days of Raphael, his chance of being a painter is infinitely less from the prosaic tendency of everything around us. Why, Raphael created painters not less than pictures!

Amico. Did he create them by exciting their enthusiasm, or by giving them some part of himself?

Pictor. Of course, by calling out what was in them. Amico. Then it was in them. That is all I want. Now if many men have the power, what we want is to call it out. Which, think you, is the nobler way, and most likely to lead to great results,—to wait if perchance some one may come along sufficient to excite your enthusiasm, or to take the matter in your own hands and wait for no man? Nay, is not the history of the great a sufficient answer? They all went alone.

Pictor. This is fine theory, Amico; but you demand the impossible. Your great men made painting, and that is their title to glory. But for us the field is filled. There remain no such conquests in art for us, as Raphael and Giotto made. Amico. O man of little faith! Is there nothing for Columbus to do now, because America has been discovered? We stand all upon a Western shore, with a whole unknown world awaiting our discovery. To believe it is there, is faith. To know it, is given to no man. Where would have been the merit of the great Cristoval, if some messenger had revealed all to him? Be a new Ulysses. Do you remember the old Florentine's verses? Tennyson has hammered them out very skilfully, but here is the gold itself.

"Ne dolcezza del figlio, ne la pieta
Del vecchio padre, ne il debito amore
Io qual dovea Penelope farlieta,
Vincer potero dentro a me l'ardore
Ch'inebbia divenir nel mondo esperto,
E degl'umanini e del valore;
Ma misime per l'altomare aperto
Sol con un legno, e con quellacompania
Picciola dalla qual non fui deserto."

"O frati, dissi, che per cento milia
Pergi siete giunti all'occidente,
A questa tanto picciola vigilia
De' vostri sensi, ch'è di rimanente,
Non vogliate negar l'esperienza,
Direte al sol, del mondo senza gente.
Considerate la vostra somma:
Fatti non foste, a viver come bruti,
Ma per seguire virtute e conoscenza."—

Inferno, Canto XXVI.

1842.] Record of the Months. 273

RECORD OF THE MONTHS.


TENNYSON is more simply the songster than any poet of our time. With him the delight of musical expression is first, the thought second. It was well observed by one of our companions, that he has described just what we should suppose to be his method of composition in this verse from "The Miller's Daughter."

"A love-song I had somewhere read, An echo from a measured strain, Beat time to nothing in my head From some odd corner of the brain. It haunted me the morning long, With weary sameness in the rhymes."

"The phantom of a silent song, That went and came a thousand times."

So large a proportion of even the good poetry of our time is ever over-ethical or over-passionate, and the stock poetry is so deeply tainted with a sentimental egotism, that this, whose chief merits lay in its melody and picturesque power, was most refreshing. What a relief, after sermonizing and wailing had dulled the sense with such a weight of cold abstraction, to be soothed by this ivory lute! Not that he wanted nobleness and individuality in his or a due sense of the poet's vocation; but he won us not forced them upon us; as we listened, the cope of the self-attained futurity

"Was cloven with the million stars which tremble
O'er the deep mind of dauntless infancy."

And he seemed worthy thus to address his friend, "Weak truth a-leaning on her crutch, Wan, wasted truth in her utmost need, Thy Kingly intellect shall feed, Until she be an athlete bold." Unless thus sustained, the luxurious sweetness of his verse must have wearied. Yet it was not of aim or meaning we thought most, but of his exquisite sense for sounds and melodies, as marked by himself in the description of Cleopatra.

"Her warbling voice, a lyre of widest range, Touched by all passion, did fall down and glance From tone to tone, and glided through all change Of liveliest utterance."
Record of the Months.

Or in the fine passage in the Vision of Sin, where

"Then the music touched the gates and died;
Rose again from where it seemed to fail;
Stormed in orbs of song, a growing gale;" &c.

