

LOVE IN ART.



H Love! if the proud Achilles himself yielded to thy power, are we to be surprised when the Christians, armed to avenge the quarrels of a God, are bound in thy chains." So writes Tasso in concluding the fourth canto of his "Jerusalem Delivered" to justify the

conduct of his own heroes who, almost to a man, have become involved in some *affaire du cœur*. The apology is artful and would be amply sufficient were it not impugned by those stubborn things—facts. Few who have read the immortal Grecian epic, will question that with Tasso in this case, the wish was father to the thought. The Iliad, indeed, opens with a quarrel over a female slave, but does the anger of Achilles spring from thwarted love? Is he not rather fired with righteous indignation at the base ingratitude of the man in whose service his trusty arm has been so long and so successfully employed? Homer was too true an artist not to see that love such as it is witnessed in Tasso's heroes—that overpowering passion which blinds the reason and paralyzes the will

would be incompatible with the strong and massive mould of an Achilles or a Diomele, though it might well befit the soft, luxurious nature of a Paris. Bryseis weeps, it is true, when the parting comes thus attesting the kindness of Achilles as a master, whilst he too is affected, rather, however, by this evidence of the slave's affection for him than by any sentimental weakness. We have none of the modern swain's tears and rhapsodies. He suffers the maiden to be led away without drawing his sword, only he will no longer fight under the man who has publicly heaped indignity upon him, nor with those who by tacit consent have justified such action. Has he not been braved to the face before the whole army? Has not his lawful share of booty been wrenched from his grasp? And did not his countrymen sit quietly by whilst all this was being done,

and never utter a sound of disapprobation? Yea they did, and in future he will have none of them. This is the real passion by which the peerless Grecian hero is actuated, a passion far more consistent with the heroic character than is the unreasonable and unreasoning love of Tasso's chieftains.

So it is throughout Homer's works. Love is present, indeed, just as it is in life, but it is not made the pivot upon which the whole action turns. And what is here said of Homer may be said with scarcely an exception, of all the great artists of antiquity. The form employed by the ancient dramatists differed much from that now used by playwrights, but their plots differed far more. In general, love was never mentioned in them, whilst in those of our time it is almost a *conditio sine qua non*. And no better proof of the false estimate now prevailing of this passion need be adduced than the superiority of the Grecian stage in all that is grand and noble over that of the present day.

In Virgil's great epic, likewise, Aeneas, though a hero somewhat of the milk-and-water type, proves himself to be able to cope successfully with mere sentiment when greater interests are at stake. His mode of procedure is somewhat steady, it is true, still the fact remains that having made a *mésalliance*, he had the moral courage, or if you wish, the moral cowardice to treat it when the occasion required.

And so on to the end of the chapter. Love's shrine in the ancient temple of art was a lowly one indeed. If we seek for causes, the degraded condition of woman will immediately present itself as a primary one. As long as she was considered a being of a lower order than man, love could have no place in human art. But it is a fact of daily experience that excess in any direction engenders a reaction equally violent. Hence when, through the instrumentality of christianity, woman was elevated to her proper sphere in life, man not content to leave her there, must needs have made her a something little less than