

ART. V. — *Œuvres d' ALEXANDRE DUMAS.* Bruxelles : Meline, Cans, et Compagnie. 1838—40. 4 Tomes.

ALEXANDER DUMAS is one of the most lively and popular writers in that new school of French literature and politics, which has attained its chief triumphs since the Revolution of 1830, though its origin may be traced a few years further back. The members of it are numerous and active, and the number and rapid succession of their publications show with what favor they are greeted by the public. In a recent number of this Journal,* we had occasion to sketch some of the characteristics of this school, when speaking particularly of the writings of *George Sand*. Our present subject is not equally attractive, for Dumas falls far short of Madame Dudevant in inventive genius and mastery of style. But his plays and novels show much talent, and afford very striking illustrations of the extraordinary *bouleversement* of taste and opinion, which is now exhibited by the reading public of France. The fertility of his pen, and the variety of subjects which he has treated, show a very ready and productive mind, stimulated by the public demand, and bent on reaping a present harvest from his popularity, rather than establishing a permanent reputation. The four ponderous octavo volumes, that lie before us, of about seven hundred pages each, printed in double columns, do not comprise the whole of his publications. Materials for a fifth volume have appeared since 1840, and still there are no signs of weariness on the part of the author or satiety on that of his readers. He appears in various characters, and writes on the most dissimilar topics, with equal liveliness and success. Novels, tragedies in prose and rhyme, history, political essays, and books of travels come from the same pen, and the family likeness betrays their common origin. His powers of invention appear to as much advantage in history as in romance, and the scenes and personages that he describes as a traveller, are very like the off-hand creations of the playwright and novelist.

France is not the only country in which literature begins to assume the aspect and undergo the mutations of trade.

* *North American Review*, Vol. LIII. pp. 103 et seq.

The author's profession is becoming as mechanical as that of the printer and the bookseller, being created by the same causes, and subject to the same laws. The nature of the supply seems likely to be as strictly proportioned to the demand, as in any other commercial operation. The public appetite will not be sated with the food, which the caprice of writers and the irregular distribution of natural genius may create. It must be gratified with its peculiar delicacies, its favorite cates ; and the means of satisfying it, in one way or another, are sure to be discovered. The publisher, in the name of his customers, calls for a particular kind of authorship, just as he would bespeak a dinner at a *restaurant* ; and, in preparing the required article, the cooks at the desk show as much versatility and readiness as their brethren in the kitchen. The great increase of the reading public, consequent on the diffusion of education and the cheapness of paper and print, is the great cause of this extraordinary cultivation of the art of book-making. The writer's profession becomes a lucrative one, when he ministers to the pleasures of so large a circle, who are willing to pay for the amusement and gratification, which he affords them. He no longer looks for his reward to the judgment of the judicious few, or the united voice of different countries and ages. He finds a more immediate recompense in the accounts of his bookseller and the applause of the multitude. And he is able to direct his course with a view to the attainment of this reward, and to disregard the higher motive. The mind is not so irresistibly inclined towards one pursuit or one kind of exertion, that it cannot be forced out of its channel. Successive efforts by different individuals, urged on by the popular voice and eager for gain, will be sure to create the desired product, however foreign it may be to their original taste or previously acquired habits.

The present literature of France seems to have grown up under influences of this character. It is not that the literary habits and preferences of individuals have changed, for it is impossible that the same persons at one period should relish the formal literature of the age of Louis the Fourteenth, and at another the extravagant Romanticism of the present day. But the changes in the constitution of society, and the improvements in the mechanical arts, have brought forward a new community of readers, whose taste differs from that of

the higher classes not more widely now, than it did a century ago, when it had not the power of manifesting itself and creating the appropriate means for its gratification. In a word, the democratic principle is now exerting as visible an influence in literature as in politics, the change being accompanied, in the beginning, with as much turmoil and as many ill effects in the one case as in the other, but destined in the end, as we may trust, to be productive of much good. A literature created for the people, if not by them, must always be characterized by greater energy and simplicity, by more excitement and a broader license, and by less polish and refinement, than one which is destined for a learned and aristocratic class. If it consist only of songs and ballads, these qualities will yet be manifested, though in a narrow sphere. But, when the progress of society has extended a certain degree of instruction to all classes, and rendered books accessible to all by cheapening their price, and when, moreover, it has lessened the weight of the authority and example of the few, removed the attachment to old established principles, and diminished the reverence for antiquity, we may expect that these characteristics will appear on a larger scale, and overpower for a time those laws of taste, which formerly enjoyed an undisputed supremacy. New sources of interest and amusement will be opened, and new fields of literary exertion entered, by men, who attach more importance to the number of their admirers, than to the basis on which the admiration rests. They will look to the quantity, and not the quality, of the praise obtained, and will measure their reputation by their substantial profits. Their productions will bear the popular stamp, — will represent the feelings and tastes, and be suited to the prejudices, of the multitude to whom they are addressed.

France has now been in an agitated, and at short intervals a revolutionary state, for more than half a century. A people very excitable by nature have had their enthusiasm kindled to the highest degree by great and rapid changes effected in their social and political condition. The sense of their own power has been animated by brilliant successes, checkered by sudden alternations of fortune, and resulting, to the mass of the people, in bitter disappointment. Great events have passed before their eyes with the rapidity with which the scenes shift upon the stage, and the mutability of

private fortunes has outdone in real life the wonders of romance. Religion, since it lost its hold on the minds of the people, has been at times taken up and again laid aside as an implement of state, a part of the political machine. Moral restraints were swept away in the current of exciting passions, when the laws for the punishment of crime were involved in the downfall of political institutions, or their execution was forgotten in the hurry of those passing events, which absorbed the attention, as they involved the safety, of the government and the people. And these exciting changes, these convulsions in state affairs and in social life, have all occurred within a single lifetime. Many are still living who witnessed the opening scenes of the first revolution, who assisted in the destruction of the Bastille, and took the oath to support the constitution of 1789.

"A revolution in letters," says Victor Hugo, "is the necessary consequence of a political revolution." As applied to the recent history of France, the remark is certainly true, though it will not hold, if, by a revolution, we understand a mere change in the form of government, which often occurs without any great alteration in the habits or feelings of the people. But, when the change has affected all classes and conditions in the state, when their opinions as well as their circumstances have been modified and shaped by the course of political events, it is only a truism to say, that the literature of the people will also be revolutionized. It will undergo as rapid a metamorphosis, it will exhibit as strange features, as have appeared in the political aspect and condition of the country. Among the various branches of letters, prose fiction, poetry, and the drama will naturally be the first to show the influence of external events, and to appear under the most striking transformations. According as the writer's sphere of effort lies near to life and manners, or as his work pretends to display a copy or a shadow of real events and things, or to embody personal or national feelings, so will it contain the visible impress of those great occurrences, which have been operating upon the character of the people. After such a troublous period, as the last half-century has been for France, we might well expect that the imaginative and fanciful department of her literature would display more license, energy, and extravagance, than before; that more improbable fictions would be conceived, more fantastic poetry be

written, and a struggle of wilder passions be exhibited on the stage. It was impossible, that the old principles of taste, the stiff laws of a rather pedantic school of criticism, should any longer retain their supremacy. They were swept away with as much hurry and enthusiasm, as the National Assembly showed when they abrogated the remains of the Feudal system. In both these cases, a temporary anarchy succeeds. The nation was so eager to do away with the old law, that it is content for a time to remain without any substitute for it, — to be guided only by passion and impulse. When the novelty of such a state of things has ceased to charm, and its practical inconveniences begin to be felt, an attempt will be made to erect a new system, and once more to draw order and method out of chaos. French Romanticism is too violent and convulsive in its character to show much promise of long life or lasting effort. Its present fever heat will most probably be followed by a severe chill.

