

of what all may yet become. When I think, too, of all the beautiful things that have been written of woman, from Solomon and Homer, through Sophocles, Shakespeare and Dante, down to Tennyson and Kingsley, when I think how poets and philosophers, painters and sculptors, have poured out their minds and hearts in a vain attempt to express their love and reverence for what some women have been and are, for what all were created to be, I cannot but ask, shall not we, the multitude, though neither poets nor philosophers, yet men, with the hearts of husbands, brothers and sons, acknowledge the divinity which lies in her, more easily to be recognized by us than that which lies no less in ourselves,—consciously acknowledge it, and earnestly and unceasingly endeavour to clear away all that hinders its free development? And will not women themselves ever strive to attain the ideal which they may learn lives in the hearts of men, which surely must live in their own hearts,—well knowing that an ideal is no vain phantom of imaginary perfection, but that which the creature was formed to be, which to a great extent it is still granted it to be, which it must never cease to strive after, on pain of

perpetual retrogression? Let me set before them, not an ideal, not indeed the highest form of character which women have actually attained, but an example, perhaps, not less valuable than these, as being more in the reach of the generality,—whose influence was through the heart, and whose desert and reward was love. The Prince is speaking to Ida.

“ ‘Alone,’ ” I said, “ ‘from earlier than I know, [world, Immersed in rich foreshadowings of the I loved the woman : he, that doth not, lives A drowning life, besotted in sweet self, Or pines in sad experience worse than death, [crime. Or keeps his wing’d affections clipt with Yet was there one through whom I loved her, one [ways, Not learned, save in gracious household Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants, No Angel, but a dearer being, all dipt In Angel instincts, breathing Paradise, Interpreter between the Gods and men, Who look’d all native to her place, and yet On tiptoe seem’d to touch upon a sphere Too gross to tread, and all male minds perforce [moved, Sway’d to her from their orbits as they And girdled her with music. Happy he With such a mother! faith in womankind Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high [and fall, Comes easy to him, and though he trip He shall not blind his soul with clay.’ ”

“ DEATH THE AVENGER ” AND “ DEATH THE FRIEND. ”



HE names of two wonderful wood Engravings by Alfred Rethel, a German, and one to be remembered in the aftertime.

Now Death the Avenger commemorates the first appearance of the Cholera, in 1831, which happened in Paris at a masked ball.

It is there, in that room, the Cholera, and Death; a strangely chosen room, one thinks, in its architecture, for a ball-room; liker to a tomb than that; it might have served well in those old

times for the followers of John and Paul to meet in—to feel new life come upon them; new thoughts, new love, new longings, new hope.

Thick walls and heavy roof, and deep splayed windows it has, but withal gorgeous patterned hangings from gallery and pillar and dais; gorgeous, but ugly; the patterns crawl like evil poisonous spiders, like the blotches of damp on foul walls.

And in this ball-room only one dances now—Death—arrayed in hood and the long robes of a pilgrim, girt about the middle with a rope; one

leg showing from the long drapery is thrown forward in mockery of dancing; and the dancers? there are two of them lying there, a man and a woman, both dead and stiff—the man's mask has fallen down, covers all his face except the eyes and forehead—and very strangely contrasted are the calm, self-satisfied, inane features of the mask with the wrinkled forehead and brows contracted in pain of the face that was alive once; the woman's mask, fastened to her hat, has fallen back, and her open mouth shows free from it; her arms are hidden by her dress, a long flower-garland trails round about her. And the rest of the maskers are rushing in mad race out of the room, the last wearing a fantastic dress with a fool's hump on the back of it, his arms muffled in his mumming-dress.

Others are there who rush out also, the musicians; huddled all together, their instruments blocking up the way, no man looking at his neighbour to see how he fares, or caring for him: for the grinning skeleton, Death, standing there with his head thrown on one side, has two bones in his hands, which he uses as fiddle and fiddle-bow, playing so wonderfully that, as you look at the drawing, you almost seem to hear the wild terrible skirling of some mad reel.

Most terrible figure of all, in the background sits The Cholera, waiting; in her right hand a triple scourge armed at the end with goads; such firm grip of that scourge; and her left hand clasps her right arm just below the wrist, fearful strong arms and hands—she is wrapped in long raiment that trails on the ground, and has flames all about it—her face is black, her mouth stern, indignant, with lips drawn up tight together; fixed eyes, glaring straight forward, and lidless, no drooping eyelids to her, beneath any rebuke, any defiance; is it not strange, that with all this the face is not a cruel one? Such a sense the thing seems to have that it too is God's crea-

ture, called up in his quarrel; strange that there should be even pity in it.