Or where the Talking Oak composes its serenade for the pretty Alice; but indeed his descriptions of melody are almost as abundant as his melodies, though the central music of the poet's mind is, he says, as that of the "fountain
Like sheet lightning,
Ever brightening
With a low melodius thunder;
All day and all night it is ever drawn
From the brain of the purple mountain
Which stands in the distance yonder:
It springs on a level of bowery lawn,
And the mountain draws it from heaven above,
And it sings a song of undying love."

Next to his music, his delicate, various, gorgeous music, stands his power of picturesque representation. And his, unlike those of most poets, are eye-pictures, not mind-pictures. And yet there is no hard or tame fidelity, but a simplicity and ease at representation (which is quite another thing from reproduction) rarely to be paralleled. How, in the Palace of Art, for instance, they are unraveled slowly and gracefully, as if painted one after another on the same canvass. The touch is calm and masterly, though the result is looked at with a sweet, self-pleasing eye. Who can forget such as this, and of such there are many, painted with as few strokes and with as complete a success?

"A still salt pool, locked in with bars of sand;
Left on the shore; that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from the land
Their moon-led waters white."

Tennyson delights in a garden. Its groups, and walks, and mingled bloom intoxicate him, and us through him. So high is his organization, and so powerfully stimulated by color and perfume, that it heightens all our senses too, and the rose is glorious, not from detecting its ideal beauty, but from a perfection of hue and scent, we never felt before. All the earlier poems are flower-like, and this tendency is so strong in him, a friend observed, he could not keep up the character of the tree in his Oak of Summer Chase, but made it talk like an "enormous flower." The song,

"A spirit haunts the year's last hours,"
is not to be surpassed for its picture of the autumnal garden.

The new poems, found in the presented edition, show us our friend of ten years since much altered, yet the same. The light he sheds on the world is mellowed and tempered. If the charm he threw around us before was somewhat too sensuous, it is not so now; he is deeply thoughtful; the dignified and graceful man has displaced the Antinous beauty of the youth. His melody is less rich, less intoxicating, but deeper; a sweetness from the soul, sweetness as of the lived honey of fine experiences, replaces the sweetness which captivated the ear only, in many of his earlier verses. His range of subjects was great before, and is now such that he would seem too merely the amateur, but for the success in each, which says that the same fluent and appreciative nature, which threw itself with such ease into the forms of outward beauty, has now been intent rather on the secrets of the shaping spirit. In 'Locksley Hall,' 'St. Simeon Stylites,' 'Ulysses,' 'Love and Duty,' 'The Two Voices,' are deep tones, that bespeak that acquaintance with realities, of which, in the 'Palace of Art,' he had expressed his need. The keen sense of outward beauty, the ready shaping fancy, had not been suffered to degrade the poet into that basest of beings, an intellectual voluptuary, and a pensive but serene wisdom hallowes all his song.

His opinions on subjects, that now divide the world, are stated in two or three of these pieces, with that temperance and candor of thought, now more rare even than usual, and with a simplicity bordering on homeliness of diction, which is peculiarly pleasing, from the sense of plastic power and refined good sense it imparts. A gentle and gradual style of narration, without prolixity or tameness, is seldom to be found in the degree in which such pieces as 'Dora' and 'Godiva' display it. The grace of the light ballad pieces is as remarkable in its way, as was his grasp and force in 'Oriana,' 'The Lord of Burleigh,' 'Edward Gray,' and 'Lady Clare,' are distinguished for different shades of this light grace, tender, and speaking more to the soul than the sense, like the different hues in the landscape, when the sun is hid in clouds, so gently shaded that they seem but the echoes of themselves.

I know not whether most to admire the bursts of passion in 'Locksley Hall,' the playful sweetness of the 'Talking Oak,' or the mere catching of a cadence in such slight things as "Break, break, break
On thy cold gray stones, O sea," &c.

Nothing is more uncommon than the lightness of touch, which gives a charm to such little pieces as the 'Skipping Rope.'
We regret much to miss from this edition ‘The Mystic,’ ‘The Deserted House,’ and ‘Elegiacs,’ all favorites for years past, and not to be disparaged in favor of any in the present collection. England, we believe, has not shown a due sense of the merits of this poet, and to us is given the honor of rendering homage more readily to an accurate and elegant intellect, a musical reception of nature, a high tendency in thought, and a talent of singular fineness, flexibility, and scope.

