

A PAGE OF VERSE

A SHADOW OF DANTE

BY C. FIELD

[*The Westminster Gazette*]

So Strömboli retreated in the gloom,
 Flinging red flame and molten lava
 high,
A flaring portent: We, who passed it
by,
Carry that lurid memory to the tomb;
Yet round its crater living flowers
bloom,
The vine, fig, olive, grow and fructify,
Above it laughs the blue Italian sky,
A paradise upon the verge of doom.

As fiery as that red volcanic blast,
Through years he wrestled with his
unseen Foe
Wailing in pain, 'I will not let Thee
go,
Until Thou bless me who have held
Thee fast';
And so our Dante from his hell of woe
Arose to paradise and peace at last.

THE ALMOND TREE

BY S. G. TALLENTS

[*The Nation and the Athenæum*]

THUS from a bitter ground,
By sorrow long retarded,
Pity, at last unbound,
At last unguarded,

From the heart of the gnarled wood
In dark and secret hour,
Steals silently to bud,
Silent to flower;

But blowing unconfined
In loveliness fugitive
Must soon to the sharp wind
That beauty give —

A sweet and bruised array,
So late in splendor burning,
To what blind prison of clay
Dumbly returning?

REQUIEM

BY RICHARD CHURCH

[*The Spectator*]

A STRANGER told me you were dead,
And I, unmoved, replied,
Asking, in even tones, the place
And hour you died.

But as, half reverently, he told
The things I asked of him,
I saw you on a summer night,
With your eyes dim,

Telling your dreams to me, the hopes
That would not let you rest;
The faith in life, the faith in love.
I saw your breast

Rising and falling to the moon
White as a troubled tide
That sweeps the world, but cannot find
A place to abide.

Youth upon your shoulders lay,
A cloak that made you one
With the luring beauty of the South;
Warm as the Sun.

Your hair was fragrant in those days,
And your eager hands would touch
The empty air, as though your
thoughts
Were fruit to clutch.

You would not rest. One night you lay
Sleeping upon my breast;
I saw the torment of your sleep —
You would not rest!

Day-long, night-long, throbbing heart,
Wounded with life, you bled.
Now it is over; now you are healed;
Now you are dead!

LIFE, LETTERS, AND THE ARTS

LUDWIG BARTH, AUTOGRAPH
COLLECTOR

IN his castle in Graz, Styria, dwells Ludwig Barth, king of all the autograph collectors in the world, and with him dwells his Book. No ordinary book, for in it are nineteen hundred autographs of the most famous personages of the modern world, and four hundred pictures, every one with associations that put it almost beyond price. In it, too, are the results of seventeen years of ceaseless labor and the expenditure of seventy thousand (pre-war) francs.

Other autograph collectors are satisfied to obtain their prizes by letter. Not so Herr Barth, who has secured all but two or three of his nineteen hundred by personal interviews.

'You deserve the Nobel prize!' exclaimed the King of Denmark, as he claimed the pages of the Book.

'Sire, I prefer your autograph,' replied Herr Barth. The King reached for his pen.

The Mikado of Japan, the Shah of Persia, ex-Kaiser Wilhelm II, ex-President Wilson, Emperor Francis Joseph, King Edward VII, Queen Mary, and King George have all inscribed the pages of the Book; and artists and scientists whose distinction equals or surpasses that of rulers of nations are there as well: Ernst Haeckel, Puccini, Grieg, Israels, Rodin, Defregger, Solomon J. Solomons.

This book of autographs is an international rendezvous, and the memoirs of its maker, if they are ever written, will be a contribution both to history and to literature; for Herr Barth has met well-nigh all the makers of the modern world. Chatting quietly with the visitor who bends above the wonderful pages of his treasure, the old col-

lector tells in a talk of ten minutes what King Edward said to him at Marienbad, King George in Buckingham Palace, Pius X in the Vatican, Sarah Bernhardt in Paris, and Queen Mary just after her coronation. Musicians add a few bars of music above their names, famous painters draw sketches. In the book is the last sketch that Hodler made before his death, while the autographs of Dreyfus, his accusers, and his defenders, give way to the makers of modern history. Kitchener is there, and Mackensen, and Hindenburg, who, Herr Barth thinks, allows himself to be too much fêted by his admiring fellow citizens.

He pauses reverently above the page where the Emperor Francis Joseph wrote 'Viribus Unitis,' and then turns the page to where another signature stands, with a date just before the signing of the Treaty of Versailles — 'Woodrow Wilson.'

Clemenceau's signature is not among the nineteen hundred, and there is an interesting reason for its absence. Before he signed, the Frenchman was idly turning the pages, when he came upon a bold signature — 'Wilhelm II.' He leaped from his chair, he even rushed to a window and opened it to let in the fresh air, and has ever since firmly refused to sign his name in the same book.

I wanted it photographed first [says Herr Barth of his book as he tells why he refused an offer of \$500,000 from Pierpont Morgan]. If I had to part with my treasure, then I felt that the whole world must share it. Morgan would not consent. So I was content to remain poor and keep my ideals. Of course, though that was a fancy price, the intrinsic value has increased immensely since then.

I had some trouble with the Kaiser, too, at an historic time — the date is the week of