We have already hinted that Alexander Dumas, though at times a pleasing, and even a brilliant writer, and certainly a very acceptable one to his countrymen, is not the ablest or the most distinguished representative of the new school of prose fiction and the drama in France. He is too much of a hack author, adapting his works with great readiness and skill to the popular taste, but leaving upon them no strong and distinct image of his individual character. He is much inferior to Victor Hugo in invention, variety, picturesque description, and all the higher attributes of a poet and a dramatist; and to *George Sand* in the intense conception of passion and in eloquence of style. But he is very lively and graphic in manner, is often successful in the exhibition of character, and shows himself a thorough student of effect. His great aim apparently is to startle the reader, and his contrivances for this end are frequently happy, though sometimes they flash in the pan. But he is not capable of exciting the deeper passions, or of keeping up a strong emotion, while the effort to do so is very apparent. The influence of his dramatic experience is quite visible, even when he is occupied with prose fiction, history, or the medley which he calls *travels*; he is continually making points, that remind one strongly of the clap-traps of a third-rate tragedian. His figures are bold, and sometimes magnificent; but they are often marred by bad taste, and not unfrequently sink into bathos.

The secret of his popularity is found in his spirited narration, in his heaping together incidents of a striking but very improbable character, and in his free use of the wildest speculations and the most atrocious sentiments, which a lively fancy and a bad heart can devise.

To say that he is perfectly lawless and unprincipled in all that relates to art, propriety, or morals, is only to remind one of the school to which he belongs. In these respects, he is neither better nor worse than Balzac, *George Sand*, and a crowd of coadjutors. His favorite characters are jail-birds and cut-throats, who sometimes affect to disguise their villany with a parade of sentiment, and, at others, brazen the matter out with a disgusting brutality ; and his incidents are drawn from the darkest annals of crime. No regard is paid to poetical justice, nor is any respect shown for the sympathies of the reader, as they are drawn out by the course of events ; but the action is carried on with a view only to excite and astonish, and all minor considerations are sacrificed to the desire of weaving a fearful and absorbing tale. Poverty of invention is betrayed by a frequent recourse to history for some wild scene or striking event, though the truth is then so disguised and mixed up with fictitious and extravagant adjuncts, that the reader feels mocked with the presence of familiar names in connexion with incidents which are no longer recognised. We can easily imagine what passages such a writer would be likely to glean from the historian. The foul deeds of the Borgias, the tissue of intrigues and murders, which formed the policy of some of the profligate monarchs of France, the most fearful incidents of the Reign of Terror, — in short, whatever page in the annals of history is spotted with blood or stained with crime, has furnished Dumas with materials, which he has turned to account by exaggerating the horrors, and inventing minor incidents to increase the probability, of the tale.

Though our author sometimes inveighs against existing institutions and the customs of society, we cannot find that he has any particular grievance to avenge, or any favorite theory to inculcate. The invective does not come from the heart, nor are the writer's peculiar views urged with that sincerity and warmth, which belong to the passionate pleadings of *George Sand* and other theorists and innovators. He has evidently not been led astray by fantastic speculations,

and, provided his books sell, he probably cares little whether the public adopt or reject his opinions. In politics, he occasionally manifests more earnestness, for he is a furious republican; but, even here, we suspect there is a prudent reference to the wishes and prejudices of that part of the community, to whom his books are chiefly addressed, and no deeply grounded personal conviction. He seems to be more intent upon pleasing his readers, than upon altering the form of government. The indifference thus manifested rather aggravates his crime in setting forth pernicious doctrines and immoral sentiments; for one can pardon much error and extravagance, when the views set forth are honestly entertained and warmly defended. We have no doubt, for instance, that Madame Dudevant has really quarrelled with the laws of society, which she attacks, and that she espouses the wrong with something of a martyr's spirit. Dumas has a more cool and calculating temperament, and, if he were not a needy writer, he would probably be a peaceful subject.

Our author is of honorable, though not of wealthy, parentage. His father, Alexandre Dumas, obtained the rank of general in Napoleon's army, and served with some distinction in Egypt. He left his family nearly destitute, and the son, at twenty years of age, with a very imperfect education, came with his widowed mother to Paris, in the hope of obtaining some small post under government, the income of which would support them both. He gives a lively sketch of his reception by some of his father's old companions in arms, who were rich and powerful, but not much inclined to notice or assist the son of their former comrade. Only General Verdier and General Foy received him with interest and kindness, but unluckily they were both nearly as poor as himself. At last, through the intervention of the latter, he obtained an humble clerkship, with a salary of three hundred dollars a year, in the household of the present King, who was then only Duke of Orleans. This appeared a fortune to his mother and himself, and he immediately settled down in quiet at Paris, being employed at the office during a great part of the day and evening, and devoting his nights to study, in the hope of repairing the defects of his imperfect education. But the confinement of such an office, and the insufficiency of his salary, pressed severely upon an ardent temperament; and his independent conduct, according to his own

account, deprived him of the favor of his superiors. Urged by these circumstances, he turned his thoughts towards writing for the stage, which has long been the most lucrative department of literary exertion in France, since the law secures to the author a large share of the profits from the representation of his pieces. "Christine," a tragedy, or rather a drama, in verse, was his first effort, and it is still the most pleasing, and the least exceptionable of his performances. The play was accepted by the directors of the theatre, but some delay occurred in preparing it for the stage, and Dumas meanwhile wrote another, "Henry the Third and his Court," which was first represented, and had great success. The time occupied in attending the rehearsals caused him to neglect somewhat the duties of his office, and, receiving an intimation that he must choose between the theatre and his post, he immediately resigned the latter. These events took place in 1829, and since that year Dumas has been an author by profession, the number of his publications evincing his industry and the fertility of his talent.

