

## PESCHIERA.

THE fortress and little town of Peschiera occupy one of the loveliest spots in Italy. The environs resemble a garden of Eden, cultivated only by the hand of Nature. Its gentle declivities are covered with vines, and enriched with mulberry, orange, olive, and citron trees. Little in harmony with the landscape, rises this fortress of Peschiera—important only in a military point of view. As to the town, it does not even boast a library, and such a thing as a map could not be procured.

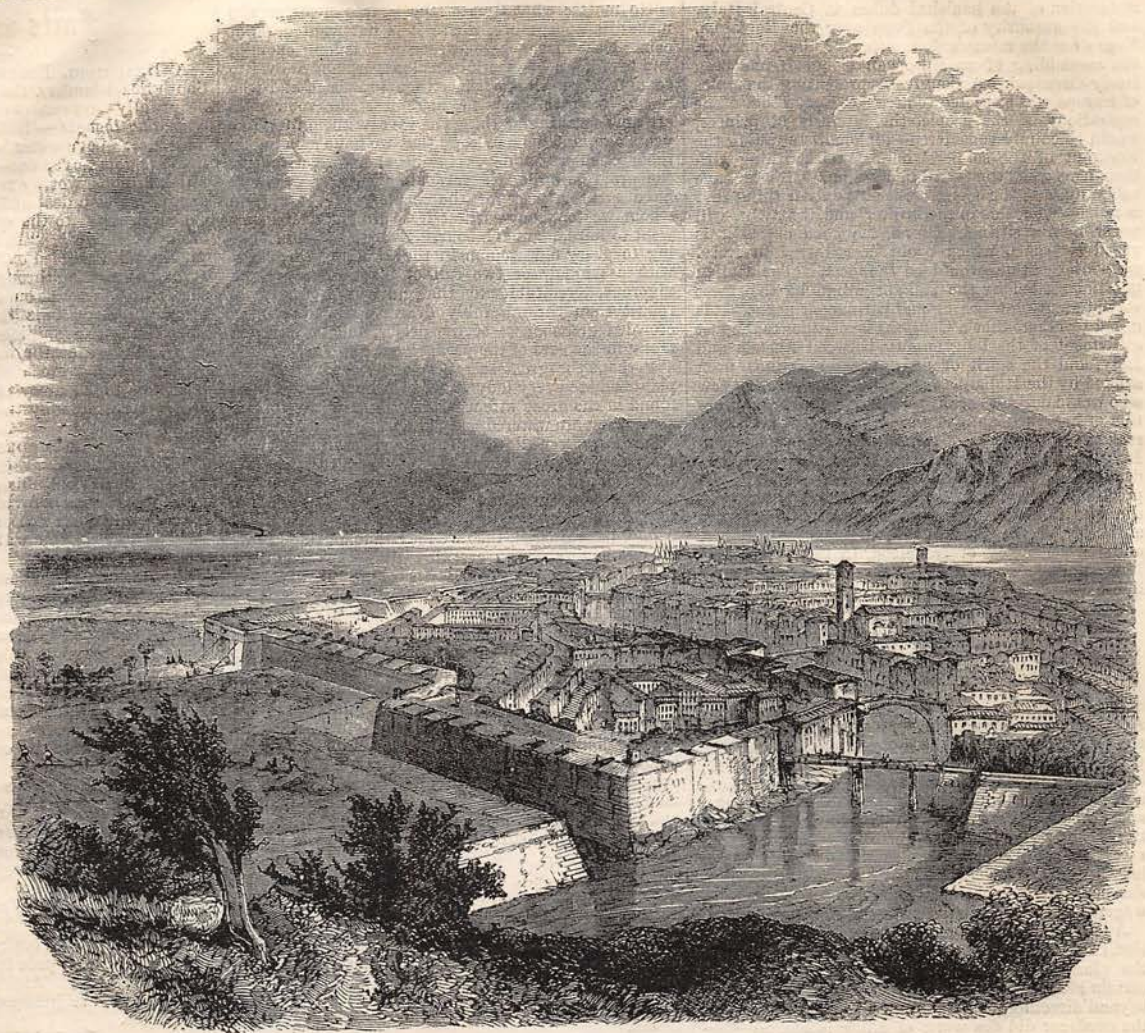
But even in the thirteenth century, Peschiera possessed an arsenal, and was thought well fortified; nevertheless it has been taken and retaken, and we cannot record one instance of its having been vigorously defended. It was captured by the Venetians, in 1441, from the Duke of Mantua; and not the loveliness of its situation, nor the strength of its walls, give it such an interest as its having once formed a part of Mantua—the fatherland of Virgil. Various places contend for the honour of giving birth to Homer; but all agree that Virgil was born at Mantua. Dante makes the poet confess the fact, when, in the "*Divina Commedia*," he meets him, or rather his shade, in the regions of eternal darkness. Virgil thus asserts his birth and parentage, when invoked by Dante:—

