

A CONFESSION.

BY WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

I know not whether I am proud,
But this I know, I hate the crowd;
Therefore pray let me disengage
My verses from the motley page,
Where others far more sure to please
Pour out their choral song with ease.
And yet perhaps, if some should tire
With too much froth or too much fire,
There is an ear that may incline
Even to words so dull as mine.

The New-York Tribune.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 9, 1908.

The average little "literary movement" is apt to owe its passing success to the disposition of its supporters to be, above all things, grand, boomy, and peculiar about it. They have a horror of common sense and of humor. But these enemies of solemn silliness usually triumph in the end. There is a delightful story told by Mr. Francis Gribble in the "Fortnightly" about the break-up of the "Esthetic Movement" at Oxford. It seems that "Punch" had been ridiculing the "New Renaissance," whereupon a certain Esthete offered a resolution at the Union, proposing that the offending journal should be dropped. The proposal was rejected, but the business did not end there. A party of boating men, fellow-collegians of the Esthete, raided his quarters, threw his blue china out of the window, and put him under the college pump. Incidentally they threatened to take similar measures with similar offenders. Their intervention had magical effects. "The leading Esthetes hurried as one man to the barber's to get their hair cut, and to the haberdasher's to buy high collars. Men who, on the previous day, had resembled owls staring out of ivy bushes, now cultivated the appearance of timid cows shyly peeping over white walls." Mr. Gribble describes the Decadents who succeeded the Esthetes as disappearing not quite so suddenly but none the less completely. "One Decadent came to a mysteriously tragic end in Paris; a second drank himself to death; a third was run over by a cab. Others seceded and relapsed into commonplace orderly courses." To be a Decadent nowadays is to be almost as old-fashioned as if you were an Esthete. Thus the little feverish "Movements" fade. They cannot endure the harsh touch of a rational world.

The long and affectionate study of the life and works of the late Gaston Boissier, which M. René Pichon prints in the current number of the "Revue des Deux Mondes," forms a charming tribute to a charming type. Boissier was a true son of the Ulidi—he was born at Nîmes—and brought to his career as a scholar and professor in Paris some beguilingly human traits. The freedom from pedantry which we have noted in speaking of his books also marked his walk and demeanor as a man. Gaston Phœbus, his young disciples at the Ecole Normale loved to call him, testifying to the brilliance alike of his personality and his talk. He liked to talk, M. Pichon tells us, and knew that he talked well; but neither in collegiate halls nor in society, neither as a member of the Academy nor as a figure in the intimacy of private life, did it ever occur to him to talk too much. Sydney Smith once observed that Macaulay "not only overflowed with learning, but stood in the slops." Gaston Phœbus would have regarded such a proceeding with horror. Paris modified if it did not quench his Southern exuberance, and in his talk as in his writing he had the quality of an artist. The portrait of him drawn by M. Pichon shows us a scholar who gave himself with all his heart to the cause of learning, but who remained from beginning to end a delightful man of the world.

In a sprightly paper contributed to the "North American Review" by Elizabeth Bismarck, attention is called to "The Morals of the Modern Heroine." They are contrasted to their disadvantage with the morals of an earlier generation of fictitious types, and the result is that the essayist comes to a rather gloomy conclusion. "The truth is," she says, "the modern heroines do not stir enthusiasm, for the modern heroine, on the whole, is a pretty bad lot. In this age of investigation the muck-raker might employ his spare time in exposing her." It is an apt suggestion. The modern heroine is indeed a fearful and wonderful creature, with manners as bad as her morals. Oddly enough, she is rarely so obnoxious as when she is invented by a woman. We say invented because, while society in all ages has produced its due quota of unedifying women, no society, at any time, has been afflicted by quite the sort of petticoated nuisance that we observe in so many novels. These teasing sisters are not simply conscienceless, vulgar, and fairly sick with vanity. They are hopelessly unnatural. They owe their ephemeral existence in part to the diseased imaginations of the writers who affect them, and, in part, to the fact that fiction is nowadays so often made a trade by persons having no experience of life. There is no author like your young author for dogmatizing about the mysteries of a woman's heart. Half educated, unaccustomed to reflection, and equipped, in short, with nothing more than a commonplace turn for narrative, he bolts Ibsen whole or the egregious Mr. Shaw, and forthwith proceeds to prattle about the things of the mind and the soul. It is no wonder that we have herds of impossible heroines.

