

Vase, D. Darwin, in his Botanic Garden, Canto ii, is generally admitted to have given the most probable account of it.

He is of opinion that the figures of this funeral urn do not represent the history of any particular family or event, but that they express part of the ceremonies of the Elusian mysteries.

Those anxious to know more about the Elusian Mysteries can consult Broughton's Dictionary of all Religions from the Creation of the World to the 18th century. Suffice it for the present to say that the persons initiated were thought to be under the more immediate care of Ceres, and, after death, were supposed to be honoured with the first places in the Elysian Fields.

Dr. Darwin divides the vase into two compartments, and reckons that the first is emblematical of mortal life, expressed by a lady who is dying, or Libitina, holding an inverted torch; she sits on ruins, under a tree of deciduous leaf, attended by two persons who seem to express the terror with which mankind look upon death; and that the second compartment represents immortal life, expressed by a hero entering the gate of Elysium, conducted by Divine Love, and received by Immortality, who is to present him to Pluto, the judge of what company he is to keep in Elysium.

This Elysium, according to Homer (see Pope's translation of the *Odyssey*) must have been a most delightful place, and a marked contrast to our winters in the Province of Quebec.

"Stern winter smiles on that auspicious clime,
The fields are florid with unfading prime;
From the bleak pole no winds molest blow,
Mould the round hail, or shake the fleecy snow;
But from the breezy deep the blest inhale
The fragrant murmurs of the western gale.

How true the rendition of Darwin may be, its general acceptance by the world of critics must bear testimony. Certainly the idea is full of grace and beauty.

Some have supposed that the vase contained the ashes of Alexander Severus and Julia Mummæa, but Darwin does not believe so.

The largest portion of these Etruscan or Grecian, or Græco-Italic or Italo-Greek vases which have escaped the devastations of time have been discovered in the sepulchral chambers of the ancients. In some instances they have been found with human ashes in them, but most frequently they have been found empty, placed upon the floor, arranged round an unburnt skeleton, or hanging upon nails of iron or bronze attached to the side of the walls. In this state they are supposed to have held the offerings &c., which it was customary to present to the dead.

Their modern copies certainly, therefore, ought not to be converted into flower vases, or desecrated with peacock feathers and dried everlasting flowers and wild grasses.

Few remains of antiquity have excited more interest than vases. The variety and the elegance of their forms, the singularity of their designs, the beauties of the compositions with which they are adorned, and the important instruction which the subjects of some of the pictures on them convey, have conspired to render them peculiarly attractive.

The "Ceramic Art Union," Wedgewood, Minton, and Copeland, have reproduced many of the most beautiful of them. Our best modern potters have derived high improvement from copying their beautiful designs; and even the manufacturer, in the imitation of their forms, has materially improved the shapes of many of those vessels and utensils which administer to the comforts or the elegancies of life.

THE DAGGER OF RAVAILLAC.

In relating a certain romantic incident of Paris life, the *Figaro* maintains that all the circumstances it details in the matter are strictly true. They relate to a singular attempt at suicide.

Everybody knows (remarks the *Figaro*, from whose columns we translate these facts) the circumstances under which Henri IV was assassinated by Ravallac, in the Rue de la Ferrière. Ravallac, thrusting his arm through the window of the royal carriage, struck the King two blows with a knife, the weapon at the second stroke piercing the heart. Then for a moment he brandished the knife defiantly; but he was immediately arrested, and the weapon taken from him by an Italian attached to the person of the Duc d'Épernon—one Pietro de Malaghina. When the Court on the day of the trial of Ravallac—May 24, 1578—reclaimed this knife, Malaghina declared that he had lost it in the crowd. This was a falsehood. The Italian having for his hobby the collection of curiosities, had secreted the knife of Ravallac, and he kept it all his life, leaving it as a gracious relic to his descendants.