"He answer'd: 'Now not man; man once I was,  
And born of Lombard parents, Mantuans both  
By country, when the power of Julius yet  
Was scarcely firm. At Rome my life was past,  
Beneath the mild Augustus, in the time  
Of fabled deities and false. A bard  
Was I, and made Anchises' upright son  
The subject of my song, who came from Troy,  
When the flames prey'd on Ilium's haughty towers.  
But thou, say wherefore to such perils past  
Return'st thou? wherefore not this pleasant mount  
Ascendest, cause and source of all delight?'  
'And art thou then that Virgil, that well-spring  
From which such copious floods of eloquence  
Have issued? I with front abashed replied,  
'Glory and light of all the tuneful train!  
May it avail me, that I long with zeal  
Have sought thy volume, and with love immense  
Have con'd it o'er. My master thou, and guide!  
Thou he from whom alone I have derived  
That style, which for its beauty into fame  
Exalts me.'"

Although the Italian campaign of Napoleon III. is yet fresh in the public mind, it may have escaped the notice of some of our readers that Massena, one of the generals of the First Napoleon, gained possession of Peschiera, and obliged Wurmser to abandon the line of the Mincio, and to fall back upon the Tyrol.

In times of peace, steam-boats ply between Riva and Peschiera (at the two extremities of the lake), and thus establish a regular communication between Italy and the Tyrol.

Peschiera is one of the celebrated *quadrilateri*, chiefly remarkable for its position, and for the account to which it has been turned by the military sagacity of Austria. Having already given a plan of the *quadrilateri* (see volume iv. page 136), together with some description of the four strongholds, it is unnecessary to enter into details regarding their natural and artificial strength: it is rather to



PESCHIERA, NEAR MANTUA, NORTHERN ITALY.

the importance attaching to the possession of these strategical points, that our attention is directed.

As the Liberator of Italy, the Emperor Napoleon entered on the Italian campaign. At Montebello and Magenta, the allied armies of French and Piedmontese defeated the Austrians. In triumph Victor Emmanuel and Napoleon rode into Milan. The tri-colour floated from the summit of the cathedral; red, white, and blue courted the notice everywhere; the air was rent with acclamations, and Italy was sanguine of complete success. At Solferino the mighty hosts of France and Austria were again brought into conflict; in the hottest of the strife, Napoleon himself was always to be seen, his calm, dark face encouraging the men, and reviving memories of the old empire. The white coats of Austria were driven before the bayonets of France. The victory was complete; but the dead and wounded who covered the field told at what cost that triumph had been purchased. Thus, in less than a month after entering Lombardy, the allied armies crossed the Mincio—that sacred line which Europe had been taught to believe the art and care of Austrian engineers had rendered inviolable. But the quadrilateral position still remained. This was the trap, so it was commonly reported, into which Austrian generals, by a succession of artifices, had contrived to draw the enemy. In a former struggle it had served them well—why should it not serve equally well again? However, the strength of the quadrilateral was to be tested. Europe waited impatiently to witness the result. The French army, increased by Prince Napoleon's corps, was to operate against Verona; part of the Sardinian army was to besiege Peschiera; they, indeed, invested that fortress both on the right and left banks of the Mincio; to the land forces were added gunboats on the Lake of Garda. An incessant fire was kept up from Peschiera, intended to distract the Sardinians, and

maintained with the regularity of minute guns; but the Sardinians held their ground, and were rapidly completing their preparations for the siege.

