

much reliance. That there would be difficulties to encounter in navigating the Gulf and River in winter, as well as in creating a shipping port that would be useful for commercial purposes, we are willing to admit. But money, science, and resolution can overcome obstacles which often at first are supposed to be unsurmountable. With respect to the effects of cold on the wheels and machinery of a steamer, that has been fully tested at Caughnawaga, and the temperature of salt water is known to be higher than that of fresh water. Nor do we believe that the floating ice in the river below Bic or Green Island could injure iron propellers; and generally the water there is open and clear as far as the sight can reach. As for the batteries and formations of ice along the shore, good engineers with plenty of money would think little of them, and would find or make a way to get rid of them or to wield them to their purpose. In view therefore of the vast benefits that a sea port within our own territory would confer on the country, we cannot but be of opinion, that the matter ought to be put to the test. One of the iron propellers at the disposal of the British Admiral on the North American Station might be despatched into the Gulf next February for the attempt. The admiral, we are certain, would not refuse to do so; and the officers and men who brave the icebergs of the Arctic seas, would find no terror in the dangers of the St. Lawrence.

LITERATURE AND LITERARY GOSSIP.

THE literature of our day is a great debtor to good book-making. To excellent typography, toned paper, and artistic binding, it owes much. We will not say that the acceptability, with readers, of all books, is due to their elegant mechanism and dress, rather than to the merit of their subject matter; but it is only just to the intellect and taste of our people to presume that much that now-a-days is written finds ready sale from the attractive and captivating exterior and interior it presents. And no doubt, this is the reason why so much is published which is mere book-making. So much in the way of "Selections," "Beauties," "Elegant Extracts," &c.

The truth is, there is so much of this collecting and editing in our time, and so much produced depending for a sale on mechanical effect merely, that we fear for the future estimate of the literature of the present century. Especially is this book-making indulged in, in the department of poetry, that we frequently ask ourselves the question, Where are our poets? Is there nothing original published? We have "Golden Leaves from the Poets," "Casquets of Gems," "Translations," and lyrics innumerable; but where are the great poems of our day—the productions that are to go down to ages with those of Scott, Wordsworth, Keats, and Byron of the last century? But we have our poets, it will be said; and those, too, whose names will be enshrined on the bright scroll of posthumous fame. We have Tennyson, Longfellow, Browning, and a host of lesser names, Massey, Alex. Smith, Jean Ingelow, and Robert Buchanan, but what have they written that may justly be termed "a great poem"? Our serial literature is much to be blamed for the absence of these great efforts. Our literary possessions are indeed poor. The demands of the age are material, and only for the passing hour. The taste of the day requires nothing more laboured than short lyrics and Magazine idyls; and much that is written, even by our first poets, is but produced to accompany some clever pencil sketch, much in the way of the old annual contributions. We hope that the literary censors and critics will see that our writers make amends for this. We can have but desultory reading when we have but desultory writing. Leaving this matter at present, we proceed to our usual summary of the books of the day, which, from want of space, we must confine to one department.—*Illustrated Works.* The publishers, we are glad to find, are now entering the field with the literary commissariat for Christmas and the holidays. Choice and rare promises to

be the approaching art-vintage season. Abundant and excellent will be the literary harvest. Pencil and tool have this year shown more than their usual cunning and industry. We meet with, first "A Round of Days described in original poems, by some of our most celebrated poets, and in pictures by eminent artists." This superb guinea volume contains some forty original poems and seventy pictures, illustrating subjects of every day life of the most varied character. "Pictures of Society, Grave and Gay," is a collection of one hundred engravings on wood, many of which embellish the pages of "London Society," and are from the drawings of most skillful artists, and from the pens of popular authors. "The Scronon on the Mount" is a most elaborate volume, chromo-lithographed from illuminations by two architects. The designs are gorgeously executed, representing every period of art and every age of palaeography. "The Poetry of the Year" is a volume of the finest pastorals in our language, illustrative of the seasons of the year. It is charmingly illustrated by drawings from Birket, Foster, Harrison, Weir, and others, beautifully executed in chromo-lithography. A small volume with photographic illustrations of the paintings of Rubens, Rembrandt, Leo da Vinci, and others, will find many admirers. The photographs illustrate a series of brief meditations on the Life of Christ, under the title of "Salvator Mundi." The announcement is made, as being nearly ready, of "La Sainte Bible, d'après la Vulgare, avec des dessins par Gustavo Doré." This sumptuous edition of the Scriptures will contain 230 illustrations, from the drawings of this wild and fanciful genius, at a cost of fifty dollars. It is to be reproduced, we understand, in English by the Messrs. Cassell, who have just produced the same illustrator's edition of "Dante's Inferno," a subject that was well suited to Doré's weird imagery. "Dalziel's Illustrated Arabian Nights Entertainments," we find has just been completed. The work is enriched with 200 pictures drawn by Millais, Tenniel, Watson, and Houghton. The fiction of art is idealized in a work entitled "The World before the Deluge," by Louis Figuier with 25 landscapes of the ancient world, designed by Rion, and 208 figures of animals, plants, and other fossil remains. No doubt, the cosmographers, ethnologists, and geologists will be curious to see this rather startling work. Illustrated editions of "Traill's Josephus," "The Recreation of a Country Parson," "The Royal Heraldic Album," and a host of annuals, almanacs, &c., complete the announcements of the press for the approaching holiday season, which have thus far been made.