His writings for the stage may be divided into two classes, the first including four tragedies in verse, "Christine," "The Alchymist," "Charles the Seventh," and "Caligula," which in form, though not in substance, follow the classical models of Corneille and Racine. In two of them the unities are strictly preserved, and in all, the fetters of rhyme operating as a happy restraint on the extravagance of his conceptions, the more offensive peculiarities of the Romantic school are scarcely visible. The second class comprises "Antony," "Richard Darlington," "Teresa," "Catherine Howard," and several other dramas in prose, which are most characteristic of the man, and of the school to which he belongs. Some of these, such as "Kean" and "Don Juan de Marana," — a bad copy and continuation of a bad original, — are as contemptible in point of execution, as they are execrable in design. The others show much talent, though polluted to the last degree by immorality, extravagance, and bad taste. They contain powerfully written scenes, affording admirable scope for the abilities of the performers, and have, consequently, been very successful upon the stage. The further representation of "Antony" was prohibited by the government, after it had been played for eighty successive nights; and some other interferences of this sort, proba-

bly, first kindled the republican zeal of the offended dramatist. "*La Tour de Nesle*," also, had a great run upon the stage; but it has subsequently appeared, that this play, although represented and printed as the production of Dumas, was actually written by another person, who has made good his title to the profits in a court of law. It is evident, however, from the style, that Dumas retouched and modelled the raw material; and the honor of originating such an extravagant picture of impurity and crime may be fairly divided between the two claimants.

As a specimen of the bold and striking style of Dumas, and to show with what vigor he conceives a subject, and how clear are his ideas of effect, we translate a portion of the preface to his "*Caligula*." Some of the expressions may appear offensive, if not impious, but we have softened, rather than exaggerated, the audacity of the original.

"Five years have elapsed since I conceived the plan of this tragedy; and, during that time, not a day has passed but I have labored upon it. It was not designed to be a work of sentiment, like '*Antony*,' nor an improvised drama, like the '*Tower of Nesle*,' nor yet, like '*Angela*,' a picture of manners. The period, which it was to present, was obscurely known, or, what was worse, we had only false ideas respecting it;—a period, which, when we have arrived at a certain age, we look back upon only through the wearisome recollections of our college studies, and which it was necessary to build up again on the movable ground of the theatre, within the narrow limits of the stage, and according to the severe architecture of the unities.

"Add to this, that antiquity, as it is displayed in the tragedies of Voltaire's school, had fallen into such utter discredit, the sense of wearisomeness, with which it affected us, had become proverbial. It was not any thing new that I was about to attempt; it was rather a restoration.

"Therefore, when once resolved to undertake the work, I grudged no labor for its accomplishment. The imperfect reminiscences of college studies were effaced; the reading of the Latin authors appeared insufficient. I went to Italy, in order to see Rome; for, not being able to study the body, I wished at least to visit the tomb.

"I remained two months in the city of the Seven Hills, visiting the Vatican by day, and the Coliseum by night. But after I had reconstructed the whole in my imagination, from the Ma-

mertine Prisons, even to the Baths of Titus, I perceived, that I had seen only one face of the ancient Janus, — that grave and austere countenance, which had appeared to Corneille and Racine, and from its lips of bronze had dictated the ‘*Horatii*’ of the one, and the ‘*Britannicus*’ of the other.

“It was Naples, the beautiful Greek slave, which was to present to me the second face, hidden under the lava of Herculaneum and the ashes of Pompeii; — a face as sweet as an elegy of Tibullus, laughing as an ode of Horace, and mocking like a satire by Petronius. I descended into the excavations under Resina; I established myself in the house of the Faun; during eight days I waked and slept in a Roman habitation, — in actual contact with antiquity; — not the antiquity which Livy, Tacitus, and Virgil have transmitted to us, — grand, poetical, and almost divine; but antiquity familiar, material, and domestic, as it is revealed to us by Propertius, Martial, and Suetonius. Then the nation that wore the toga began to come down to me from its pedestal, to assume a palpable form, to exhibit a living countenance. I peopled these empty houses with their lost inhabitants, from the palace of the patrician down to the shop of the oil-merchant; and all the steps of that immense ladder, which reached from the emperor even to the slave, appeared to me in a dream like that of Jacob, covered with beings like ourselves, who were ascending and descending. This was not all. I went to them, I opened the tunic, I raised the cloak, I put aside the toga, and everywhere I found the man described by Homer and Diogenes, by Dante and by Swift, — with the stature of a dwarf, and the passions of a giant.

“Then, from the study of men, I attempted to pass to the knowledge of things. I endeavoured to form an intelligible account of those times, of which we have a history, but no explanation. I looked at the frantic emperors, and the enslaved people, — a hundred and sixty millions of men, victims of the cunning of a tiger, or the ferocity of a lion. I sought out a motive for these monstrous crimes, and for this unbounded patience; and I discovered one, by substituting faith for philosophy, and contemplating the Pagan world from a Christian point of view.

“At this epoch, Rome was not only the capital of the empire, but also the centre of the world. It resounded so loudly over the face of the earth, that not even a murmur could be heard from the other cities. Its houses covered the whole space from Tivoli to Ostia, from Ponte Molle to Albano. In this immense hive hummed, like bees, five millions of inhabitants, or about six times the population of Paris, and four times that of London. It had a magnificent garden, which reached from Vesuvius to

Mount Genève; a voluptuous gynæceum, called Baïæ, a splendid villa, denominated Naples, and two immense granaries, Sicily and Egypt, always full of corn and maize. Moreover, either by stratagem or conquest, it had inherited the treasures of Babylon and Tyre, its ancestors, the commerce of Carthage and Alexandria, its rivals, and the learning of Athens, its instructress.

“From this centralization of men, wealth, and learning, there had resulted a strange mixture of manners, a frantic luxury, a corruption like that of Sodom. The Roman colossus, powerful as it was in appearance, experienced at times sudden shocks, quakings of the earth, and mysterious agitations. The earth was like a woman near the end of her travail; she felt the movements of her offspring,—the unknown progeny foretold by the salutation of the angels, and awaited by faith. The ancient world was opening in fissures from old age; a cleft was widening in the pagan Olympus, from the east even to the west; the universe was in a state of torpor, like that of a serpent changing its skin. A mortal shudder ran through this society, which tried to overcome the presentiment by its orgies, and, with a hand hot with revelling, endeavoured to wipe out with wine and blood, the fatal words traced by the finger of the angel on the reeking walls of its festivities. At last, Rome could no longer have trust either in earth or heaven; it was between a volcano and a tempest; it had the full catacombs under its feet, and over its head an empty Olympus.

“It was because it had just been chosen for the designs of the Almighty;—because, a predestined city, from a rock, it was to become a pharos;—because this immense crucible, wherein the human race was transformed by heat, was at the same time a gigantic mould, from which was to come forth a new world. As human revolutions, although conducted by the divine hand, can be accomplished only by human means, God willed to assault this fortress of iniquity, both at the summit and at the base; he sent madness upon the emperors, and faith to the enslaved. Behold, therefore, these Cæsars, from Tiberius even to Julian, when they have hardly attained the height which they call empire, how they are seized with a sudden vertigo, with wild insanity, with incredible blindness! See how their bloody rage foolishly destroys every thing, which might serve for their support, by striking at both the knights and the patricians, those natural props of every monarchy! See how the doomed nobility destroys itself, and, at a word, a gesture, on the command of its tyrant, holds out the throat, opens the veins, or perishes by famine! It is a thirst for death, a mania for

annihilation ; and Rome has not a palace, that does not send forth death-rattles, cries, and groans.

“ Now cast your eyes on the other extremity of society. In lieu of despair, behold consolation ; instead of executioners armed with the axe, see old men bearing the cross and the Gospel ; in place of a hand digging up the earth, a finger which points to heaven.