VENICE.

Some Illuminating Chapters in Her History.

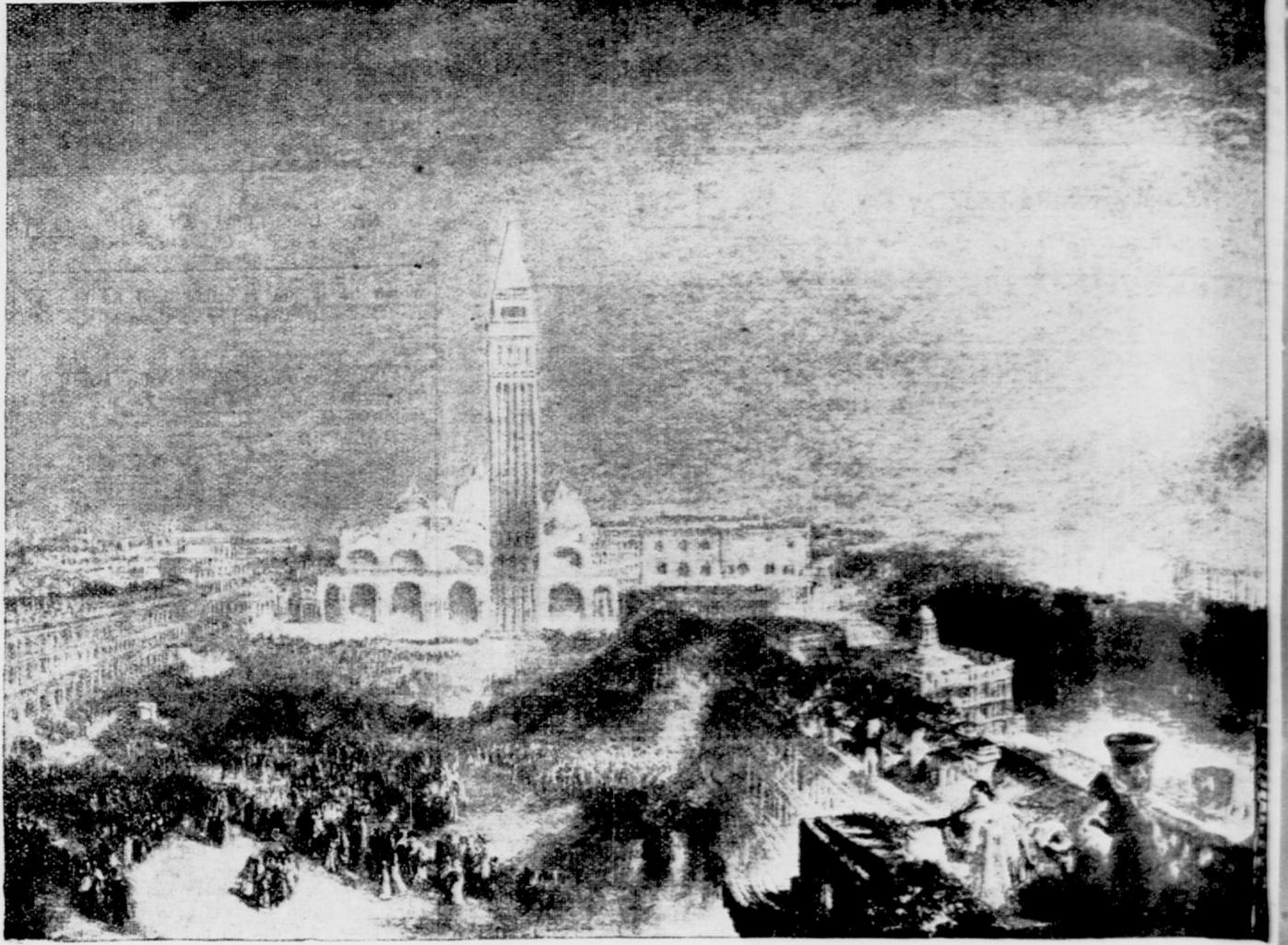
STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF VENICE. By Horatio F. Brown. In two volumes. 8vo, pp. xii, 356; v, 349. E. P. Dutton & Co.

