

—for it ran round a circle like a disk— it made a sense very different ; no one knew what might be the true reading, but there existed a superstition that when it should come true the last Corleone should die, and the Pagliuca d’Oriani should end. And now, once again, an ordinary writer would have made this Sibylline sentence the keynote of his tale, or at least would have caused it to fulfil itself. Mr. Crawford views it as a curious and interesting superstition, but it has no shadow of influence either upon himself or the events which he narrates, and its fulfilment is merely a singular coincidence.

In the manner of death of one of these Pagliuca, our author has created one of the strongest situations with which we are acquainted, either in the novel or the drama. The murderer of his brother in this same old Church of Santa Vittoria, finding that he has unwittingly had the young priest Ippolito Saracinesca for a witness, communicates the crime to him, without loss of a moment, under the seal of confession. Then, caring not, knowing not, whether his astounded auditor has absolved him or not, he straightway leaves the church, locking the door behind him, and denounces Ippolito to the authorities as the murderer. The ingenuity of it baffles belief in its invention by mortal mind. Surely it must have happened ! Of a similar nature is Concetta’s denunciation of the same rather unlucky young priest, who has just rescued her from the violence of Francesco. “ And you thought I would turn and accuse a Corleone when I could accuse a Saracinesca ? You do not know us,” says Concetta.

Truly we may confess it without shame we do not know the Sicilians, if these are they ; and we may add without a blush that we do not want to ! Mr. Crawford probably does ; at least his calm, dispassionate narrative compels belief. Certainly the national character as depicted by him is thoroughly self-consistent ; even that charming and childlike villain, “ the Moscio,” is in his hands more entirely comprehensible than one’s dearest friends and nearest relations. That Aliandra should be attracted by this delightful person is perfectly intelligible, and may contain the seed of another Sicilian tale ; in the mean time, if Mr. Crawford’s present-

ment of the island, with its mixed Saracen and Greek ancestry, be as voracious as it appears, if the Mafia be “ not a band . . . but a sentiment, a feeling, a sort of wild love of our country,” then he has rendered an important service to social science, in addition to creating one of the strongest and most delightful novels of our century.

John Lennox.

NATURE IN DANTE.*

As a rule the Dante monograph, like other special treatises, is apt to prove caviare to the general. Dante’s theology, his philosophy, his politics are not subjects which appeal strongly to the layman. But every one, old and young alike, who has once come under the spell of Florence, and has felt the witchery of Tuscan skies, must have some curiosity to know what emotions these same aspects of nature awoke within the poet who is of all others most closely identified with the life of mediæval Italy. And for this reason Professor Kuhns’s unpretentious but thoroughly scholarly little volume ought to appeal warmly to the general reader as well as to the student of Dante.

It has the sterling merit of being written in a broad spirit of impartiality ; the author has sought to collect and sift down all the passages in the *Divina Commedia* that in any way bear upon his subject, together with whatever side lights the *Vita Nuova* or *Canzoniere* afford ; and this he seems to have accomplished with commendable thoroughness, and has presented his results in a style at once lucid and entertaining. Taken as a whole, the book cannot be said to throw any especially new light upon Dante’s attitude toward nature, but rather to confirm previously accepted views. “ My object,” he says, “ has not been to deny Dante’s claim to be considered a close observer and a genuine lover of Nature—for this I believe to be true of him in an eminent degree—and I fully concur in the opinion of Burckhardt and Humboldt, who consider him the first poet to show the modern appreciation

* The Treatment of Nature in Dante’s *Divina Commedia*. By L. Oscar Kuhns, Professor in Wesleyan University, Middletown, U. S. A. New York : Edward Arnold. \$1.50.

of the world in which we live" (p. 44) ; but at the same time he finds that "when compared with modern writers, Dante seems narrow in the use he makes of nature ; the poet and the painter of today manifest a deep and wide sympathy for all manifestations of life, and for all variety of scenery. . . . The feeling for the sublime and wild in Nature, which is entirely lacking among the ancients, is also lacking in Dante." In their attitude toward nature there is a close analogy between Dante and the early Florentine painters, beginning with Cimabue and Giotto, as has been well brought out by Mr. Ruskin, in his delightful chapters on "The Mediæval Landscape" (*Modern Painters*, Part IV., chaps. xiv., xv.), to which Professor Kuhns has frequent occasion to acknowledge his indebtedness ; in poet and painter alike we see the same effort to emancipate themselves from their classical or Byzantine models ; but the trammels of tradition were not to be thrown off in a single generation. One of Professor Kuhns's most interesting chapters is that on "Dante's Conventional Treatment of Nature," in which he shows Dante's extensive indebtedness to the Bible and to classic writers, Vergil, Ovid, and others, for stock phrases and metaphors, many of which have become the common property of poets in all ages. "The only wonder," he concludes, "is not that Dante has so many conventional references to nature, but that, in spite of the artificiality of his times, he gives such striking evidence of close personal observation of the world about him" (p. 19). And he cites the many phases of Nature which Dante was the first to introduce into poetry, "such as the hand bathed and smoking in winter, the change of colour in burning paper, the lizard flashing across the sunlit road, and especially the phosphorescent glow on water at night" (p. 186). What seems to impress him especially is Dante's topographical accuracy, and he dwells upon the exactness and minuteness of the poet's descriptions of the course of the Arno (*Purg.* XIV., 16 sq.), and of the location of Mantua (*Inf.* XX., 61 sq.). But notwithstanding Dante's keen powers of observation and accuracy of detail, the most casual reader of Professor Kuhns's book cannot fail to note the absence in the *Divina Commedia* of all that we are