“ Thus the anger of God descended upon the great, and his mercy was extended over the humble. These two messengers of the Almighty went to meet each other, the one coming down from the emperor to the people, the other ascending from the people to the emperor. They came together in the middle ranks of society, each having accomplished its work. From that time, there was a Pope instead of a Cæsar, martyrs in the place of gladiators, Christians and no more slaves. A second Genesis was accomplished ; to the light of the eyes succeeded that of the soul. God had made a new world out of the wrecks of the ancient universe.

“ When I had arrived at this point of view, one may imagine what poetical and sublime materials were offered to my mind by this struggle between dying paganism and nascent faith. My only other business was to select from these three ages of transformation, an epoch proper for the developement of my plan. The close of the reign of the successor of Tiberius appeared to me the best fitted for my theory respecting the action of Providence. Of the three types which I needed, history offered me two, and my imagination had long before conceived the third. These three were Messalina, Caligula, and Stella.”

— Vol. II. p. 659.

Dumas had not the power to execute the plan which he has here sketched with so much strength and clearness, though in a distorted and galvanized style. The topic is a magnificent one, but we question whether it is a tractable theme for the poet, and it certainly cannot be compressed within the narrower limits prescribed to the dramatist. “ Caligula ” contains some striking scenes, the action is carried on with much spirit, and the diction, though occasionally rough-hewn, is often rich and impressive. But far from embodying the poet’s whole idea, no one would suspect, except from reading the preface, that he had such a lofty end in view, or that he designed any thing more than to represent with theatrical effect the frightful crimes and terrible death of the worst of the Roman emperors. The characters in general are feebly drawn, especially Stella, who was designed to be the impersonation of Christian faith and the martyr spirit.

Her belief, indeed, is only an accident in the story, dignifying her character, but in no wise affecting the course of events nor the termination of the tragedy. She is represented as the daughter of Caligula's nurse, and the action turns on her becoming the victim of the emperor's brutality, and being avenged by her mother and her betrothed. If she had been a pagan, the action might have led to the same issue ; and, though increased interest might attach to her, in the present case, from the higher belief and noble sentiments which she professes, this is precisely the advantage which our poet is incapable of using. He is wholly incapable of portraying ideal purity, faith, and excellence, and the attempt to accomplish such an end produces nothing but mawkish sentiment, or extravagance and bathos. But he is quite at home in delineating such a monster as Caligula, to whom history attributes as much ferocity and madness as Dumas is fond of representing in his fictitious heroes. The most natural and striking personage in the tragedy, or rather in the prologue to it, in which alone he appears, is Lepidus, a dissipated and reckless young patrician, but with some traces of high feeling, who, having been denounced to the emperor for using seditious language, opens his own veins in the bath, in order to escape a more ignominious death. The quickness and composure, with which the young trifter, when apprized of his danger, conceives his plan of forestalling the executioner, and goes jesting to his death, are brought out with great effect.

The union of strength and crime, the junction of a powerful intellect with violent passions and a bad heart, is the compound which our author loves to exhibit, both in his plays and in his prose fictions. With his usual exaggeration, he carries the first element so far that it appears superhuman, and he gives a degree of atrocity to the other, which augments the horror, as much as it lessens the credibility, of the tale. Alfred d'Alvimar, Richard Darlington, Marguerite, Antony, and Don Juan de Marana are all personations of unmitigated wickedness coupled with extraordinary power, and the course of events usually brings about the triumph of these demons, instead of their defeat and punishment. Dumas professes great admiration for Shakspeare, and seems to imagine that in this respect, as in many others, he is only following in the steps of the great dramatist. He forgets,

that the "mighty master" always qualifies guilt with some marks of compunction or some touches of natural feeling ; or he shows the magnitude of the temptation together with the atrocity of the crime, and paints the struggle of conflicting desires which is thus occasioned ; or, at most, wickedness is used only as a foil to virtue, and appears only in a subordinate part. Iago is perhaps the only character of unmixed and gratuitous evil in the whole Shakspearian gallery, and he was necessary, as a part of the ground on which Desdemona appears more silvery white and pure by the contrast, and as a means of preserving the beholder's sympathies for the noble Moor, when stimulated to foul injustice by the other's devices. It may be observed, also, that the character of Iago is the most unnatural one in the play, as appears by the anxiety of the reader to detect some other motives for his conduct, besides the insignificant pretexts which he assigns. We cannot accept at once and on trust such a union of a powerful mind and a black heart, and we search eagerly for some key to the enigma, — some cause or palliation of the crime. It is scarcely necessary to say, that Macbeth, Shylock, King John, and even Richard the Third have enough of good or noble qualities in them to preserve a portion of our esteem. Not so with the villains that our French dramatist is delighted to portray. He seeks only to startle the reader by the magnitude and gratuitous character of the crime, or by the atrocious motives which even heighten its guilt. And the effect is, when the interest is most absorbing, that we detest most heartily the writer and the book.

Before quitting "*Caligula*," we must cite a short passage, which shows either the extraordinary inaptitude of the French language for a certain class of subjects, or how dangerous it is for such writers as Dumas to venture upon Scriptural ground. In giving an account of her conversion, Stella narrates the story of Lazarus, as it was told to her by an eyewitness of his resurrection. It would be difficult to match the last verse as a specimen of bathos.

"*Madeleine en pleurant tendit au ciel les bras !
Mais le Sauveur lui dit, Femme ne pleure pas.
Et marchant aussitôt vers le sépulchre avare
Où pour l'éternité s'était couché Lazare,
Jésus, devant le peuple immobile d'effroi,
Dit, étendant la main ; Lazare, lève-toi !*"

A peine retenti cette voix tutélaire,
Que, brisant de son front le marbre tumulaire,
Lazare, obéissant au cri qui l'appela,
Se dressa dans sa tombe, en disant, ME VOILÀ ! ”

“Catherine Howard” is neither the most powerful nor the most absurd of our author’s dramas, but it may be cited as a sample of his method of constructing a plot, and of his use of historical materials. Ethelwood, Duke of Dierham, is secretly married to Catherine Howard, who is of an ignoble family, and whom he retains in concealment near London, from his fear of the brutal passions of Henry the Eighth. She is accidentally seen by Fleming, the astrologer of the king, who is struck with her beauty, and, being ignorant that she is a married woman, proposes her as a wife to the monarch, after the dissolution of his match with Anne of Cleves. Henry, who has seen Catherine but once, and then without speaking to her, immediately accepts the proposal, and orders Ethelwood to bring up the beautiful damsel to court, and introduce her into the train of the princess Margaret, the king’s sister. The husband, not daring to reveal the truth, applies to Fleming for advice, and obtains from him a draught, that will bring on the appearance of death for several days, but, at the end of this time, the patient will awake to life again. This potion being administered to Catherine, her apparent death follows, and she is placed in the burial vault, which is visited first by Ethelwood and then by Henry, who comes to mourn over her, and even places a nuptial ring on the finger of the seeming corpse ; a sentimental act, of which one would hardly suspect the burly monarch. After the king has withdrawn, Catherine revives, and her husband explains to her what has passed, even to the circumstance of the ring, and then hurries her away in secret to one of his castles in the north.

