

and Characters' I only opened once in Didot's Libraire, and then I happened on a theft. If you turn to page 381 of Vol. I. (American edition) you will be struck with the line,

"Like a Moor's head cut off at the nape."

When Browning makes the Bishop of St. Praxed's order his tomb, he uses the same words about a *Jew's* head, which are in Meredith's 'Rabbi ben Ephraim.' Certainly, Owen is an incomparable thief." Thus the letter. Browning's poem alluded to is a grand one, and taught me first his superiority in dramatic power to Tennyson. Standing one mellow afternoon in Poet's corner, I gazed on my favourite Chaucer's tomb, and thought, how blessed he was in being the fore-runner of English poetry. And yet I see some have discovered that he owed his power to the Italian school. Nevertheless I cling to the opinion, that, while receiving suggestion from abroad he uttered nothing base, but his own only. He is too honest, the ancient Englishman, to be a plagiarist. His clear, sweet tune rings down the centuries like well-cast bells, in which there is no foreign metal.

HISTORICAL SONNETS.

BY PROFESSOR LYALL.

X.

The Helenuic Spirit! whence its advent?—why
That grand emancipation of the thought?
From what fair land of freedom was it brought,
That burning hatred of all Tyranny?
Was it some Aeon, in its transit by
The Ages, that such transformation wrought?
Was it the freedom of the mind unbought,
Itself emancipate from Slavery?
Was it the clime of Greece—its purer skies—
Its flashing seas—its glorious hills and plains—
Its sparkling founts—its warbled melodies:
Have we in these the spirit that disdains
To brook the Tyrant, and the Tyrant's chains—
The victim of ignoble falsities?

XI.

Land of high song! of noblest poesy!
Of Homer's epic, and of Pindar's lyre—
Of Sophocles's drama, Sappho's fire—
And of those Idyls, pure from Castalie:
Land of high thought, of sage philosophy—
Haply all too curious to enquire
Into a first Arché, taught to admire
In all that is a wondrous unity—
The cause of causes, itself without a cause—
For to the uncaused mind at last is brought:
Land of old Thales, Anaxogoras,
Of Plato, too, all but divinely taught—
The Historic Muse, portraying that which was,
With lessons for the future grandly fraught!