



We have to thank the author, Mr. H. S. Howell, for an extremely interesting little book, entitled "The Keys of the Bastille of Paris." The author's story adds a fresh phase of romance to the associations of that old prison fortress, the fall of which, as Carlyle writes, "may be said to have shaken all France to the deepest foundations of its existence." It appears that in October of 1879 Mr. Howell's attention was drawn to a paragraph in the *Toronto Mail* to the effect that the keys of the Bastille were said to be in the possession of a young locksmith, of St. Louis, Missouri, who had purchased them from a Frenchman named Lechastel. How did the latter come to own such a relic? It may be recalled that, when the Bastille surrendered, the Governor, the aged Marquis de Launay, was, in spite of solemn engagements, dragged into the street by the infuriated mob and put to death. Carlyle gives a striking picture of the old noble guarding the stronghold against his King's enemies: "Fancy him sitting from the first, with lighted taper, within arm's length of the powder magazine; motionless, like an old Roman senator or bronze lamp-holder, coldly apprising Thuriot and all men by a slight motion of his eye, what his resolution was. Harmless, he sat there while unharmed, but the King's fortress could, might, would or should in no wise be surrendered save to the King's messenger. One old man's life is worthless, so it be lost with honour, but, think, ye brawling *canaille*, how will it be when a whole Bastille springs skyward! In such statuesque, taper-holding attitude, one fancies de Launay might have left Thuriot, the red clerks of the Basoche, the Curé of Saint Stephen, and all the tagrag-and-bobtail of the world to work their will." But the Bastille was not to be saved the dishonour of capture even by such self-sacrifice. The surging multitude must have its way. And then? "Why dwell on what follows? * * * Along the streets of Paris circulate seven Bastille prisoners, borne shoulder high, seven heads on pikes, the keys of the Bastille, and much else." Now, it is claimed in Mr. Howell's essay that "among the first who entered the courtyard of the Bastille was one Carwin Lechastel by name, and, when the draw-bridge fell, he secured a bunch of keys from one of the fleeing gaolers. These he stuck on the end of his pike and carried through the streets. The keys, we are told, remained in Lechastel's family until 1859, when one of his descendants, who had emigrated to America, finding himself in reduced circumstances, was compelled to offer the old heirloom for sale. He spoke little English and many could not understand his strange relation, while of those who did, only a few gave it credit. At last he encountered a sympathetic hearer in the person of Mr. John Hamilton, of Morgan Street, St. Louis, to whom, after some negotiation, he disposed of his treasure. On seeing the notice in the *Mail*, Mr. Howell tried in vain to have communication by letter with "the keeper of the keys." At last he determined to go to St. Louis and there, after no little trouble, he made good his quest. The keys, now in his possession (for he finally persuaded Mr. Hamilton to part with them), are five—one bearing evidence of extreme age, 12 inches long and very heavy; another, of steel, delicately wrought, with the socket shaped like the *fleur-de-lis*. The latter is the smallest of the bunch. Of those of intermediate size, one is 6 inches long, and has a heavy, beveled head; the remaining ones are 10 inches long and seem to have once been plated with brass. In closing his description of the capture of the fortress, Carlyle writes, *inter alia*: "The key of that robber-den shall cross the Atlantic, shall lie on Washington's table." Mr. Howell reminds us that "Lafayette secured the key of the main entrance—Porte St. Antoine—and sent it to Gen. Washington, and it is now to be seen on Mount

Vernon." Among letters that Mr. Howell received touching his own remarkable find was a communication from Mrs. E. B. Washington, a grand-niece of the first President, and a member of the Mount Vernon Association. She was very anxious to compare the Lechastel keys with Lafayette's famous gift, and on subsequently obtaining an opportunity of doing so, she was much struck with the resemblance. Mr. Howell sent photographs of his keys (exact size), with accompanying description, to the British Museum, the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of this city, and other learned institutions on both sides of the Atlantic. The subject is of exceptional interest in the present year.