The trials of the Duke of Dierham are not ended. The king visits him in the castle, where Catherine is concealed, and says that the princess Margaret has conceived an affection for him, and offers him her hand in marriage and the regency of the kingdom, while Henry himself is to be absent on an expedition against Scotland. Ethelwood wishes to refuse these proffers, and the king leaves him, menacing him with death and the confiscation of his estates. To

escape this danger, the unhappy husband resolves upon the use of the same means by which he had saved his wife. He drinks the remainder of Fleming's potion, and gives to Catherine two keys of the funeral vault, one of which, after his apparent death, is to be handed to the king, in conformity with the custom on the burial of an English nobleman, and with the other she is to open the tomb at the proper time, when the two can escape together, with a portion of his wealth, to France. But Catherine is intoxicated with the flattering love of the monarch, and the prospect of becoming queen of England, and she resolves, after a short struggle with herself, to leave her husband to perish in the vault. She seeks the presence of Henry, informs him that she had accidentally been buried alive, and had escaped, shows him the royal ring upon her finger, and, when the enraptured monarch offers at once to marry her, she secretly throws the key which she had received from Ethelwood into the Thames. The marriage takes place, but a singular chance saves the life of her first husband, and places the means of vengeance in his power. The princess Margaret obtains the other key, which had been delivered to the king, and, going to the vault to mourn over the object of her affections, finds him alive and brings him to the palace, where he remains concealed in her apartment. Remorse pursues Catherine after her elevation to the throne, and a few days afterwards she is terrified by the appearance of Ethelwood in her chamber, who upbraids her with the crime that she had attempted, and announces that her punishment is at hand. Henry returns while they are still together, and though Catherine bars the door against him, the duke persists in remaining there till the king has heard his voice in conversation, and then retires, leaving his cap on the sofa. The monarch bursts open the door, finds the cap, which confirms the suspicion excited by hearing a man's voice in the chamber, and goes away, menacing the queen with the fate of Anne Boleyn.

The trial of Catherine before the Peers now follows, and she is found guilty of adultery and treason, and condemned to death. But the young earl of Sussex demands the trial by combat in her favor, and generously offers himself as her champion. Proclamation being made to find a champion for the king, Ethelwood presents himself disguised in black armour, without announcing his name, and vanquishes Sussex.

The queen is now deprived of her last hope, and is visited in the Tower by the executioner, who comes to ask her pardon for the execution of his office. She suddenly conceives the design of bribing him to leave the kingdom, thinking that a delay of some days must occur before a substitute could be found, and that meanwhile the king might incline to mercy. The man yields to the offer of a diamond ring, and, when the hour arrives, no executioner is to be found, and Catherine is again excited by the hope of escape. But the herald offers a large reward for any one who will undertake the hateful office, and, a man in a mask presenting himself, the execution at last takes place. After the blow is struck, Ethelwood pulls off the mask and exclaims, — “I have stricken the guilty ; behold her accomplice ! ”

Comment is unnecessary on this extraordinary mixture of history and fable, and the absurdity of every part of the story. But putting aside the extravagant improbability of the plot, it certainly offers a wide field for the actor’s powers in the rapid changes of situation, the excitement of feeling with which they are attended, and the conflict of opposing passions, to which Catherine and Ethelwood are subject. It is difficult to select a scene which shall be a fair specimen of the execution of the work ; but our readers may form some ideas of it from a translation of Ethelwood’s soliloquy on his first visit to the burial vault, before his wife has recovered from the trance.

“*Ethelwood.* Yes, Fleming has strictly kept his word. Her sleep is indeed the twin brother of death, and, if it were not my work, my own eyes would be deceived by the resemblance. How fragile is human existence ! A few drops extracted from certain plants are enough to interrupt it ; a few more would destroy it entirely, and the soul which once sparkled in these eyes that are now closed, which once animated the voice that is now mute, which gave life and thought to the body that is now motionless and cold, would depart for ever, and mount upwards to the source of things. What has become of it during this lethargy, which is more than sleep, and less than death ? Does it fly to the realm of dreams, does it sleep like a sacred lamp shut up in the tabernacle ? Is it gone to knock at the gate of that unknown world, which is called eternity ? And when the blood shall begin again to circulate in the veins, when the thought shall return to animate the understanding, and this soul, exiled for a

time, shall again enter into the body, like a queen into her palace, will it have recollection of the objects of this world, or of the things of heaven, which it will have seen during these two days? Oh, I can conceive that the assassin should feel no remorse at the sight of his victim, for if this inanimate body is not happy, it is at least very tranquil! O, Catherine, would it not be better that I should lie down beside thee in this tomb, and let the vault be sealed up over our heads, and that we should thus sleep in each other's arms even till the day of the final awakening, than to intrust our lives again to the hazards of the world and the vicissitudes of fortune? For there is no certain future but that of the tomb, and why should we wait for this, when we can so easily go to meet it? (*Kissing her forehead.*) O, God! she moved, I think! My voice reached her soul, even in the depths of her slumber. Catherine! Catherine! come to thyself! Think no more of death! Life — life — with thee, happy or miserable, in joy or in despair! O, my God, send life! (*Turning towards the door of the tomb, which is opening.*) Unhappy chance! Who comes here? Imprudent wretch that I am, why did I not close this door behind the last person that went out? (*Going to the door, and then recoiling in fear.*) The king, — the king here! (*Returning to the tomb and bending over the body.*) Ye powers of darkness, let your iron slumber weigh heavily upon her eyes, and, rather than they should open now, let them never open again!" — Vol. II. p. 517.

The incident, on which the plot of "Charles the Seventh" turns, is far more natural and striking than the extravagances which we have just cited, and the play is executed with more finish and in better taste. It presents rather a vivid sketch of some peculiarities of the Feudal system, as exhibited in their influence on social life, and of the distracted state of France at the time when that system was rapidly crumbling to pieces, and the monarchy was gradually becoming consolidated in the hands of the king. It is hardly possible to give an idea of the piece in our limited space, as there is very little unity of action in it, notwithstanding the boast of the author in the preface, that in this instance he had rigidly observed the classical forms. The chief interest attends the development of the character of Yaqoub, a young Arab, whom the Count de Savoisy had brought home on his return from a warlike expedition to the East, undertaken by command of the Pope, in order to expiate an involuntary sacrilege. To borrow the pedantic style, in which our author

speaks of his art, the several characters are presented rather as types of things, than as individuals. Yaqoub represents the slavery of the East, Raymond the servitude of the West, the Count himself pictures forth the Feudal system, and the monarchy, of course, appears in the person of the King. The moral idea, — for Dumas fancies that the play contains one, — is, that nature has organized every individual in harmony with the place where he was born, and where he ought to live and die. To transplant him is to do more or less violence to his original constitution. The principles of good, which, in his natural climate, and on his maternal earth, might ripen into fruit, are turned to evil on a foreign soil. As he cannot annihilate the air which offends his lungs, the sun which scorches him, or the earth which wounds his feet, his hatred turns upon men, on whom he can always wreak his vengeance.

