

only surprised that nothing
of a decided kind in the
way of opposition should have
appeared before. However I
have ^{also} been surprised (and
pleased) to find such
things producing a much
more harmless & momentary
impression of unpleasantness
than I should have expected,
- indeed I might almost
say none at all; particularly
as I cannot help in this
instance putting against the
Blackwood article the fact
that B. & Co. wished to publish
the book & I went elsewhere.
But above all, these things
probably do not touch me
much for the reason that
my mind is now quite occu-
-pied with my painting, and
has been for some time past.
I am making very rapid

progress with my large picture
of "Dante's Dream", about
10 or 11 feet by 7. A big
picture is gladdens work,
really coming to every faculty
one has or ever thought
one might have, and I
hope I am doing better in
this than hitherto. In ~~another~~
fortnight or so I shall have
all the figures painted on
the canvas and only the
glazing of the draperies
left to do. The background
is as yet untouched &
before I resume the picture
after bringing it to the com-
-pletion of the figures as above
~~with~~ I intend to go for a
month or so into the country
to recruit. However, though
I have been working decidedly
hard, I find that it chiefly
seems to have the effect of
consolidating & steadying