

treason, cannot be banished from the scene of their exploits and triumphs. Is there not danger in the retrospection, especially with a people so imaginative and enthusiastic as the Italians? Napoleon also wishes it to be understood that the French evacuation of Mexico will shortly come to a close. It is even asserted that the Emperor in his next speech to the Legislative Chambers will announce the fact. But this is not probable. Maximilian is not yet so firmly established in his place that he can dispense with French aid. With the exception of the trouble in Frankfort, the general aspect of Europe is unusually peaceful.

DANTE.*

SIX hundred years have passed since Dante Alighieri was born. Florence had the honour of his birth, which took place in May, 1265, but he died at Ravenna, the city of his asylum, in 1321—a few months after completing his fifty-sixth year. In 1274, when nine years old, Dante first saw Beatrice, daughter of Folco Portinari, and that sight was to him a vision for life. This vision inspired the *Vita Nuova*, his earliest work, and subsequently expanded into the grand proportions and transcendent idealism of the *Divina Commedia*.

Yet it would seem that the actual relations of Dante with Beatrice, were neither close nor frequent. They were rather of a distant and formal kind. Beatrice became the wife of Simone de Bardi, and died at the early age of twenty-four years. Dante married Gemma Donati, and a family of seven children was the issue of the marriage. As Beatrice moves in the pages of Dante, commentators have become perplexed, and some have affirmed that she was a character purely symbolic. This position, however, cannot be regarded as tenable. There can be no manner of doubt, we think, that Beatrice is not a mere allegorical representation, but the representation of an actual woman, known in Florence, during the early life of Dante. His love for her was mystical, very pure and very worshipful. He says that "her aspect caused death to every other thought, and that her presence preserved man from all wrong, destroyed all enmity and all sensuous impulses, kindled the flame of charity, and put to flight pride and worth." This actual woman, however, became so thoroughly idealized in the great poem, that there are but scant traces of human nature left in her. There she becomes symbol of all that is highest, truest, and most desirable to human aspiration—symbol, indeed, of Divine Wisdom. Thus Dante speaks of her in Paradise:

"Mine eyes I raised,
And saw her, where aloof she sat, her brow
A wreath reflecting of eternal beams.
Not from the centre of the sea so far
Unto the region of the highest thunder,
As was my ken from hers; and yet the form
Came through the medium down, unmix'd and pure.
'O Lady! thou in whom my hopes have rest;
Who, for my safety, hast not scorned, in hell
To leave the traces of thy footsteps mark'd,
For all my eyes have seen, I to thy power
And goodness, virtue, love and grace."
Parad., Cant. XXXI.

From the dawn of Christianity upon the world, until the thirteenth century, no great poet had appeared. Dante is the first great Christian poet. His ideal of womanhood differs entirely from that of the great poets of antiquity. The explanation of this is to be found in the more exalted morality and spirituality of the Christian religion. His great poem is based on medieval conceptions, of course, but in attitude and breadth of thought it soars far above and beyond anything peculiar to the middle ages. In the realms of scientific thought his marvellous insight led him to anticipate Newton by four hundred years in the matter of gravitation. In the lowest abyss he and his guide pass Lucifer wedged in ice, and they come to a point where they see the arch fiend "with legs held upward."—"Where is now the ice?" he asks his guide.

* Dante as Philosopher, Patriot and Poet. With an analysis of the *Divina Commedia*, its Plot and Epitome. By Vincenzo Botta. New York: Chas. Scribner & Co. Montreal: R. Wortington.

"How standeth he in posturo thus reversed?
And how from ere to morn in space so brief
Hath the sun made his transit? Ho! in few
Thus answering spake: 'Thou deemest thou art still
On the other side of the centre, where I grasped
The abhorred worm that boroth through the world.
Thou wast on the other side, so long as I
Descended; when I turned, thou didst o'erpass
That point, to which from every other part is dragged
All heavy substance.'"
Infern., Cant. XXXIV.

Dante as a poet occupies a pedestal all his own. For Italy he created a national language, and laid the basis of a national literature. He was a poet not merely for Italy but for humanity. The *Divina Commedia* is made the subject of special courses of lectures in the German Universities. Dante was patriot as well as poet, and spent much thought and active life in the service of his country. He was a foe to the political pretensions of the papacy, and wrote and laboured with a view to Italian unity and liberty. His views of duty were too exalted for the city of his birth, and Florence, to her eternal shame, doomed him to an exile in which he died. The fate of the public peculators in his poem, ought to be a warning to public peculators in all lands and all times. This class is plunged into a lake of burning pitch, and freely tortured by attendant demons. In passing through the abyss, the poet sees a fiend of "nimblest tread" running with a siner of this stamp firmly clutched; and, dropping him into the lake, he says to his fellow fiends,

"Him
Whelm ye beneath while I return for more;
That land hath store of such. All men are there,
Except Monturo, barterers:—Of 'no'
For lucro there an 'ayo' is quickly made."
Infern., Cant. XXI.

Our copy of Dante by Carey has, in this Canto, an illustration by Flaxman, which we respectfully recommend to the notice of all decorators of modern legislative halls in Ottawa or elsewhere.

