

PHILARÈTE CHASLES.

"Foster therefore the intercourse of intelligence ; facilitate the relations between races."

And few men have more systematically and thoroughly applied themselves to the task than he who wrote the above words. With patient and unremitting toil Philarète Chasles selected in English, German, Spanish, and Italian literature, the best and most characteristic works, and re-produced them in his native tongue, in the garb which would find most ready acceptance with, and be most easily appreciated by, the French nation. While the war raged fierce between Classicists and Romantists, instead of joining in the wordy contest, as to the merits of foreign literatures, he undertook to make those known to the disputants on either side and the vast mass of onlookers that still remained undecided.

During a space of forty years therefore, he continued to produce brilliant criticisms and studies of works known too often only by name. He traversed almost every field of literature, and initiated the French reading public into the mysteries of Gœthe, of Schiller, of Lessing, of Shakespeare, of Cervantes, of Lope di Vega, of Dante, and innumerable other writers. He gave proof of immense power of analysis, of correct appreciation, of subtle discrimination ; he laid the foundations of a new system of classification in literature ; he pointed out the true bent of the genius of every author he criticised ; in a word, he taught France foreign literature both skillfully and thoroughly.

It would indeed have been a matter of wonder if Chasles had not sought to embody the results of so much study and labour in some more compact form than that of his collected works. His "*Questions du Temps et Problèmes d'Autrefois*" may be taken as the summary of his researches and meditations.

Divided into six books, treating severally of Philosophic, Social,