Through some vicissitudes, now unknown, the knife passed into the hands of Marshall Maurice de Saxe, who in 1750 presented it to his physician, Dr. Senac. He dying shortly after left it to his son, M. Senac de Meilhan, who gave it to a certain Marquise de Crequi with a series of complimentary verses, beginning:

De ce couteau d'un régicide
Recevez le don, belle Armide.

This "belle Armide"—that is, the Marchioness Crequi left the historical knife to her cousin, Baron Blanchfort. After further changes of ownership, it came last year into the possession of a young student, Monsieur Philippe M—. This young man, who occupied a little room in the Rue des Acacias, led a hard life, struggling against poverty, and generally getting worsted in the combat. On several occasions he tried to sell the knife of Ravallac, but he valued it at 2000 francs, which was more than anybody would pay for it. A few weeks ago he found himself without a cent and with nothing to eat.

He would not think for a moment of abating the price of the knife of Ravallac, so, Frenchman-like, he determined to kill himself with it. He gave himself a violent thrust in the chest having first left on his table the following note:

To Monsieur le Commissary of Police:

Let no person be charged with my death. I go to rejoin Henri IV. If I had not been so feeble, I would have killed myself in the Rue de la Ferrière.

Dec. 24 1873.

PHILIPPE M—.

But the wonderful knife of Ravallac proved to be as weak as the intellect of the would-be suicide. The rusty weapon, broken and blunt, only made an insignificant wound, from which young Philippe recovered within a week. The knife in the meantime was deposited at the police office. It is a species of poniard, with a bone handle cut in the form of a cross, and bearing on the blade the initials of the original owner.

ENGLISH REPUBLICANISM.

M. D. Conway writes to the *Cincinnati Commercial* that it is a widely-recognized fact that Lancashire is the hot-bed of republicanism. The first republican club of any considerable size was started soon after the end of the American war in Bolton. That club numbered a good many men of ability among its members, some of them belonging to the wealthy classes. But the club has just come to an end. This was partly due to an officer of the club, who, in his ardour for freedom, made free with the funds of the society entrusted to his charge. But it has been due in still greater part to the decided decline of what two years ago we used to speak of as "the Republican movement in England." When Mr. Bradlaugh—who has, I hear, just arrived to find himself at the bottom of the poll at Northampton—comes to look around him, he will find that the Republican movement, about which he has been lecturing in America, has undergone a phase which even he will have to recognize. I have already hinted at this in previous letters, but my present visit to this region, and conversation with Republican leaders, has made the fact clear beyond dispute. Those leaders all say that they are now convinced that the English masses will require a long education before they will be prepared for a republic. So far as home politics are concerned, they find no serious change; even this week's elections have not made them believe in a real reaction in the direction of Conservatism. There never was, they affirm, a period when there was more animosity against the Church and the House of Lords. But the people no longer find a charm in the vision of an English republic. Some of the leaders referred to confess that their own minds have become doubtful and hesitating on the subject. One of the most influential confessed to me that his rock of offence had been America. He had long been a regular reader of American journals, and the exposures of the degree to which rings have flourished in that country—the Credit Mobilier and Salary Grab—and particularly the "miserable administration of Grant"—to use his own expression—had made him doubt whether substituting a President for the Queen might not be substituting King Stork for King Log. I had no idea, until I came into this region, of the extent to which these people are familiar with American affairs. One young man told me that he was still a Republican, but never meant to advocate an immediate republic until he thought the English people were ready to do without either monarch or president.

A COUNTESS TO ORDER.

If the average French narrative of alleged social realities is conspicuously questionable in its veracity, its whimsical ingenuity generally commends it to some amused notice; and the following latest specimen, gravely given in a Parisian daily paper, is particularly refreshing: Count X., a young patrician of an illustrious and indomitably proud family, fell deeply in love with a maiden in respectable but not aristocratic life, and, of course, realized that his illustrious parents would never consent to his marriage with her. He was a nobleman, and must take a noblewoman for wife. It was useless to plead with paternal pride for any modification of that edict. Miserable beyond expression thereat, the Count consulted a friend of ready wit for advice, and was informed that his sweetheart could be raised to nobility of title and at the same time left mistress of herself, if she would consent, for his dear sake, to act an artful part. A certain Count Y., a wild bachelor of society, was on the verge of bankruptcy, and ready to perform any extravagance for money. Let this audacious spendthrift be promised a goodly sum for pretending himself fascinated with the young lady, and actually leading her to the altar; allowing her to desert him there and then, instantly after the ceremony, as though in sudden remorse for jilting another; and then suing for a divorce on the ground of her desertion.

