if science was monopolized in a very few places.

Ranke had a peculiar taste for history.

When a student at Leipsic he thought of writing the history of Dr. Luther and his time. Many years later he executed this plan in his grand work, "German History in the time of the Reformation," the volumes of which appeared from 1839 to 1847. There are in German dozens of great works on the time of Luther and the Reformation, but there is no work as original, as peculiar, as deep, and as comprehensive as the work of Ranke. When he wrote this great work, which alone would have given him a place among the very best historians of all times and nations, Ranke had published already a number of other remarkable works; first his "History of the Nations of Europe from 1494 to 1535," then "Princes and Nations

his studies. He was a searcher, investigator, and examiner of old documents without an equal. He was digging after historical gold in the dust and dirt of old archives and libraries with a zeal and with a perseverance that won the admiration of all who knew him. After he had returned from his visit to Italy Ranke wrote his work entitled, "History of the Popes in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in three large volumes. This work is, I think, the masterpiece of Ranke. I remember how it fascinated us young men when we studied it. Not having money enough to buy it, I made copious extracts from it and partly copied it in 1851.

In 1840, King Frederick William IV., the

Ranke in return wrote his "Nine Books of Prussian History," which appeared in 1847 and 1848, in which he with the firm hand of a master, delineates the origin, struggles, development, and growth of the House of Hohenzollern and of Prussia. Hardly had this great and noble work been finished when the indefatigable historian commenced his "History of France since the time of the Reformation," after which he published a similar work on the "History of England" in the same period.

Ranke had won by his works a world-wide reputation. The Pope had put his first work concerning the time of the Reformation in the "Index librorum prohibitorum," which, of course, was a great honor for Ranke. But at the same time his books were translated into all the languages of civilized Europe, and from all parts of Europe students crowded to Berlin in order to attend his lectures. A number of young men gathered around him who adopted his principles and method in studying and writing history. They form the so-called school of Ranke. The most prominent are Waitz, Kopke, Giesebrecht, the author of the most excellent work, "History of the times of German Emperors," Hirsch, and Willmanns. If we remember that Ranke, while he wrote so large a number of valuable books, was giving regularly his daily lectures as professor of the university, we can get a faint idea of the immense amount of work which this German scholar accomplished.

One of his faithful and grateful hearers and admirers was the father of the late king of Bavaria, the noble and much beloved Maximilian II. When he became king he called Ranke to Munich, but Ranke declined. He had at Berlin everything he wanted, and he did not like to move. He lived in the same little old house which he had occupied for forty years. The King of Prussia honored him greatly because he had remained in Berlin. Ranke was intrusted with the task of editing the correspondence of Frederick William IV. with Baron Bunsen, the friend and ambassador of the king in England. Later he edited also the memoirs and letters of Hardenberg, the Prime Minister of Prussia in the time of Napoleon I.

When Ranke reached the age of seventy he ceased to lecture but not to work. He stopped lecturing rather in order to gain time for work. In 1869 he published a "History of Wallenstein" and settled for ever the question whether Wallenstein was a traitor to his emperor or not. In 1871 Ranke published a book on the origin of the Seven Years' War between Frederick II., and Maria Theresa. Thus he surprised his countrymen almost every year with a new



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of Southern Europe in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," then, in 1829, a "History of the Serbian Revolution."

In 1825 Ranke had been called to the chair of Professor of History at Berlin. In 1827 he visited Vienna, Venice, Florence, and Rome in order to examine the archives of those places and to gather material for

elder brother of the present Emperor William, ascended the throne of Prussia. Being himself a great scholar and able, as one has said, to fill the chair of a professor of philosophy, of theology, of history, and of law, the new king was a great friend and admirer of Ranke and supported him liberally. He made him historian of Prussia in 1841, and

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