In our last issue we made brief mention of Prof. W. J. Alexander's "Introduction to the Poetry of Robert Browning." We now return to a subject which, we are sure, has a peculiar interest for a good many of our readers. In this city the poet and his works have of late years attracted much earnest attention. During his stay in Montreal, the Rev. Dr. Stevenson lectured on both Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Not long since the Rev. Dr. Barclay, of St. Paul's church, and the Rev. Mr. Barnes, of the Church of the Messiah, took Browning for the theme of lectures delivered in different courses during the same week. We understand, moreover, that the able author of "The Princess: A Study" has been for some time engaged on a critical examination of Browning's writings. There is also at least one fruitful Browning Society in Montreal. Whether these signs of increasing interest in a poet once so little read are of more than local significance, we cannot confidently say, but we are inclined to think that they are indications of a movement comprehensive enough to include the more thoughtful minds of our cities and large towns. If this be so, Dr. Alexander's volume may be accepted as especially timely. The chapters of which it is composed were originally lectures prepared for a class of advanced students. They contain copious extracts, with careful analyses and a critical commentary. The first chapter deals with the poet's "General Characteristics"; the second, with "Browning's Philosophy"; the fourth, with "Browning's Theory of Art." In chapter two Dr. Alexander observes that Browning's "philosophy is in the tendency . . . to fix the attention on the inner rather than on the outer life, the life of the soul rather than on visible phenomena." He is thus "an idealist, something even of a transcendentalist." Nature to Browning is no vast machine, rolling inexorably on its destined path, behind which, if there be any force which we can call God, he is far removed and works on us only through secondary causes, uniform and predictable. On God manifest in law, the God of Western science and logic, Browning's poetry does not much dwell, but rather on the God of Eastern thought, the God of religion, who is not far from any one of us." At the same time Prof. Alexander deems it necessary to prevent any misconception as to Browning's openness to new discoveries and ideas. "It is not for a moment to be insinuated," he continues, "that Browning does not recognize the other aspect of Nature, does not accept the general results of science; but, unlike his age, it is not this side which attracts him most. We look in vain in Browning's poetry for an expression of the pervading scientific enthusiasm which glories in our rapid advance in the knowledge and command of material nature, and in the prospect thus unfolded of the future well-being of the race. For that we must go to Tennyson." In the chapter on Browning's "Theory of Art," Dr. Alexander bases his judgment largely on Browning's self-revelations in his prose essay on Shelley. "In Browning's conception," he concludes, "the artist is not merely one who, through his skill in reproducing nature, has the power of affording pleasure to his fellowmen. The true artist has a higher endowment and function. He is one in whom the imperfect shows of the world awaken a more adequate reminiscence, as Plato would say—premonition would, perhaps, suit Browning better

—of absolute truth and beauty. He is further gifted with the power of reproducing, more or less successfully—whether in marble or colours, or music or language—these anticipations of the divine idea, so as to stimulate the less penetrating vision of ordinary men to a more perfect perception of the absolute." Browning is, "according to his own definition, a subjective poet." But in form he is objective. "He is not lyrical; he rarely speaks in his own person; he is dramatic, he presents an objective world of men and women." The sixth chapter is devoted to Sordello, of which a careful analysis is given, book by book. In the chapter on "Christianity in Browning," the exposition of his philosophical system is continued, with special reference to its religious side. The closing chapters treat of the second and third periods, respectively, of Browning's development. Though short, these chapters are instructively suggestive. Of Browning's position among the great poets of this century, Prof. Alexander writes: "English literature, in the nineteenth century, presents an unusual array of great poets—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Browning. The rank which Browning will ultimately hold among these as a poet, it would be premature to attempt to fix; but one might, perhaps, venture to assert that of the seven named, Browning is the greatest man." We would gladly linger longer over Prof. Alexander's book, but what we have said and the extracts we have given will, we trust, be sufficient to convince our readers of its value as "An Introduction to the Poetry of Robert Browning." The publishers are Messrs. Ginn & Co., of Boston.

We have received a Subject Catalogue or Finding List of Works of Reference in the Toronto Public Library. The catalogue also contains an index of subjects and personal names, which makes it exceptionally valuable. The Toronto Public Library was opened in 1884 for public use, and is sub-divided into the reference department and the central and branch circulating libraries. It has only been during the last three years that the attempt was made to lay the foundation of a reference library, and the catalogue shows that the promoters have well succeeded. In addition to general cyclopædias, books of the calendar, reader's handbooks, quotations, proverbs, anecdotes and fables, the following departments are covered by the best and latest authorities: Natural sciences, theology, mental and moral sciences, social and political sciences, medical science, industrial arts, fine arts, language and literature, geography, travel and topography, history and biography. Canada and Newfoundland have a department of their own, which comprises some most interesting and useful contributions, while the collection of manuscripts relating to the Dominion is extremely valuable. We congratulate Mr. Bain on the judgment which he has shown in discharging a delicate and difficult task.

HUMOUROUS.

Some men are always in bad company—even when they are alone.

The sun is very grand, but the moon takes the shine from it when she comes out.

"No, sir," said a weary looking man in a train to an individual by his side, "I wouldn't marry the best woman alive! I've been a draper too long for that." What did he mean?

"Look at that rabbit," said little Tot, as she curiously watched the peculiar "twinkle" of the animal's features; "every time he stops to smell anything he seems to stutter with his nose."

Governess (to little Miss Ethel, who is making famous progress in mythology): "Now, Ethel, what do you know of Minerva?" Ethel: "Minerva was the Goddess of Wisdom; she never married."

"Doctor," said a wealthy patient, "I want you to be thorough, and strike at once at the root of the disease." "I will," said the doctor, and brought his stick down with a smash on a decanter standing on the sideboard.

Murray has published H.R.H.'s speeches. A model of good taste and judgment each is, And as a speaker he's an out-and-outer.

Well, 'tis but just, that's as it seems to me, And natural that H.R.H. should be As Prince of Whales, a most accomplished spouter.