The idea of this stupendous artifice struck the love-lorn Count X. as being splendid, and he hastened to put it into execution. His lady-love could not refuse his prayer that she would thus, by a technicality, make herself eligible for his parents' acceptance, and the needy and empty-headed Count Y. consented to play his mercenary part for \$1,500. So, there was an introduction; a pretended infatuation; a marriage; a flight by the bride from the bridegroom before the party was out of church; an immense social sensation, and a summary divorce. But the wedding ceremony had made the exemplary heroine a countess, says the story, though the divorce followed so quickly after; and then, when the true lover could introduce her to his haughty parents as the Countess Y., those stately progenitors had no choice but to accept the titled fair as of rank to become their daughter-in-law.

Of course the whole story is absurdly a sheer invention; yet an American might as reasonably believe it practicable in French life as a Frenchman that such awful stuff as Sardou's play of "Uncle Sam" gives the realities of society in the United States.

MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF ANCIENT PROPHECIES.

With all their apparent scepticism—perhaps some may say on account of it—the French are a very superstitious people, and they have always been fond of political prophecies, especially those of an arithmetical character. Most people will remember the well-known arithmetical mystery by which, the figures composing the dates of the birth, marriage, and accession to the throne of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette being severally added together, the dates of all the most remarkable events of the subsequent revolutionary period were discovered. A similar calculation was made regarding events connected with the family of the late Emperor, and in that case the additions all agreed with startling accuracy in fixing on the year 1869 as the epoch of some tremendous catastrophe. Unfortunately, however, for the prophecy, which might otherwise have been cited as a strange example of accidental coincidence, the crash came a year too late. Since then we have had the dark sayings of the Nun of Blois, which, during the miseries of the late war, aroused an intense interest among the more ignorant and credulous portion of the French people, but which still remains unfulfilled, for the "young Prince" has not yet left the "Isle of Captivity," and the Bonapartists say that the prophecy can no longer be regarded as applicable to the middle-aged Comte de Chambord at Frohsdorf, but evidently matches exactly with a scion of the Napoleonic race who is now pursuing his studies at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. Lastly, a certain Abbé Baboisson has come

forth with a new interpretation of a well-known passage in the Book of Daniel—the only genuine interpretation extant, he avers. According to the ingenious Abbé, the fourth beast with the ten horns is Federated Germany, the little horn which arose afterwards, and waxed mightier than them all, is Prussia, and this horn will be crushed by the "Son of Man," i. e., the Comte de Chambord, on or before the 21st October next, the Abbé's interpretation of the "time, times, and half a time," being three years and a-half, dating from the Treaty of Frankfurt. English students of prophecy have usually allotted a much longer period to this mysterious phrase, but with that question we need not here concern ourselves, our chief object being to indicate the symptoms of unreason and unrest which still characterize the people of France, and of which the Abbé's book affords a striking example, for such works would not be published unless there were an audience eager to read them.—*Graphic*.

A WIDOWER'S WIT.

The peculiar fortune that was supposed by the classic sages to turn the folly of fools into good luck, had an illustration recently in the case of a German widower, living at a place called Hyde Park, in Pennsylvania. The wife of this fatuous mortal died not long ago, leaving him with a large family of young children to cherish; and, as his elderly mother, sisters, and sisters-in-law tired of the heavy domestic responsibility, one after another, it occurred to him that a second wife and a stepmother might best answer the urgent needs of heart and home.