Mr. Brown's mode of writing history is none the less scholarly because it is informal and discursive. He knows his sources with a thoroughness that might be envied by the veriest pedant; but his feeling for the purely human side of his subject is too warm and his sense of literature is too keen for him to obtrude the "documentary evidence" he has so richly accumulated. He uses this as a means to an end, as the material on which to base essays calculated to be profitable alike to the student and to the general reader. The broad scheme he has

The details of the evolutionary process by which the Venetians little by little were provided with a stable government are too numerous to be even summarized in this place. The significant point to be noted is that the ruling caste was quick to see the danger of giving its figurehead too much power. We think of the Doge as in some sort a monarch, with commanding attributes. It is difficult to conceive of the central figure in Venetian pageantry as a man cribbed, cabined and confined. That from the nature of his office—an office strictly elective—he could not hope to found a dynasty gives us a hint of other disabilities. But it is important to observe that when his name came out of the urn a noble raised to the ducal chair really had the hand of fate laid upon his shoulder in heavy and even sinister fashion. At the very outset he was made to feel something of the deadly power of the state. When the biretta had been placed upon his head he was brought to the Sala del Piovego, where the

garchy organized with consummate skill? succeeding generations, of course, wrought changes in the political machine, but, whatever befalls upon the people. Mr. Brown's chapters steadily illustrate its extraordinary efficiency. He relates the conspiracies of Biamonte Tiepolo and Marino Faller. Neither was successful; indeed both served to confirm the development of Venetian polity along its original lines. Tiepolo in exile, and, what is more, his efforts to shake the old order of things only led to the creation of the Council of Ten, the last and most potent instrument of aristocratic authority. Likewise, Marino Faller, dying a traitor's death on the steps of the ducal palace, left behind him a party inspired by his treason to strengthen its hold upon the State.

It is impossible to withhold a tribute of admiration from a government so well balanced as was that of the Venetians. Its evils are undeniable. It could be cruel and corrupt, and

THE PIAZZA OF ST. MARK, VENICE.
(From the painting by Turner.)

adopted is especially to be commended. He selects a salient phase of his subject, a representative type or episode, and contrives to make it throw light on the general development of Venetian history. He is thus enabled to dispense with a vast amount of that routine business, as it might be called, which the exhaustive historian cannot afford to neglect, and at the same time he is in no wise prevented from giving us a luminous interpretation of the spirit of Venice. That spirit is ordinarily filtered for us through a veil of romance. In most books and for most readers the claim of the Venetian glamour is imperious. Mr. Brown does not neglect it, but he places in the foreground the concrete problems by which the builders of the republic were confronted, and lays stress upon the practicality with which these problems were attacked and solved.

Geographical conditions determined the bent of the Venetian genius with exceptional force. "Venice on her lido," runs the saying, "stood exposed to every wind." She stood, as it were, between the East and the West. Very early in her history she was afflicted by the natural trend of her commerce, if by nothing else, with Byzantium. Her proximity to Italian soil and to the Papal power could not but work, as time went on, to the modification of her relations with the East. But situated as she was, with her waters giving her a kind of quasi-isolation, she was bound, by the instinct of self-preservation, to strengthen the natural bulwarks between her independence and the covetous moves of the alien on every side. Mr. Brown well exhibits the persistent reaction of the site of Venice upon the growth of her political fabric and all her governmental institutions. The invigorating airs of the sea tended to develop a race of men jealous of their freedom. At the same time a community dedicated, as was this one, to trade and, in short, to materialistic ideals, was certain, sooner or later, to be involved in difficulties over the reins of administration. Wealth, as always, brought men to the surface and kept them above it. The aristocracy of one period was menaced by that of a new generation. Hence, the rise of factions, bitter struggles for supremacy and, finally, a compromise, which, if favorable to the dominance of a class, was at all events the sure preventive of such individual tyranny as marked the establishment of this or that principality on the mainland.

body of his immediate predecessor had lain in state, and there he was harshly reminded that thenceforth his path led relentlessly to a bier in the same chamber. Thus the eldest member of the council would address him: "Your Serenity has come here in the pride of life to take possession of the Palace; but I warn you that when dead your brains, eyes and bowels will be removed. You will be brought here to this very spot, and here you will lie for three days before they bury you." With these grim words ringing in his ears the new Doge proceeded to take up his duties.