Suddenly the exciting drama came to an end. At its most critical situation the spectators were surprised by the Emperor's note to the Empress—"An armistice has been concluded between the Emperor of Austria and myself." The *Moniteur* added to the official dispatch that the extent of the armistice was limited merely to a relaxation of hostilities, leaving the field open for negotiations. Everybody knew that the Emperor's programme of the campaign in Italy included the complete emancipation of that long-suffering country, "from the Alps to the Adriatic." As long as Austria held her quadrilateral, she maintained the power to harass the free states, and to carry on her encroachments, in defiance of the triumphs which had been won in the cause of liberty. To leave the quadrilateral still in the hands of Austria was to leave the work less than half accomplished. Napoleon's troops were swarming round those boasted strongholds; surely he would not retreat with the object of the campaign unaccomplished. It was thus people reasoned with themselves on the news of the armistice. The friends of Italy were disappointed; but still entertained the hope of something better than an anomalous and incomprehensible confederacy, with the Pope for its president. But so it came to pass. Villafranca was the scene of such a treaty. Peschiera, Verona, Mantua, still overawed free Italy with bristling bayonets; and the heroes of Montebello, Magenta, and Solferino turned their faces to Paris.

But the future of Italy is not to be decided by the quiet talking of the Emperors over a cigar. The changes contemplated are such as to call for the opinion of other European Powers. Since the treaty of Villafranca the phases of the Italian question have varied considerably; but the problems still to be solved are of the utmost importance—namely, the



restoration of the banished dukes to Central Italy, and the authority of the Pope over the Romagna. Ever since the memorable meeting of the Emperors, the assembling of an European Congress has been freely discussed. A Congress representing the states of Europe was expected to arrange everything. The aspirations of the people, the interests of princes, would be calmly considered—diplomats taking the work out of the soldiers' hands, and finishing with their pens what the sword had begun. Months have rolled by, and the Congress is still only a thing that is to be—"it looms in the future," and, it may be, will never hold a sitting. Of all the good offices, it is urged by some, which could be rendered to Italy, non-intervention would be the best. The Italian question settled by the Italians would be the surest way of securing a lasting and permanent peace. It is urged by others that a Congress is essential to the just settlement of the long enmity between Austria and Italy, and the spirit of resistance which has been evoked by the Italian campaign. There are but few who would desire to see Italy again under the domination of her Austrian masters; and the only question of real importance is what would secure independence to Italy on the best and surest foundation—independence which can never be maintained while Austria predominates in her councils, and overawes her from the quadrilateral. The question of the temporal authority of the Pope is also of great importance, and on the policy of Napoleon, in this respect, his New Year's letter to the Pontiff seems to throw some light.

## The Amateur Gardener.

BY GEORGE GLENNY.

ACCORDING to our notions, GARDENING FOR LADIES should be confined to those operations that can be performed with a rake, a hoe, a dibble, and a trowel; budding, grafting, training, layering, pruning, sowing, weeding, thinning, transplanting small subjects, and potting. A proper man is alone fit to plant trees, dig, trench, dress, make hot-beds, as well as collect and prepare the material; it is not a lady's occupation. We should as soon expect to see her walking through the mud by the side of a wagon team as engaged in such humiliating work.

A lady would not be out of place, well and warmly clad from head to foot, watching and superintending the planting of trees, the making of paths, and certain alterations, as she may order or approve; but beyond directing, or holding up a tree or shrub while the gardener did the work of filling in and treading it, and general superintendence, we would not have a lady descend. Her digging should not go beyond what could be done with a trowel; the rest of gardening for ladies should be light, pleasant, and feminine work.

In many operations ladies are more dextrous than men; for instance, in pricking out seedlings—for they can handle smaller plants; in making cuttings, and putting them to strike, they have the advantage of us; and in all things that require delicate handling they beat us. They have more patience, and, if they love flowers and plants, they have more perseverance. We can say these things with confidence, because we have been many years in correspondence with lady gardeners, and have many opportunities of witnessing both their patience and perseverance, when repeated failures would make half the men give up in despair.