This “moral idea” is rather a striking one; the only difficulty is, that it is not true, — that it is contradicted by history and daily experience. Man is neither a polar bear, that can live only on the ice, nor a palm tree, that will grow only within the tropics. Early habits may make a change of country irksome for a time, and to an ardent temperament the new locality may produce serious evil; and this fact is enough for our author’s present purpose. But human nature is especially distinguished from that of the brutes by its great power of adaptation to the most dissimilar circumstances. Yaqoub is irritated by the insults to which he is exposed as a captive and an unbeliever, and not merely by the change of air and the novel circumstances with which he is surrounded. The higher part of his nature is called out as readily by the affection which he conceives for Bérengère, the noble lady of a Frank, as it would have been by a passion for a daughter of the desert. If he had visited the country as a conqueror, instead of a slave, he would have found the soil as genial and the new home as pleasant, as that of Spain appeared to his Arab ancestors, who wrested it from the Goths. The contrasts that are presented by the characters grouped around him, and the scenes in which they are called to act, certainly present a fine scope for the powers of the dramatist, and, though the execution falls short of the design, the whole play is one of the most pleasing and effective of our author’s performances.

We have purposely selected for particular comment the least exceptionable of the dramas of Dumas, since a full notice of the others would only create weariness and disgust. In "Antony," "Richard Darlington," and "Angela," the incidents are even more glaringly improbable than any which we have noticed; the plot turns generally upon adultery, murder, or incest, and the personages are worthy of the atrocious sentiments which they are made to express. As the writer has shown himself capable of better things, as he does not appear, like some of his contemporaries, to be a sincere and devoted advocate of anti-social theories and licentious speculations, we must attribute these lamentable perversions of talent rather to the taste of the audiences for whom he labors, than to the natural obliquity of his own disposition. The latest of his writings for the stage, "Mademoiselle de Belle Isle," is one of his most ingenious and successful efforts; and, though marked with some of his characteristic faults, the plot is interesting, and it is carried out with much art and finish of execution. Those who have had the good fortune to witness its representation by such admirable performers as Lockroy, Firmin, and Mademoiselle Mars, though the last, at the full age of sixty-five, had the presumption to undertake the part of a girl of twenty, will not readily forget the impressive and delightful exhibition. The play continues a favorite on the Parisian stage, though she who contributed so largely to its first success, has at last heeded the whispers of her friends, and retired from the scene, of which, for nearly half a century, she was so distinguished an ornament.

Dumas having acquired his popularity chiefly as a playwright, we have considered his dramas at some length; and it is necessary to pass very quickly over his other writings. These are very miscellaneous in character, and certainly show a ready and versatile mind. The most considerable in dimensions and importance are the "Impressions of Travel," a medley of fancies, tales, and sketches, a large portion of which have but a slender connexion with a journey and residence of the author for a few months in Switzerland; and "Fifteen days at Sinai," a work which has rather better founded pretensions than the other to be called a book of travels, though it also contains much extraneous matter. The artifices of the bookmaker are very apparent in these

volumes, which are swelled to their present size for no other object that we can perceive, except to increase the profits of the author and publisher. Even as they are, from the liveliness of the style and the great variety of matter, they furnish very pleasant, though certainly very light reading. Dumas has a good deal of the talent so happily displayed by our own Willis and Stephens, in infusing spirit into the observations and sketches which are expected from the professed traveller, and in giving a lively narrative of personal adventure. The following is a translation of the Introduction to the book, which explains the motives of the expedition.

“ Every traveller thinks he is bound to inform his readers of the motives of his journey. I have too much respect for my illustrious predecessors, from M. de Bougainville, who circumnavigated the globe, down to M. Le Maistre, who made a tour round his own chamber, not to follow their example. Besides, there will be found in my exposition, however short it may be, two very important things, which would be sought in vain elsewhere; — a receipt against the cholera, and a proof of the infallibility of the newspapers.

“ On the fifteenth of April, 1832, as I was coming back from escorting to the staircase my excellent and celebrated friends, Litz and Boulanger, who had spent the evening with me in fortifying themselves against the prevailing scourge by taking strong black tea, I found that my legs suddenly failed me; at the same moment a dizziness obscured my sight, and a tremor passed over my body; I clung to a table to save myself from falling. I was attacked with the cholera.

“ Whether it was Asiatic or European, epidemic or contagious, is a point of which I know nothing. But what I do know very well is that, five minutes afterwards, perceiving that I could hardly speak, I made haste to call for some sugar and ether. The domestic, who was a very intelligent girl, and who had sometimes seen me, after dinner, soak a bit of sugar in rum, supposed that I wanted something similar. She filled a glass with pure ether, placed upon its opening the largest piece of sugar she could find, and brought it to me when I had just gone to bed, shivering in all my limbs. As my consciousness began to leave me, I mechanically reached out my hand. I felt that they put something into it, and at the same time I heard somebody say, ‘Swallow that, Sir; it will do you good.’ I brought this something up to my mouth, and swallowed what it contained; that is to say, about half a flask of ether.

“ What revolution took place when this diabolical liquor en-

tered my body, it is impossible for me to say, for almost immediately I lost all consciousness. An hour afterwards, I returned to myself and found that I was wrapped up in several folds of fur; a bottle of boiling water was at my feet; two persons, each holding a warming-pan full of coals, were rubbing me on every seam. For a moment I thought I was dead and in the infernal regions; the ether was burning my vitals within, the assistants were frying me brown without. At last, after a quarter of an hour more, the cold confessed itself vanquished; I was dissolving into water, and the doctor declared that I was cured. It was high time; two more turns of the spit, and I had been roasted.

"Four days afterwards, the director of the *Porte-Saint-Martin* came to take a seat at my bedside. The theatre was yet more sick than I, and the dying called to its aid the convalescent. M. Harel told me, that he required in a fortnight, at the utmost, a piece which should produce at least fifty thousand crowns; he added, in order to persuade me, that the feverish condition in which I was placed, was very favorable for a work of the imagination, on account of the excitement of the brain with which it was attended. This reasoning appeared to me so conclusive, that I immediately set myself to work. I gave him his piece at the end of a week, instead of a fortnight, and it produced a hundred thousand crowns, in lieu of fifty thousand. It was true, that I was very near becoming insane.

"This forced labor was of no benefit whatever to my health. Such was my weakness that I could hardly stand upright, when I heard of the death of General Lamarque. The next day I was appointed one of the committee of arrangements for the funeral; my duty was to cause the artillery of the national guard, to which I belonged, to take the place assigned to it in the procession by the military hierarchy.

"All Paris saw the funeral pomp pass by, — a sublime spectacle of order, sorrow, and patriotism. Who changed this order into confusion, this grief into anger, this patriotism into rebellion? I know not, nor do I wish to know, before the day when the dynasty of July, like that of Charles the Ninth, shall give up its accounts to God, or, like that of Louis the Sixteenth, shall settle its affairs with men.

