

The Nicaraguan
Incident.

The difficulty with Nicaragua is practically at an end. The British Government not only withdrew its ships the moment its demands were acceded to and payment of the indemnity required for insult and injury to its consul and other citizens guaranteed, but it withdrew them in a magnanimous fashion, sparing the little but obstinate republic all unnecessary humiliation. The thing which elevated an otherwise trivial international affair into temporary importance was, of course, its relation to the somewhat nebulous Munroe doctrine of the United States. The history of the affair is well adapted to impress once more the lesson that the Washington Government, at least under the present administration, can be relied on to pursue a dignified and reasonable course, and that the better class of people and papers in the United States are also capable of taking a moderate and sensible view of such an incident. When once we have learned, as the English seem to have done, to rate the ravings of the popularity-hunting politicians and newspapers at their true value, by treating them as wholly unworthy of notice, there is really little to complain of in the course of the great Republic. It must be, however, not a little humiliating to the better classes of citizens in both countries to observe that, while most of the really influential secular newspapers, and a goodly proportion of those which are religious or semi-religious, took an attitude and tone which were unobjectionable, there were too many of the latter class which showed, and are always ready, in such cases, to show, a spirit utterly at variance with the principles of the Kingdom of Peace, in the service of which they profess to be enlisted. Whether through ignorance or fanaticism, some of these have not in this case hesitated to do all in their power to arouse suspicion, distrust, and national enmity towards the British on every occasion. What a pity it is that we have so often to blush for things said and done in the name of religion.

The Tasso
Centenary.

The enthusiasm with which the three hundredth anniversary of the death of Tasso has been celebrated in Italy would seem strongly to indicate the realization of that wish for literary immortality expressed in his youth when he said: "I hope by labour and study joined with the strong propensity of nature to leave something to after times so written that they should not willingly let it die." The works of Tasso, says Cecchi, "are found alike in shepherd's hut and rich man's palace, and his passionate and pathetic song consoles the poor mariner who rows smitten by the hot sun and the countryman who plies his flail amid the chills of winter." The influence of this Italian poet on English literature can be very distinctly traced in the works of Spencer and Milton, particularly the former, who is as much indebted to Tasso for his inspiration as was Tasso himself to Virgil, Homer, and Aristo. Indeed a comparison of the works of the poet of Ferrara, with those of the writers we have mentioned, will show that originality was not his most conspicuous quality. In this respect he is, of course, decidedly inferior to Dante, who surpasses him likewise in tragic intensity of expression and in imaginative power. To the literary student of to-day there is something almost painfully repugnant in the fulsome adulation which Tasso rendered to the unscrupulous princes and corrupt courts of his day, and in his blind allegiance to those orthodox institutions against which the intellect of Europe, under the influence of the Renaissance, was uttering its most great and memorable protest. The sufferings of Tasso, which have earned him the sympathy of several generations, were not the sufferings of the hero or martyr who sacrificed his interests to his convictions, but merely the

troubles of the poet whose prince had been unkind. Nevertheless when we consider the almost complete dependence of the literary classes of that time upon the bounty of princes, we may perhaps condone his intellectual subservience ascribing it to the compulsion of the same unkind necessity which led the unwilling feet of Dr. Johnson to the anti-chamber of Lord Chesterfield. And there are in the works of Tasso, particularly "Jerusalem Delivered" and the "Aminta," passages of exceeding beauty, redolent of all the grace and witchery of Italian skies and stars, and reflecting in their subtle imagery the myriad hopes and aspirations of a mind well dowered with nature's richest gifts. And there are sonnets for a summer's day which seem to hold within their rhythmic depths the ancient tints and colours of the tender Tuscan skies,—poetic blossoms that seem to blush and thrill touched by the splendid passion of the poet's inspiration. Inferior to Virgil and Dante in originality and creative power, he is undoubtedly their equal in the nobility of his thought and grace and sweetness of expression, surpassing, also, in these particulars, both Aristo and Petrarch.

A Discovery in
Egypt.

In a recent lecture before the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Professor Flinders Petrie told of a remarkable find which he had made in the course of his excavations in Egypt. His story in brief is this. In their excavations in a limestone plateau, in a region about twenty miles north of Thebes, he and his fellow-explorers came upon a town and temple of great antiquity, while the whole plateau around about is full of the remains of paleolithic man. Within a quarter of a mile of this distinctly Egyptian town they came upon the remains of another town which, to the great surprise of the explorers, showed no trace of anything Egyptian. In the series of cemeteries connected with it, they excavated nearly two thousand graves, in which, "not a single Egyptian object was found, not one scarab or cartouche, not one hieroglyph, not one piece of usual funeral furniture, not a head-rest, or a kohl-pot, not one Egyptian bead, not one god, not one amulet, not a single piece of Egyptian pottery, such as were found in the neighbouring Egyptian town." The conclusion reached by Mr. Petrie, as the result of his investigations, was that the race which inhabited this strange town belonged to the period between the 7th and 8th dynasties, i.e., about 3,000 B.C. They were, he believes, invaders, of the Libyan-Amorite type, who, coming from the West, had swept away the inhabitants and lived in entire separation from the Egyptians. The remains were those of a people with well developed heads, and with fine and powerful physiognomy, the stature of many being over six feet. They were in some respects well advanced in art and civilization, in others singularly backward. Copper chisels and needles were found. Other metals were well known. Some of their pottery was exquisitely coloured and superior to any Egyptian ware, though it was all made by hand, the use of the wheel being evidently unknown. Other particulars of great interest are given, and the discovery cannot fail to prove very valuable to the paleontologist.

A Bold
Experiment.

The experiment of the Progressive Council of London (the great) in discarding the contract system, establishing workshops and procuring plant of its own on an enormous scale, and doing its own repairing, sewerage work, bridging, and building, within the metropolitan area, without intermediary contractors between it and its employees, was a very courageous one. It is gratifying to learn that the results so far have fully justified the system. It is now stated that on transactions involving the expenditure of nearly one million dollars