We are not ashamed to own that in our early days of gardening we derived many advantages from our observations on ladies' gardening; and we are not quite sure that our first real fancy for a garden was not produced by observing the enthusiastic pursuit of plant-growing by a relation, who now and then trusted us to perform some trifling operation. At all events, we learned from her that, in nineteen cases out of twenty, the best time to put in cuttings is as soon as they are large enough, when they start from the old plant; and so certain did the ladies of that locality—a part of Hampshire—make of striking what they called a slip, that they named it a plant directly they obtained it, and that was when a shoot had started an inch or two from the old wood. This applied to most of the hardwooded plants. Their process was similar to the present practice: the slip was placed in a small pot of light soil, and covered with a wine-glass, which was regularly wiped dry inside every morning, shaded from the sun, and the soil never allowed to dry. When it began to grow, the glass was removed an hour or two in the middle of the day, and, as it strengthened, it was removed altogether, and allowed to have a little of the morning and evening sun. From this it will be gathered that season had nothing to do with taking cuttings.

No matter what time of the year a shoot or slip makes its appearance, where it is not wanted, off it comes close to the base as soon as it is long enough, and is either set to work as a plant, or handed over to some friend to whom it has been promised, and who knows very well how to make it strike root. We are now speaking of things as we saw them fifty-five years ago, and acknowledge that we have acted upon them to the present day. Having, therefore, witnessed the progress of ladies' gardening in those days, we have great respect for the memory of those from whom we took our earliest lessons; but they never went to hard, manual labour. Every cottage belonging to every old woman in the locality was graced with a window or two full of plants, healthy and vigorous, creditable to the cultivator, far more robust than the miserably drawn-up plants in the crowded greenhouses of the dealer, and better than many in the care of the professional gardener.

Perhaps the great secret of superiority among the plants where every lady is her own gardener, may be found in the great attention they bestow upon their pots: they are watered only when they want it; the leaves are never allowed to be covered with dust and dirt; they are put out of doors whenever there is a warm shower, and, if they are too long without it, their leaves are carefully sponged. The ladies know that nothing delicate can thrive in dirt. From this it may be gathered, that we may take cuttings now, if there be any ready; and this will be the case with fuchsias, which, in greenhouses or warm windows, will have begun to push; and now is the season for pruning them—that is, cutting out all the wiry branches of the last year, and shortening all the strong ones—bringing the plant into tree or bush shape; but bearing in mind that all the new growth will be from nine inches to a foot long, and making allowance for that in the form you adopt as the foundation.

The shoots that grow inwards ought not to remain on, but should be rubbed off at once. We have seen ladies frequently watering the beds and borders in the open ground; but this is creating much unnecessary labour, for, if they once begin, they must continue, and the subjects in the open ground do not require it, when once established. We will not deny that, in dusty situations, a sprinkling over the foliage, to wash the dirt off, is very refreshing; but, when the roots are left to shift for themselves, they will go down after moisture; but, if the surface of the ground be watered, the fibres will come up instead of going down, and then we must keep them moist, or they will perish. Geraniums, also, ought to be pruned into shape. No matter how close these are cut, they will make good plants by the season of bloom.

The work of shifting plants from smaller to larger pots goes on at all times—winter and summer—the only rule to observe is, to shift to a new pot when the old one is filled with roots, and this can always be told by turning the present ball of earth out, and, if the fibres are close all over the outside next the pot, the plant must be shifted; if not, it may remain in the old pot for a while longer; and this rule applies to all plants in pots.

## AN IRISHWOMAN'S RECOLLECTIONS OF IRELAND.

I REMEMBER a beautiful land far away—

An isle by the blue sea caress'd;  
And the fields are so green, and the mountains so grey,  
In this isle far away in the West.

There rocks grim and hoary, and stately old hills,  
Still echo the peasant's sweet song,  
And broad-shining rivers and murmuring rills  
Go flashing and dancing along.

And many a dim grot and weird-looking dell  
Peep out from her emerald breast.  
Ah! well may the fairies continue to dwell  
In this beautiful isle in the West!

Oh, land ever lovely! though many long years  
My feet have a stranger-soil press'd,  
Thy memory comes with a gush of fond tears,  
Sweet home of my youth in the West!