A Letter to Rev. Wm. E. Channing, D. D.
By O. A. Brownson.

THAT there is no knowledge of God possible to man but a subjective knowledge,—no revelation but the development of the individual within himself, and to himself,—are prevalent statements, which Mr. Brownson opposes by a single formula, that life is relative in its very nature. God alone is; all creatures live by virtue of what is not themselves, no less than by virtue of what is themselves, the prerogative of man being to do consciously, that is, more or less intelligently.

Mr. Brownson carefully discriminates between Essence and Life. Essence, being object to itself, alone has freedom, which is what the old theologians named sovereignty;—a noble word for the thing intended, were it not desecrated in our associations, in being usurped by creatures that are slaves to time and circumstance. But life implies a causative object, as well as causative subject; wherefore creatures are only free by Grace of God.

That men should live, with God as the predominant object, is the Ideal of Humanity, or the Law of Holiness, in the highest sense; for this object alone can emancipate them from what is below themselves. But a nice discrimination must be made here.

The Ideal of Humanity, as used by Mr. Brownson, does not mean the highest idea of himself, which a man can form by induction on himself as an individual; it means God's idea of man, which shines into every man from the beginning; "Enlighten the very man that cometh into the world," though his darkness comprehendeth it not, until it is "made flesh." It is by virtue of that freedom which is God's alone, and which is the issue of absolute love, that is, "because God so loved the world," he takes upon the subject, Jesus, and makes himself objective to him without measure, thereby rendering his life as divine as it is human, though it remains also as human,—strictly speaking, as it is divine.

To all men's consciousness it is true that God is objective in a degree, or they were not distinctlyly human. His glory is re-fracted, as it were, to their eyes, through the universe. But only in a man, to whom he has made himself the imperative object, does he approach men, in all points, in such degree as to make them divine. He is no less free (sovereign) in coming to each man in Christ, than in the first instance, in making Jesus of Nazareth the Christ. Men are only free inasmuch as they are open to this majestic access, and are able to pray with St. Augustine, "What art thou to me, oh Lord? Have mercy on me that I may ask." The house of my soul is too strait for thee to come into; but let it, oh Lord, be enlarged by thee. It is ruinous, but let it be repaired by thee," &c.

The Unitarian Church, as Mr. Brownson thinks, indicates truth, in so far as it insists on the life of Jesus as being that wherein we find grace; but in so far as it does not perceive that this life is something more than a series of good actions, which others may reproduce, it rests on an arm of flesh, and puts an idol in the place of Christ. The Trinitarian Church, he thinks, therefore, has come nearer the truth, by its formulas of doctrine; and especially the Roman Catholic Church, by the Eucharist. The error of both Churches has been to predicate of the being, Jesus, what is only true of his life. The being, Jesus, was a man; his life is God. It is the doctrine of John the Evangelist throughout, that the soul lives by the real presence of Jesus Christ, as literally as the body lives by bread.

The unchristianized live only partially, by so much of the word as shines in the darkness which may not hinder it quite. This partial life repeats in all time the prophecies of antiquity, and is another witness to Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

Mr. Brownson thinks that he has thus discovered a formula of "the faith once delivered to the saints," which goes behind and annihilates the controversy between Unitarians and Trinitarians, and may lead them both to a deeper comprehension and clearer expression of the secret of life.

Lectures on Modern History, from the Irruption of the Northern Nations to the close of the American Revolution. By Wm. Smyth.

Lectures on Modern History, from the Irruption of the Northern Nations to the close of the American Revolution.

This work is not exactly what it professes to be. It is rather a series of lectures on the method in which modern history is to be studied. It directs the student to the most important subjects in the modern history of Europe and America, and points out to him the sources in the English and French languages, where he is to seek information. It is, in short, a guide-book of modern history, and as such of great value.