In May last, the sixth centenary of Dante's birth was celebrated with great enthusiasm in his native land. The book before us by Signor Botta appears to have been drawn out by that event. It is evidently a labour of love on the part of the author, opportune in its coming, and valuable as a popular help to the study and appreciation of the great poet. A glance at the table of contents will show its value as a contribution to this end, and we hope it may attain a wide circulation hereabouts and elsewhere.

LITERATURE AND LITERARY GOSSIP.

THERE is a kind of physiognomy in the titles of books, no less than in the faces of men, by which a skilful observer will as well know what to expect from the one as the other." This saying of Butler's, we doubt not, had some force in his day, when it was the fashion to compress the contents of a work into the title-page, and this, to an almost offensive degree. But, to-day, when the fashion is with authors to assume a *non de plume*, and to usher their productions in an incognito, he would be indeed a skilful analyst and conjurer who would rightly divine the subject or purport of a book from its title-page. Take, as an instance, Mr. Ruskin's new volume, "Sesame and Lilies," with the more mysterious adjunct to the title of "King's Garden and Queen's Treasures"—who would infer the subject to be on books and women, how to read the first and how to educate the latter?

The reader, after considerable cogitation and shrewd guessing, might infer tolerably correctly the contents of such books as "Undertones," "Looking towards Sunset," "Soundings from the Atlantic," "Stones Crying Out," &c. "Horæ Subsecivæ" we know to be Leisure Hours, "De Profundis" we are told is a tale of the Social Deposits; but really of the titles of some works which have recently appeared, it would be a masterly mind that would arrive at a correct conclusion as to their contents. Thus it must be, that Reviews of works are so eagerly sought by book-readers, more as a glossary on the title-page of the books of the day than as a criticism on their merits.

We pass to our usual summary. In literature and art, we meet with first, an interesting volume to philologists, entitled "Chapters on Language," by F. W. Farrar, M.A., Trin. Col., Cambridge. A second series of "The Gentle Life," the first series of which contains perhaps the finest essays in the English language. The publication of Earl Derby's Translation of Homer's *Iliad* has set the classical scholars and versifiers vigorously to work. We notice, besides the works which appeared immediately after Lord Derby's—"The *Iliad* of Homer in English Hexameter Verse," by J. E. Dart, M.A., and "Homer and the *Iliad*," by Prof. Blackie, of the University of Edinburgh. This latter work, which from the reputation of the author, we are sure will be good, will be divided into three parts,—Homeric Dissertations; 2dly, The *Iliad* in English verse; and 3dly, Commentary, philological and archaeological. Two recent Scottish works will appease, for the time the cravings of the curious in ethnology and archaeology. They are respectively entitled "The Early Races of Scotland, and their Monuments," by Lieut. Col. Forbes Leslie, and "Ancient Pillar Stones of Scotland, their Significance and Bearing on Ethnology," by Geo. Moore, M.D. We note, as being reprinted from Geo. H. Lewis' Fortnightly Review, a new poem of Rob. Bulwer Lytton, "The Apple of Life," under the *nom de plume* of Over Meredith. It is an oriental legend, a little indelicate to some tastes, but beautifully wrought out. Mr. Redgrave gives us an account of the progress of Art in England under the title of "A Century of Painters of the English School, with critical notices of their works." In advance of steel engraving and wood-cut engraving as embellishments to books, we have now photography at work; and of the three, the latter is, we doubt not, capable of as much art-manipulation, and will become more acceptable in the illustration of books as the two former. And to connoisseurs, who cannot possess themselves of the originals of rare pictures, no one will question which of the arts would be more acceptable as a copyist than photography. Such a work as the following, produced as it is in photography, will go far to reconcile one for the absence of an original Raphael,—the great works of Raphael Sanzio of Urbino, a series of twenty photographs from the best engravings of his most celebrated paintings, with Vasari's Life, Notes, &c.

In the department of Science we have "Frost and Fire, Natural Engines, Tool Marks and Chips, with sketches taken at home and abroad, by a traveller," a work of most pleasing originality of thought; and in *Theology*, a new work by the Rev. Dr. Guthrie, entitled "Man and the Gospel," and from the pen of Dean Alford, "Meditations, in Advent, on Creation, and on Providence." A volume of miscellanies from the collected writings of Edward Irving, and an excellent and welcome addition to the literature of the Holy Land scenery, from the pen of the author of the *Chronicles of the Schouberg Ootta Family*, entitled "Wanderings over Bible Lands and Seas." G. M. A.

"LONDON SOCIETY."*

It was Byron, we believe, who expressed regret that one of Moore's most exquisite melodies should bear the lackadaisical name of "Love's Young Dream." We, too, are somewhat inclined to carp at the title of one of the best English Magazines of the day, "London Society," the November number of which has just reached us. The young will find in its pages tales and poetry written with much ability, and unexceptionable in tone and morals; while graver readers may indulge in subjects more to their satisfaction. The engravings, also, are excellent.

The price for which this serial is sold ought to insure it a large circulation in Canada and other British Provinces; for British subjects can learn from its perusal nothing inconsistent with the sentiments and principles which they inherited from their fathers, and is the best legacy which they can leave to their children.

* "London Society," an Illustrated Magazine, London: 9 St. Bride's Avenue, Fleet Street. Dawson Brothers, Montreal.