And often I dream I'm a barefooted child,  
And sit at the old cabin door,  
With a head full of fancies romantic and wild,  
And a warm heart with love brimming o'er.

In the glens through the tangled green bushes I roam,  
And, oh! I supremely am blest;  
As, even in spirit, again I'm at home—  
At home in the beautiful West.

Still, as Life's troubled day to its close draweth nigh,  
Like some poor little bird in its nest,  
This heart, worn and weary, right gladly would fly  
To its own darling isle in the West.

E. F.

## Facts and Scraps.

A BEAUTIFUL THOUGHT.—Among some of the South Sea Islanders, the compound word for hope is beautifully expressive: it is *manaolana*, or the *swimming thought*—faith floating and keeping his head aloft above water, when all the waves and billows are going over one—a strikingly beautiful definition of hope, worthy to be set down along with the answer which a deaf and dumb person wrote with his pencil, in reply to the question, "What was his idea of forgiveness?" "It is the odour which flowers yield when trampled on."

A LADY passing through New Hampshire, observed the following notice on a board:—"Horses taken in to grass. Long tails three shillings and sixpence, short tails two shillings." The lady asked the owner of the land the reason for the difference of the price. He answered: "You see, ma'am, the long tails can brush away the flies; but the short tails are so tormented by them that they can hardly eat at all."

A MODEL WOMAN.

"DID you not say, Ellen, that Mr. B—is poor?"

"Yes, he has only his profession."

"Will your uncle favour his suit?"

"No; and I can expect nothing from him."

"Then, Ellen, you will have to resign fashionable society."

"No matter—I shall see more of Fred."

"You must give up expensive dress."

"Oh, Fred admires simplicity."

"You cannot keep a carriage."

"But we can have delightful walks."

"You must take a small house, and furnish it plainly."

"Yes; for elegant furniture would be out of place in a cottage."

"You will have to cover your floors with thin, cheap carpets."

"Then I shall hear his steps the sooner."

WHATEVER YOU DO, DO WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT.

—Work at it, if necessary, early and late, in season and out of season, not leaving a stone unturned, and never deferring for a single hour that which can just as well be done now. The old proverb is full of truth and meaning, "Whatever is worth doing at all, is worth doing well." Many a man acquires a fortune by doing his business thoroughly, while his neighbour remains poor for life, because he only half does his business. Ambition, energy, industry, and perseverance, are indispensable requisites for success in business.

THE MAIDEN'S TEARS.

"SAY, maiden fair, why dost thou weep?

Some secret sorrow hidden deep

Within thy heart is bringing

Into thine eyes those pearly tears,

Sweet memories of by-gone years,

Thus fountain-like upspringing,

Of unrequited love, a dream

Wakes from its hidden source, the stream,

That down thy cheeks is stealing?"

"Nay, 'tis not love." "What, then? oh, say!"

"Well, then, we dine on goose to-day:

The onions I've been peeling!"

## Scientific Notes.

INCOMBUSTIBLE DRESSES.—Chemical science has almost exhausted itself in quest of some means of rendering the light drapery of women less inflammable, and thereby diminishing their liability to an agonising death. For this purpose, a salt was required that would have no injurious effect on the appearance or strength of the material subjected to its action, and hitherto it has been sought fruitlessly, since all the agents used have been objectionable in one sense or in another. A solution of common salt rendered the fabric steeped in it crisp, stiff, and harsh to the touch. Alum slowly destroyed the material. Phosphate of ammonia, otherwise efficient, became liquid under the hot iron of the laundress. Sulphate of ammonia, though without this fatal defect, was, as well as the phosphate, soluble, and requiring constant renewal. It is stated, however, that *tungstate of soda* is free from all such objections, that the fabric once saturated with it, while uninjured to the sight or touch, is permanently unflammable. It has been satisfactorily employed for some time in the Royal Laundry.

NEW MISSILE POWER.—A commission of ordnance officers have recently been experimenting on the gunpowder-gas engine, devised by Sir J. Scott Lillie, who claims to enable a single person, by simply turning a valve, to discharge by his engine 120 shots per minute, through rifled barrels. It does not yet