This is "Death the Avenger."—Then "Death the Friend."

In an old tower just below the belfry, in the place where they ring the bells: there is Death again in his pilgrim's dress, tolling for one who is just dead, the Sacristan of that Church; this Death is draped tenderly down to the feet; there is no maddening horror about him, awe only; he is not grinning as in the other picture, but gazes downward, thoughtfully, almost sadly, thinking of the old man's life that has been. And he, with his hands laid together and his eyes closed, is leaning back in his chair: many a time these latter years has he leant back so; then needs must that he rise stiffly and wearily to go about his duties; but now he need never rise again; his lips, parted a little now, need never again be drawn together close, at sight of weary injustice and wrong; he will soon understand why all these things were. The dragons on the spire eaves lean forward open mouthed, disappointed because he has got quit of all that now; near the head of him against the wall is a figure of Christ on the Cross, a Bible is open by the side of him; near the stairs is a horn hanging, a huntsman's horn, and through the window, on the sill of which a bird is singing, you can see the fair sunset-country stretching away for leagues and leagues (for we are high up here, just under the spire).

They say he was a hunter in the old time, this man; that he heard the north wind sing about his ears, as he dashed over the open spaces; that the young beech-leaves in the early summer quivered at the blasts of his horn; that many a time he rode into that village you can see down there, wherein he was born, where his father and his father's father lived, weary with riding; that some one used to look out for him when he rode in, in the evenings. But that too is all gone by—only

in memories perhaps—yet he had other hopes then perhaps than this, a mere old sacristan dying lonely in the old belfry.

What matter? for the setting sun is

bright over all that country, and the bird sings still in the window sill—not afraid of death.

This is "Death the Friend."

TWO PICTURES.

RUSKIN has told us in his 'Notes' this year, that the present Exhibition is richer than usual in good pictures; we are right glad to learn it; may every year see a growth in right knowledge and power until R. A. shall mean in very truth Royal Artist! But it is also a pleasant thought that the Academy does not contain *all* the good pictures that have been painted this year or last: others there are, which have not met the public eye and shall not yet awhile; very beautiful and precious; not only as studies of lovely form and colour; but as memorials of human life, its passions and holy affections; stories whether of the past or present, with that deep meaning in them, which can quicken our faith in God and man. Such are poems addressed to the eye and heart, sacred Poems; which some who walk in the dusty highway of the world may feel it a blessing to see, perhaps still more to have seen. Two such I intend now to describe, well knowing how imperfect must be the result of the undertaking—one earnest look at the originals were worth a volume of any translation!—but wishing at any rate to give the world, or rather our Magazine-world the good news that two excellent pictures have been summoned into existence.

Of the first, the subject is taken from the Vita Nuova of Dante; the Vita Nuova in which Dante in a series of poems and sonnets connected by prose gives the history of his early life, and especially of his affection for Beatrice.

In one of these poems he describes a dream in which he saw by foreboding Beatrice lying dead:

"Allor diceva Amor: 'Più non ti celo;
Vieni a veder nostra donna che giace.'
L'immaginar fallace
Mi condussi a veder mia donna morta;
Equando l'avea scorta,
Vedeo che donne la covrian d'un velo.
Ed avea seco umiltà sì verace
Chè pareo che dicesse, 'Io sono in pace.'"
"Then Love said: 'Now all things shall
be made clear;
Come and behold our lady where she lies.'
These idle fantasies
Then carried me to see my lady dead.
And when I enterèd,
Ladies I saw with a veil covering her:
And with her was such very humbleness,
That she appeared to say, 'I am at peace.'"

It is this passage which the painter has chosen to illustrate. And is it not a great and worthy one? Let the reader consider for a moment what this vision was, and who once saw it, and when, and where; then let him read on.

It is a chamber in the city of Florence. Invisibly, as it were some sympathizing Spirit, we take up our station in the middle of the room, and look on in silence. In the farther wall, which is decorated with a simple diaper pattern of gold on a purple ground, is hollowed out an oblong recess containing a narrow bed, such as was common in those simple times, and the like of which may yet be often seen in old rustic dwellings; fit offering-place for an evening prayer! Stretched upon this bed lies Beatrice, in the fixed peace of after-death; her stately form folded in a pure white robe,—shroud I will not call it, for the arms are free, in