"On the ninth of June, I read in a legitimist paper, that I had been taken with arms in my hand, at the affair in the cloister *Saint-Méry*, tried by a military tribunal in the course of the night, and shot at three o'clock in the morning. The news bore such an official character, the account of my execution, which I had met with great bravery, was given in such detail, the information came from so good a source, that for a moment I en-

tertained serious doubts about the matter. Besides, the writer was perfectly convinced that the account was true. For the first time he spoke well of me in his paper ; it was very evident he thought I was dead.

"I threw off the coverlet, jumped down from the bed, and ran to the glass in order to obtain some proofs of my existence. At that moment, the door of the chamber opened and a messenger entered bringing a note from Charles Nodier, which was as follows.

"My Dear Alexandre.

"I have just read in the newspaper that you were shot yesterday at three o'clock in the morning. Be kind enough to let me know whether this will prevent you from coming to dine with me to-morrow at the Arsenal, along with Taylor."

"I sent back word to Charles, that, as to the matter of being dead or alive, I could not speak with certainty, for my own opinion was not yet made up on that point ; but, in either case, I should certainly come to dine with him on the morrow ; so he had only to make himself ready, like Don Juan, to entertain the statue of the commander.

"The next day, it was finally decided that I was not dead. But this was not gaining much, for I was still very sick, and therefore the doctor ordered me, as a doctor always does, when he knows not what else to prescribe, to make a journey to Switzerland.

"Consequently on the twenty-first of July, 1832, I left Paris."
— Vol. I. p. 165.

This extract affords one specimen of the manner in which Dumas alludes to topics of political interest. Frequent remarks of a similar character are scattered throughout his works, betraying rather the exasperation of personal feeling, and the desire of making pungent and exciting observations, calculated for the popular ear, than the sober and earnest convictions of a lover of freedom and truth. The spirit of the opposition to the present dynasty of France appears on this and other occasions rather violent and revengeful, than deliberative and profound ; it betrays the bitterness of disappointment and even the desire of blood, but it does not seem to rest upon fixed principles, nor to point to any definite end. In a word, it shows the disposition of a people accustomed to revolutions suddenly brought about by violence and bloodshed, and not by a gradual change of opinion effected by the diffusion of knowledge, the study of political

rights, and the general progress of civilization. In a historico-political work by Dumas, entitled "Gaul and France," which has been translated and published in this country, there are further manifestations of this state of political feeling, which we commend to the attention of the curious.

To return to the "Impressions of Travel," Dumas, after leaving Paris, makes his first halt at Montereau, about twenty leagues from the capital, where the sight of the bridge over the Seine reminds him of the two great events in the history of France, of which it was the theatre ; the assassination of the Duke of Burgundy, by the Dauphin, in 1419, and the last great victory of Napoleon over the Allies in 1814. After his usual fashion, of swelling the size of his book by foreign matter, lugged in by the head and shoulders, he takes this occasion to narrate at length, in a strange mixture of truth and fable, the story of both events. In this way, the reader is perpetually reminded, that he is engaged with a travelling novelist and playwright, who is seeking everywhere for the materials of his art, and who sets down, as the fruit of a voyager's observations, what was in truth slowly concocted at home in his closet. Some of the historical reminiscences thus introduced, and dressed up in the usual manner of a writer of fiction, are told with great vivacity, and are very acceptable to most readers, though they make a rather disjointed book. They are more tolerable, at any rate, than the antiquarian discussions and other passages which show some pretensions to learning, and serve to fill up a given number of pages, though the facts and arguments seem to be derived from no higher source than encyclopædias and guide-books.

But there are other portions of the book, which afford far more entertaining matter. Dumas has an eye and a heart for the more striking aspects of outward nature ; and though the wonders of Switzerland have already wellnigh exhausted the pen and the pencil of the tourist and the draughtsman, his descriptions are thrown off with such spirit and graphic power, that the reader willingly lingers over them, and even turns to them for a second time. Then the crowd of motley characters from all parts of the world, whom the attractions of this country bring together at its chief places of interest during the summer months, afford fine scope for his ready

talent in sketching portraits and caricatures. As he has no scruple in inventing scenes and incidents for showing off their peculiarities to the best advantage, he forms a very amusing gallery of grotesque and life-like personages. Something of national prejudice appears in his portraits of the travelling English, who, it must be confessed, do not sustain a very high character in any part of the continent. Dumas sketches, with malicious fidelity, the stiffness of John Bull's manners, his helplessness in novel situations, and his ludicrous attempts at speaking any other than his vernacular tongue. The drawings of his own countrymen are more flattering, as might be expected, but they are equally well done. The carelessness and vivacity of the young Parisian, and the humors of that experienced voyager and amusing companion on the road for a single day, — the travelling bag-man, or commercial agent, — are shown up with great effect. A scene on the top of the Righi between one of these people and an Englishman is described with much comic power, though it is absurdly made to terminate in a duel of so tragic a cast, as to remind one of the dramatist's study of horrible *dénouemens*.

The stories and traditions of the peasantry, especially those relating to the heroic days of Switzerland, are picked up by our traveller, and related, with the usual admixture of fiction, in a very agreeable way. We have room only for one extract more, and that shall be a part of the account of the first ascension of Mont Blanc, which Dumas pretends to have taken down from the lips of Jacques Balmat himself, the hero of the story, who was alive in 1832, at the age of about seventy. He accomplished his great feat in 1786. M. de Saussure had promised a considerable reward to the first who should reach the summit, and, thus stimulated, Balmat, an active and hardy peasant, having explored the way alone, for about two thirds of the distance, in two previous trials, determined to make his great effort in company with Dr. Paccard, of Geneva.

"All our little affairs being arranged, we took leave of our wives, and set out about five o'clock in the afternoon, one of us taking the right bank of the river Arve, and the other the left, in order that no one might suspect the end which we had in view. We came together again at the village of Côte, and, having attained an elevated point between the glacier of Bossons and that

of Taconnay, resolved to pass the night there. I had brought with me a blanket, in which I rolled up the Doctor like an infant in swaddling clothes, and, thanks to this precaution, he passed a good night. For my own part, I slept soundly till about half past one. At two o'clock, the white line appeared in the horizon, and the sun soon rose, without mist, clear and bright, promising a famous day. I awakened the Doctor, and we began our journey. In a quarter of an hour, we were engaged in crossing the glacier of Taconnay. The first steps of the Doctor upon this great sea, among the yawning crevices, to the bottom of which the eye could not reach, over the bridges of ice which one hears cracking under his feet, and is certain of instant death if they break, were rather wavering. But he gained courage by degrees, as he saw me advance, and we got over it safe and sound. We then began to ascend the Grands-Mulets, and soon left it behind us. I pointed out to the Doctor the place where I had passed the first night. He made up a very meaning face, and remained silent for ten minutes; then, suddenly stopping, he exclaimed, 'Balmat, do you think we shall reach the top of Mont Blanc to-day?' I perceived where the shoe pinched, and reassured him by a laugh, though without promising anything. We kept on ascending for two hours; the wind had risen since we left the *plateau*, and was now becoming more and more troublesome. At last, when we reached the peak of rock, called the Petit-Mulet, a violent gust carried off the Doctor's hat. At the round oath which he uttered, I stopped and perceived his beaver sailing away towards Carmayer. He was looking after it with outstretched arms. 'O! you must bid it adieu, Doctor,' I exclaimed, 'for it is on the way to Piedmont. A good journey to it!' It seemed that the wind had taken a fancy for joking, for I had hardly closed my mouth when there came such a furious gust, that we were obliged to lie down on the ground, to avoid being carried after the hat. For ten minutes we were not able to rise; the wind lashed the mountain, and whistled over our heads, bearing clouds of snow as large as a house. The Doctor was disheartened. For myself, I thought only of the saleswoman, who at this time had agreed to look up to the *dome Gouter*; and therefore, the moment that the wind lulled, I stood up; but the Doctor would only consent to follow me on all fours. We thus arrived at a point whence the village could be seen. There I drew out my pocket glass, and in the valley, twelve thousand feet below us, I perceived our gossip, together with a crowd of fifty people, eagerly gazing upwards. A consideration of self-love prompted the Doctor to get upon his legs again; and, as soon