in the habit of thinking of as the salient features of an Italian landscape—the blue sky, the blue waters of the Mediterranean, the matchless scenery of the Riviera, the olive groves and vineyards, with all the busy life attending the vintage and the gathering of the olives—all, in short, which in modern parlance goes to make up the *milieu*, is lacking. "We must confess," admits Professor Kuhns with visible reluctance, "that the direct evidence in the *Divina Commedia* of an appreciation of the natural beauties of Italy in any way comparable to that shown by modern writers is very small ;" and in almost every chapter he is forced to show his surprise at such a want of appreciation. For example, "in all references to the sea there is a strange absence of colour in the descriptions. . . . The waters of the Mediterranean are very beautiful, and show every shade of colour, according to circumstance. But of all this there is not one word in the *Divina Commedia*" (p. 87). Or again, "There is not the slightest evidence in the *Divina Commedia* of a love for the simple, wild, uncultivated flowers, those which are found in the fields and along the wayside" (p. 116) ; that "as in the case of flowers, the number of different trees is surprisingly small, and forms a striking contrast with Vergil and even Ovid" (p. 123) ; that the "most common birds used by troubadours and minnesingers are the nightingale and lark. . . . It is rather singular that Dante has so little reference to them" (p. 135) ; and similarly, in regard to places, that "of all the beauty which hovers about Venice, floating on the bosom of the Adriatic, not a trace can be found in the *Divina Commedia*." A similar comment has been made by Ruskin of Dante's apparent lack of appreciation of the magnificent panorama of the Val d'Arno and the purple range of the mountains of Carrara, which one commands from the hill of San Miniato. Of course it is unwise to build too much upon the omission of certain phases of nature from the *Divina Commedia*, and Professor Kuhns is quite justified in being persuaded that "in spite of the above facts, Dante did appreciate the beauty of his native land." But the tendency of his book is to leave a vague sense of doubt and disillusion.

How many good books are marred by an unsatisfactory index ! The present

one might have been considerably amplified with profit, while a table of passages cited, without detracting from the popular character of the book, would have greatly increased its value to the specialist.

Frederic Taber Cooper.

THREE PARTNERS.*

In the chastened words of Whisky Dick, we wish to offer our congratulations and felicitations to Mr. Harte on his having written so delightful a story, and one that embodies so distinctly the noble qualities, and their defects, which have made his personality the force it has been in American literature. There is here the same gift of lucent narration, the same deft selection of incidents and love of unravelling mysteries, the same plucky determination not to blink the tragic and irreparable facts of human conduct, which have always informed his writing, and these, as usual, threaten to play the very mischief with his dramatic instinct and his delineation of character. No one but a genuine artist in intent could emerge so creditably from such a *mêlée* with himself, or indeed be under the constant and harassing necessity of essaying so many things at once. If it should be found that the book before us lacks wholeness and symmetry and abounds in clever artificial situations—"curtains," grand entrances and exits; that its four central figures are Dickensian incarnations of a single trait or characteristic, and its minor personages, being less strongly accentuated, are more complex and human, though less appealing, because the targets of the author's gentle satire; and that its humour, founded upon truth rather than exaggeration, and taking its hue from the complications of the plot, alone remains intact before the surge and undertow of conflicting ideals, let us yet be thankful for those ideals, and lenient toward one who has attempted much and been unable to weld into complete harmony the intricacies of his design.

The three partners who carved their fortune out of Heavy Tree Hill were

* Three Partners; or, the Big Strike on Heavy Tree Hill. By Bret Harte. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.25.

Stacy the practical, Demorest the contemplative, and Barker the impulsive. Stacy got them away in time from the ill-fated cabin, in three years became a rich banker, and curbed the others' *penchant* for wildcat investments. Demorest, in his all-night vigil before they packed off to Booneville and ever afterward, brooded on the vision of a fair young girl whom he had abandoned, in obedience to a malicious forged letter, that he might remove the reproach of his poverty. Now it was the sight of a stagecoach, now of a photograph, that reminded him of his buried past. We leave him happy in the discovery that the loved one was not dead, as he had been informed, and gloomily wondering if she had "grown stouter and more complacent." Barker, who always believed in everybody until they believed in themselves, and then "shook" him, who was not only open to deceit, but seemed to invite it, to whom "all women were either virgins or married saints," wedded a vulgar little fool who carped at his enthusiasms, talked loudly in hotel dining-rooms, and berated hotel clerks, and finally eloped with her broker. Barker drifted into chimerical but lucky speculations. He fell effusively in love with a Mrs. Horncastle, of infelix reputation, who in his eyes was "as noble as she was generous and handsome." And when his wife, deserted by the lover of her money, drove up in a buggy, dirty and dishevelled, he incurred her everlasting contempt by tenderly assuming that she had been to the Divide looking after the money he had given her. Each one of the trio is drawn with firm, broad strokes, and stands out unrelieved by lights or shadows. Nor is our old friend Jack Hamlin, who hovers about like a good angel, guarding their treasure and visiting wrath upon the robber and murderer in their midst, conceived differently. He is a buoyant soul with "not a crease in his white waistcoat nor a speck upon his varnished boots." That is all.

Every one of these characters is essentially simple. While you are under the glamour of the romance, they are all momentarily convincing. You fancy that you have met a Barker, a Demorest, a Stacy, if not a Hamlin. Yet I venture to say that in real life they are far outnumbered by the Van Loos, the Mrs. Horncastles, and the Steptoes,