To reach this conclusion and to make it practical were two different things. The overtaxed and bereaved parent did not happen to be acquainted with any lady of obvious eligibility for the honour he proposed conferring, nor did he like to make known his dilemma to kindred and friends. What, then, does he do but resort to a questionable kind of New York newspaper which admits "matrimonial" advertisements to its columns, and quietly search the same for some feminine application to his fancy! Finding one of these snares for the silly and wicked whereof the signature suited his taste, he made a pretext of business to his mother and children for coming to the great city, and actually started out to find the address given by the advertising husband-seeker.

And now for the illustration of the cynical classic proverb, *Fortuna favet Fatuis*. Reaching the very street of the address, the misguided widower became confused about the numbers, and entered the store of a small tradesman, who happened to be a fellow-countryman, to make inquiries. The tradesman knew the occupants of the desired number to be such questionable people that he was prompted to warn his rural compatriot against them, and upon being frankly informed further of the inquirer's matrimonial mission intimated that he could introduce the deluded innocent to a woman worthy to be made an honest man's wife. In short, he had in his home at that moment a penniless orphan-niece only lately coming to this country to earn a living, and lost no time in presenting her to his Pennsylvania friend as the very woman to place over his motherless household. She was a hearty, simple-minded, good lass, with a heart instinctively warm for any fellow-countryman meeting her in this great, strange country, and it took but a few hours' conversation to make her and the widower both quite willing to be comfortably married. On the following day, reports the *Scranton Republican*, bridegroom and bride took the home at Hyde Park by surprise, and there the twain are now living in a happiness, giving every promise of permanence.

LITERARY PIRACY.

The late D. P. Page, the first principal of the Albany State Normal School, remarks to the following purport: He said that a few years previous, while travelling in Massachusetts, his wife, at a hotel, found an article in a magazine that impressed her so favourably that she copied it in her scrap-book. He read it at the time, and had not thought of it since till the evening before, when the same article had been handed him by one of the students for "correction," as an original composition. He sincerely regretted that among young gentlemen and ladies, aspiring to the honourable position of teachers, even one should be found who would do so dishonourable a thing as to try to pass off as his or her own the productions of another, and his first impulse was to expose the fraud in open school. But he presumed that was the first thing of the kind that had occurred in that institution, and as there might be extenuating circumstances, he had concluded to forgive the offender, provided that individual should call at his room within three days, confess the fault and promise not to repeat it. In this statement Mr. Page gave no intimation as to the character of the "piece," or the personality of the offender, and before the expiration of the three days more than two-thirds of the students had called upon him, acknowledging the offense, and apologised, "and," said he, while relating the circumstances, "the right one did not come at all."

Literary Notes.

It is nearly certain that Mr. Burnand, of *Happy Thoughts* celebrity, will be the new editor of *Punch*.

Mr. Archibald Forbes, the well-known correspondent of the *Daily News* during the Franco-German war, has gone to India to report upon the famine.

Hugo's "Quatre-vingt-Treize" has appeared, and even his bitterest political enemies declare it to contain some of the finest pages his genius has yet penned.

Malbrough was a favourite air of the great Napoleon's, though he had little ear for music. He rarely mounted his horse at the commencement of a campaign without humming the tune.

Mr. Gladstone has intimated his intention to present about 200 volumes of classical and theological works to the unattached students' library which is now in course of formation at Oxford.

A St. Petersburg letter mentions that the opera of *Life for the Czar*, by the Russian composer Glinka, has just been performed in that city for the 403rd time, its popularity showing no sign of abating.

Sir Richard Wallace (son of the late Marquis of Hereford), lost by the Pantechon fire a valuable library, a large quantity of plate, a collection of ancient armour, and some pictures, all insured for \$140,000, but worth five times that amount.

Lord Salisbury, it is said, has undertaken to draw up a scheme of University reform. The task requires a combination of scientific attainment with unflinching courage; and both these qualities the marquis possesses in no ordinary degree. It could not be in better hands.