as he rose, I perceived that we were recognised, — he by his great surtout, and I by my ordinary dress. The people in the valley waved their hats to us, and I answered with mine. That of the Doctor was absent on a long furlough.

“But Paccard had exhausted all his energies in getting upon his feet, and no encouragement could induce him to continue the ascent. After I had used all my eloquence, and saw that it was only losing time, I told him to continue moving about, and to keep himself as warm as possible. He answered, ‘Yes! yes!’ mechanically, only to get rid of me. I then left the bottle with him, and set off alone, saying that I would return for him.

“After this, the route did not offer any great difficulty, but, in proportion as I ascended, the air became less fit for respiration. Every ten steps I was obliged to stop, as if afflicted with the asthma. It seemed as if I had no lungs, and that my chest was empty. I then folded up my handkerchief like a cravat, tied it over my mouth, and breathed through it, which eased me a little. Still the cold increased, and I was an hour in advancing half a mile. I walked with my head bent down, and seeing that I had reached a new point, I raised my head, and perceived that I was at last on the summit of Mont Blanc.

“Then I cast my eyes around, trembling lest I should be deceived, and should find some other peak, which I should not have the strength to ascend; for the joints of my legs seemed to hold together only by means of my trowsers. But no, no. I was at the end of my journey. I had reached a spot that no one had occupied before me, not even the eagle or the chamois. I had come alone, without other aid than that of my strength and will. All that surrounded me seemed to be my property. I was king of Mont Blanc, I was the statue of this immense pedestal.

“Then I turned towards Chamouny, waving my hat on the end of my stick, and saw, by the aid of my glass, that they answered my signs. The whole village had turned out. The first moment of exultation having passed, I began to think of the poor Doctor. I descended as rapidly as I could, calling out his name, and was frightened to find that he did not answer. At last, I perceived him, with his head between his knees, bent up like a cat asleep before the fire. I struck him on the shoulder, and he mechanically raised his head. I told him that I had reached the top of Mont Blanc. The news did not seem very interesting, for he replied by asking me, where he could lie down and go to sleep. I then told him that he had come thither in order to reach the summit, and that he *should* go there. I shook him, raised him up, and made him take a few steps. He appeared stupefied, and it seemed to be indifferent to him whether he went one way or an-

other, — whether he ascended or descended. But when the movements which I forced him to make brought back a little the circulation of the blood, he asked me if I had not another pair of gloves, like those which were on my hands. They were mittens of rabbit fur, which I had caused to be made expressly for the excursion. Under the circumstances, I would have refused both of them to my own brother; but I gave him one.

“A little after six o'clock, we both stood upon the summit, and although the sun shone brightly, the sky appeared darkly blue, and a few stars were visible. When we turned our eyes downwards, we saw nothing but ice, snow, rocks, and rugged peaks. The immense chain of mountains that runs through Dauphiny, and extends as far as the Tyrol, spread out before us its four hundred glaciers glowing with light. The lakes of Geneva and Neuchâtel seemed like blue points, and were hardly perceptible. On our left lay mountainous Switzerland, piled together in heaps, and beyond it the level country appeared like a rich carpet. On our right was all Piedmont and Lombardy, as far as Genoa. In front, was Italy. Paccard saw nothing; I told him all. For myself, I no longer suffered, I was no more fatigued. I hardly perceived the difficulty of breathing, which a short time before had nearly caused me to renounce the undertaking. We remained there thirty-three minutes.

“It was now seven o'clock, and but two hours and a half of daylight remained. It was high time to commence the descent. I waved my hat again as a final signal to those in the valley, and we began to descend. There was no path for our guidance, and we found our way only by the little holes in the ice made by our iron-shod staves. Paccard was like a child, without energy or will, whom I guided when the route was good, and carried in my arms when it was bad. At eleven o'clock we had left behind us the region of ice, and placed our feet upon firm ground. Then I permitted the Doctor to stop, and prepared to wrap him up again in the blanket. Having done this, I laid him down under shelter of a rock, and, having eaten and drank a little, we crept as close as possible to each other, and went to sleep.” — Vol. I. p. 213.

The next morning they resumed their descent, and arrived in safety at the village, though the Doctor had become totally blind, and remained so for several days; and even the vigorous Balmat did not recover for some time from the effects of the excursion. De Saussure ascended the next year, guided by this intrepid pioneer, and, between that time and 1832, ten other parties accomplished the same feat.

Among the names we find those of two Americans, Dr. Rensselaer and Mr. Howard, who ascended in 1819.

We have as yet said nothing of the novels of Dumas, which form rather the most bulky portion of his works. There is less need of noticing them at length, as they evince less talent than his other productions, though they are equally characteristic of his school, and as some of them have been translated and published in this country. One of them, "Pauline," appeared recently from the American press. It is a strange tale, in which horrible incidents are accumulated, too improbable to create any illusion, and without sufficient force of coloring or style to become interesting as a work of art. "Isabel of Bavaria" and some others are historical romances, the story following at times very closely the course of real events, and not embellished with sufficient copiousness of invention or descriptive power to correspond with the dignity of the characters or the richness of the materials. It would be idle to compare them with the magic creations of Scott, as they are much inferior to works of the same class by the writer's countrymen. They belong to the mass of indifferent fictions, which the press of France, England, and America is now sending forth in vast profusion, adapted for a great multitude of uninstructed readers, who seem to find nothing better than the perusal of such trash for the amusement of their leisure hours.

ART. VI. — *Life in Mexico during a Residence of Two Years in that Country*. By Madame C— DE LA B—. Boston : Little & Brown. Two Volumes. 12mo.

IN the present age of high literary activity, travellers make not the least importunate demands on public attention, and their lucubrations, under whatever name, — Rambles, Notices, Incidents, Pencillings, — are nearly as important a staple for the "trade," as novels and romances. A book of travels, formerly, was a very serious affair. The traveller set out on his distant journey with many a solemn preparation, made his will, and bade adieu to his friends, like one who might not again return. If he did return, the