His execution of them varied, of course, according to his character. A strong man unquestionably found a means of expressing his personality, and, working through his councillors, carried out a policy stamped, at least to a certain extent, by his will. In whatever direction he turned, however, he was met and in a large measure controlled by the power whose symbol he was. As early as the middle of the thirteenth century he was hemmed in by restrictions and made "simply the ornamental apex of the aristocracy, drawing all his existence from below him, from the base of the constitutional pyramid." Mr. Brown has on the subject this interesting passage:—

A clause was added to the *promissione* by which the Doge pledged himself to execute the orders of the Great Council or of any other council, be they what they might. Nor dared the doge exhibit his portrait, his bust, or his coat-of-arms anywhere outside the walls of the ducal palace, that all might know that the essence of the dukedom was not resident in the doge, but in the whole aristocratic body. The doge was, in fact, to be the phenomenon of the aristocracy, with no individual existence, but living only as the outward and visible sign of the inward aristocratic spirit. In this view he was held to be incompetent to announce his accession to the throne in any foreign court, except that of Rome. No one was to kneel to him, kiss hands, make presents, or render him any act of homage which could possibly be construed as homage to the individual rather than homage to the spirit of the aristocracy, in which alone the doge lived and moved. The elevation of a member of any family to the supreme office barred all other members of that family from holding posts under government either in Venice or in Venetian territory. The sons of the doge were ineligible as members of any councils except the *Maggior Consiglio* and the *Pregadi*, and in this latter they had no vote. Finally, to complete the isolation of the ducal throne, to close the doors of the princely prison, it was decreed that no one who might be elected to the office of doge should have the right to refuse that appointment; that no doge could of his own choice resign his office, nor ever quit Venice.

Does not this gilded captivity imply an oli-

for the much dreaded machinations of an individual despot it substituted a rule hardly less stifling to the spirit of freedom. Nevertheless Venice as Venice waxed prosperous and powerful beneath the shadow of the Ten, and in the volumes before us we see again and again what stern might, with what perfect craft, the Republic pursued its proud course. The rarest of Padua imagined that they could have their own against Venice and, at the games of diplomacy and war, win territory and prestige from the Republic. They found extinction to their pains. One of Mr. Brown's longest and best chapters is devoted to the career of the Francesco Bussone, better known as Carmagnola, whose military abilities, long exercised magnificently in the service of Filippo Maria Visconti, were ultimately employed by Venice against the Milanese tyrant. Carmagnola thought, like Francesco Carrara and his son Novello, that where Venice was concerned he could play for his own hand. We wish we could follow here all the windings of his picturesque story. We must be content to note instead that Venice wound it up to suit herself. The unwise soldier of fortune was led in due time between the two dread columns on the Piazza di San Marco, and there beheaded.

The Venetian powers knew their own mind, and when once they had made it up they acted with rapidity and with crushing force. They were well served at home and abroad. The young Venetian nobleman was soon initiated into political life, and whenever he became a servant of the State he accepted a rigid discipline. The political machine, though complicated, was well oiled, until it seemed almost to go of itself, and to be a kind of juggernaut. Mr. Brown devotes a good chapter to the subject of political assassination as it entered into the movement of Venetian government. It was regarded in those old days as a weapon of war and discussed "in precisely the same spirit that the Geneva Convention discussed the use of explosive bullets, Greek fire, or the immunity of ambulance wagons." He gives some examples, a little amusing at this distance, of Venetian dabbling in these dark waters. In 1649 the *Provveditore Generale* in Dalmatia wrote to his masters to propose a new way of ridding them of their Turkish foes. A Dr. Michiel Angelo Salomon had come to his notice, a gentleman