We will supply our resumé of the new publications in the other departments of literature in our next number. G. M. A.

THE SONNETS OF SHAKSPEARE.

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE is the great central sun of the modern intellectual firmament, round which, since his own time, the whole glittering system of English literature has revolved. Like that other sun of the celestial economy, there are spots upon his surface, but they detract nothing from his splendour, nor does the lapse of years diminish his brightness. He who built the great Pyramid is unknown; and, in a certain sense, the same remark might apply to him who has raised such a superstructure of thought that the monuments of genius erected in other lands, and upon other languages, seem, in comparison, as ant-hills beside the towering majesty of the Alps. A mystery overshadows him like that which broods over the existence of Homer.

It is the general impression that we know nothing definite about Shakspeare. This is partially true. His daily life, his haunts, his companions, are mere matters of surmise. But if we desire to glance at what may be called his inner life, if we wish to see the great magician within his cell; if we would behold him revealing himself to himself, and hear the musical moanings of his vexed spirit—then we must lay his dramas aside, and turn to his sonnets.

We must remember that the age in which he

lived was as prolific in vices as it was in great men. Nor did he escape untainted; and the last twenty-five sonnets, with some others, tell us of his intimacy with a mistress who was "twice forsworn." But while his gifted compeers, Green, Peele, and Marlow sank beneath the defiled and turbid stream, this strong swimmer, born to a higher destiny, and to the inheritance of a wider fame, battled with the surge bravely and successfully, and at length reached the shore. As he himself says, "the best men are moulded out of faults," and he is an example of the truth of his own observation. He had been drawn into that terrible vortex, from whose wreck-strewn surface and sepulchral roar, memory flies affrighted. And well do these sonnets tell us of the pangs he endured; well do they picture that remorse which is sometimes worse than death. Hear how he bewails the past in the 110th sonnet:

"Alas! 'tis true, I have gone here and there,
And made myself a motley to the view,
Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
Made old offences new.
Most true is it, that I have looked on truth
Askance and strangely."

Here is a great soul standing face to face with conscience and covering itself with sackcloth and ashes; it is only such spirits that can repent and have the boldness to acknowledge before the world that they have sinned and suffered. The little mind lets nothing agitate it. A passing regret will be sufficient atonement for most offences; but it is not to be expected that a tempest will stir from its depths a shallow pool as it would the waters of the ocean. In the 74th sonnet we see that so far had the clouds of remorse overshadowed his spirit, that even thoughts of suicide came up like dark and tempting spectres before his imagination. And then we have the 146th sonnet, where contrition, deep repentance, finds expression in the following exquisitely pathetic lines:

"Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
Fool'd by those rebel powers that thee array,
Why dost thou pine within, and suffer death,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
Why so long cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?
Then soul live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms diving in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more.
So shalt thou feed on death, that feeds on men,
And, death once dead, there's no more dying then."

We will at present say no more on this subject, but may revert to it at a future time. There are some who can see no blemishes in the life of a favourite author, but they who close their eyes to his faults show that they are unacquainted with life, and at the same time possess no rational appreciation of his character; for if he fell, is it not a matter of deep regret? and if he rose again, winging his way up through the storms and mists of temptation, as an eagle cleaves its course through the clouds, in order that it may gaze upon the sun, is it not a matter for admiration? A great soul emerges from temptation strengthened and purified. We have left ourselves little space to speak of the beauties of the sonnets, and they are as numerous as morning dew drops in a garden of roses. But here is a specimen:—it is sonnet 104:

"To me, fair friend, you never can grow old,
For as you were, when first your eye I eyed,
Such seems your beauty still. Three winters' cold
Have from the forest shook three summers' pride;
Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turned;
In process of the seasons have I seen
Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burn'd,
Since first I saw you fresh which yet art green;
Ah! yet doth beauty, like a dial-hand,
Steal from his figure, and no pace perceived;
So your sweet hue which methinks still doth stand,
Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceived.
I fear of which, hear this, the age unbred,
Ere you were born was beauty's summer dead."

Throughout the sonnets runs a silvery rivulet of thought and poesy, a shining tributary of that majestic river on which his dramas have floated down to immortality. And we have only space enough left to say that, while in his dramas William Shakspeare depicts humanity, in his sonnets he pourtrays himself. S. J. W.

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